



# Genre – Text – Interpretation

*Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Folklore and Beyond*

Edited by

Kaarina Koski and Frog with Ulla Savolainen

**Studia Fennica**  
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## STUDIA FENNICA FOLKLORISTICA 22

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## Preface

“Genre” is a fundamental concept for many disciplines today, and has perhaps been nowhere so intensively discussed and analyzed as in the discipline of folklore studies. The handling of this key concept and attitudes toward it have been carried in different and sometimes inconsistent directions by the winds of time for more than two thousand years. Debate over its definition and use was ablaze from the 1960s into the 1980s; it formed a beacon that was difficult to ignore and was so hot that many thought it best to keep a distance from it. The heat of those discussions tempered critical views and perspectives on the concept, and it has gradually moved into the background of discourse as the flames of controversy died down. The embers continue to glow, yet rather than being abandoned, genre maintains a central position in many fields – implicitly if not explicitly. Questions of genre now flare up occasionally in individual works which disturb the coals of these earlier arguments, yet academic discussion has rather left it behind in the wake of insights, strategies and approaches that have made tremendous progress in other aspects of these fields across the last several decades. With the coming of a new century, multidisciplinary influences have offered new insights into “genre” as a concept and challenged earlier definitions. “Genre” is such a core concept especially to research on traditions, and so implicit in the ways that we, as researchers, think about those traditions, that it has become necessary to return to this fundamental term and concept in order to reassess it. This is vital within folklore studies, but also across the diverse and intersecting disciplines to which “genre” is central. It is necessary to consider the values and drawbacks of “genre” as a term and concept, as well as the impacts which this has on research, on research history and how these sorts of conditioning can be overcome. A multidisciplinary discussion on genre has become crucial – a necessity that has given rise to the present volume.

*Genre – Text – Interpretation: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Folklore and Beyond* is the fruit of several years of labour. The concept for the volume arose from a discussion between Kaarina Koski and Frog in the wake of the seminar “Laji nykytutkimuksessa” [‘Genre in Current Research’]. The seminar was organized in 2010 in Helsinki, Finland, by the Department of Folklore Studies of the University of Helsinki. Kaarina Koski had been the driving force behind this event, which had been motivated by the fact that



a number of Finnish scholars had been wrestling quite aggressively with the concept of genre and how to theorize it in their research on an individual basis: the seminar aimed to bring their approaches into discussion. Rather than being oriented towards producing a publication, this event aimed to bring forward the topic of genre in a variety of research, much of which was ongoing, for the mutual benefit of participants. The result was a boom of excited discussion that resonated long after the event. Not only did this unveil the amount of work being done on the concept but also its diversity. In addition to advancing the concept on the platform of debates and perspectives within the discipline of folklore studies, researchers were developing and reinforcing their perspectives by combining these with perspectives and theoretical work done in a variety of other disciplines. There was clearly a general need to reevaluate the concept of genre in a more comprehensive and multidisciplinary way.

The idea on which the present volume is based is both to offer reevaluations of the concept of genre and also to offer a new platform for considering the diversity of perspectives associated with it as well as to discuss and illustrate their aspects and potential. Owing to the wide relevance to scholars globally, the publication was planned to be in English rather than in Finnish. The inter-connectedness of theorizing genre in folklore studies with theories and perspectives being developed in other disciplines also led the volume to be planned as multidisciplinary itself. Koski and Frog notified the participants of the 2010 seminar about this plan and invited them to contribute, but they also circulated a call for papers which invited scholars from various fields of research to offer their insights on genre. As a result, the book you have before you contains contributions primarily connected with folklore studies, but also contributions from the perspectives of linguistic anthropology, literature studies, philology, sociology, and so forth, as well as representing a variety of national scholarships from around the world. The process of the volume's development has been extended and the amount of work involved led to inviting Ulla Savolainen to join the editorial team in 2013. Individual articles have in many cases evolved significantly as part of that process. One or more of the editors has worked extensively with each contributor to both strengthen the individual articles and also to help ensure that the volume as a whole will be approachable for a multidisciplinary audience. The editors also organized blind peer-review by two reviewers for each contribution individually and the Finnish Literature Society subsequently organized blind peer-review by two reviewers of the whole volume. As articles developed, the editors also arranged for them to be seen by different contributors on a case by case basis followed later by the circulation of a version of the full manuscript, which has enabled the diverse articles found here to enter more directly into dialogue with one another through cross-referencing. The result is gratifying, and we hope that the perspectives of this volume will generate new discussions in the future.

The articles collected here offer theoretical views on different genre systems and on genre as a concept. They vary in their emphasis on theory, terminology and empirical data as they discuss several concerns related to the concept of genre. As a consequence, the views they offer are very

complementary as they address themes recurrent in this volume. These themes include questions of how a “genre” should be defined, and how different definitions hold to different kinds of texts, to different kinds of communications and representations, or to different contents of those communications and representations. Such themes also include how relationships between genres should be approached, to what degree it is possible to define a genre system, and how relationships between genres impact or construct understandings of texts in analysis and for those who use them. Most central, however, is how genre as an approach and research tool can contribute to – and have consequences for – the study of oral and written texts today.

Among the many points that come forward through the present volume is one that is not found in any single article but revealed through the collection as a whole. This is that the embers of the heated discussion and debates surrounding genre are far from cold. The Promethean fire of this topic has not been extinguished but rather carried in hundreds of directions, scattered among individual scholars who have wrestled with its flames in dozens of contexts. Each of the contributions to this collection can be taken individually on its own merits, but the true strength of the present volume is in bringing together this rich diversity of insights and perspectives that collectively underscore the fundamental significance of genre as a concept and tool while simultaneously unveiling that the debates are far from finished.

2nd February 2016

*Frog, Kaarina Koski and Ulla Savolainen*

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# Introduction





## At the Intersection of Text and Interpretation

### An Introduction to Genre

“Genre” is a fundamental term in the analytical vocabulary of many disciplines. Its use has varied considerably over time, by location and by field of study. In addition to its function as an analytical tool, the term genre is used in standard language to denote a style or category of art, music, or literature (*OED*, s.v. “genre”). Academic debates about genre have from time to time been heated among the researchers of texts, expressions and meanings. Different approaches have been concerned with linguistic, oral, literary, visual, musical, narrative, traditional and many other forms of expression. They have focused on diverse characteristics of these forms, such as their style, structure, function, purpose, context or distribution. Several lines of development in research have a variety of opinions about how genres as forms and categories should be understood and defined, and also about the purpose, utility and potential hazards of defining them. Although “genre” can be considered to belong to the core scientific vocabulary and concepts of a variety of disciplines, the question of what makes a genre a genre is, in practice, most often unasked. The concept and term are continuously evolving in relation to new terms, concepts and understandings through use as much or more than through scientific debate. Such processes of evolution also lead to diversification and can easily result in confusion and miscommunication when a common term is conceived in different ways. It thus becomes necessary for such core terms and concepts to be periodically revisited, critically reassessed with regard to their uses and utility in the present.

Although the term “genre” may seem increasingly pervasive, its progressive spread from language to language in analytical discussion is relatively recent. As terms go, “genre” has actually had a rather short, if adventurous life, gradually displacing equivalent words in various languages as it has been built up as a specialist scientific term.<sup>1</sup> This broad international spread seems to trace back to English, where it first pops up in the late eighteenth century, and then as an exotic foreign term – *genre* was actually just a fancy French word meaning “kind, sort, style” – and gradually came to be viewed as a native English word in the mid-nineteenth century. Even at its most broad, the term “genre” now normally implies a technical distinction of some sort and it is regarded as a term suitable as an analytical tool. The technical associations that now reside in the term also seem to be the key

factor that has led it to be borrowed into one language after another. Like the corresponding use of its Latin ancestor *genus*, it describes “an assemblage of objects which are related or belong together in consequence of a resemblance in natural qualities” (Lewis & Short 1969: s.v. “genus”). However, the term “genre” is not used for just any “assemblage of objects”: it is particularly reserved for assemblages of texts that are products of human expression – if “text” is approached in the broad sense of “any coherent complex of signs” (Bakhtin 1986 [1976]: 103). This fancy French word started off in discussions of high culture, but rapidly extended into discussions of folklore and other cultural practices where it was used as a more formal term for “type” and thus many categories that were already established became labelled as “genres”. It has hopped from discipline to discipline in what became a rocketing spread with the outcome that almost any category of human expression could potentially be addressed as a “genre”. In parallel with this spread, the fields where it has received the most concentrated theoretical attention began questioning its utility and applicability. The volume *Genre – Text – Interpretation: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Folklore and Beyond* has emerged in response to these tensions surrounding “genre” and its relevance in research today.

### *Roots of Western Genre Theory*

The concept of genre is by no means new. “Genres” are in essence categories, and as long as people have distinguished expressions as belonging to one type as opposed to another, there have been genres. However, when we start talking about “genres” – whatever word we use to describe them – discussion advances from distinguishing epic poetry from lyric song or a sonnet from a novel to reflecting on the categories *as* categories. At its most basic, this is the movement from thinking about any one of these as *a* genre to thinking about what makes them categories at all, and how different categories relate to one another.

Western scientific theorizing about genre can be traced especially back to the works of the Classical philosophers Plato and Aristotle in the fourth century BC. These philosophers’ works became icons of such thinking in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and can be considered the soil in which Western theories of genre took root. Plato took familiar types of poetry and performance for granted without interest in analysing them as categories (*Ion*, *Republic*), although he condemned “mingling lamentations with hymns, and pæans with dithyrambs, and imitat[ing] with harp music the music of the hautboy (flute)” (*Laws* III.xv) – i.e. mixing genres which he conceived as each governed by particular “laws”. He was primarily concerned with representation and aesthetics or reception. This interest led him to theorize broader categories according to how art affects the soul of the individual according to whether verses represent (*a*) the speech of the poet, as in dithyrambic and similar poetry, or (*b*) the speech of a character, as in dramas, with a third category in which (*c*) these two were mixed, as in epic (*Republic*, Book III).<sup>2</sup> (See also e.g. Frow 2006: 55–56; Juntunen 2012:

530.) In contrast, Aristotle was concerned with problems of determining and delineating categories according to perceivable distinctions – in this case of texts. He abstracted three types of criteria according to which genres are distinguished: (a) the formal mode or medium of representation, such as verse or prose, the music of a type of instrument, a combination of verse and enactment of a role in drama, etc.; (b) what is being represented or the content of a particular work; and (c) the manner of representation in the sense of the three categories described by Plato (*Poetics* I.i–iii). These three basic criteria could then be subdivided according to different types, which resulted in a remarkably sophisticated model to formally describe individual genres. (See also Frow 2006: 56–57; Juntunen 2012: 529–530.) Aristotle’s great innovation was to think about genres in terms of constellations of features that, individually, might be found across several genres, and to parse these with sometimes quite subtle analytical distinctions as criteria for genre classification. The categories might be described as ideal abstractions derived from an exemplar work or group of works seen as belonging together that reciprocally defined what the relevant texts were or should be. Thus, Plato pioneered theorizing categories that were relevant across genres but did not theorize genres *per se*. Aristotle built on this by developing a complex model for the descriptive classification of different genres that provided the foundation of Western genre theory.

The Aristotelian model proved profoundly influential, although Aristotle’s works were lost to the West during the Middle Ages until the Renaissance. His *Poetics* became extremely influential in literature and literary theory through the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries via Classicism and Neoclassicism,<sup>3</sup> with normative formulations of poetics also manifesting an idea of genres organized into hierarchical classes (see e.g. Farrell 2003; Lyytikäinen 2006: 167–169). Generally, the principle remained to view genres in terms of “normative rules with universal validity” (Frow 2006: 57). However, these were also the centuries of a rising historical consciousness that led to the recognition of historical affinity between languages from India to Rome and the British Isles and differences between them as outcomes of their distinct histories (e.g. Jones 1799 [1786]), the proposition that culture itself underwent historical processes of development (e.g. Comte 2009 [1830–1842]) and then iconically to Charles Darwin’s (1964 [1859]) theory of biological evolution. The historical comparativism of philology then sought to reverse-engineer the histories not only of words and languages but also of gods, heroes and stories that were believed to have evolved from a common heritage, acknowledging historical change not only in text, but in genres and the historical movement of stories as texts from one genre to another (e.g. Grimm 1953 [1854]). In the closely related study of literature, scholars developed corresponding models of the historical evolution of literary genres (e.g. Brunetière 1890), a conception of change over time that has become a basic premise of understandings of literary genres today (Frow 2006: 3; Lyytikäinen 2006; Juntunen 2012: 530). The idea that a genre’s “normative rules” had “universal validity” was breaking down.

## Genre and Text

Romanticism brought certain fundamental changes into the discussion, but an acknowledgement that the particular rules of a genre could vary by culture and historical period did not overthrow the idealization and validity of such categories which were easily conflated with natural kinds in the objective world (see Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume). Nonetheless, individual talent could be given precedence over concern for genre models in the works of authors and artists, once-idealized categories were challenged as fluid or commingling and “[t]he literary movement [...] attacked rules of all sorts” (Croce 1995 [1902]: 447; see also Behler 1993; Lyytikäinen 2006: 170–176). In contrast, contributions of the individual were rendered “invisible” (Lotman 1990: 58) in considerations of folklore, which, building on the philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel (1967 [1807]: 731–749), became viewed as more generally an expression of *das Volk* [‘the people/peasantry’]. Folklore became conceived in terms of text that could be collected from its imperfect custodians – *das Volk* – to be reduced to a single, pure form of heritage (linked to nationalism) before it was lost entirely (Anttonen 2005; Frog 2013). Although Plato seems to have conceptualized genres of verbal art in terms of performative behaviour alongside music (*Laws* III.xv; see Aristotle, *Poetics*), research in the nineteenth century had a positivistic base that worked on the basis of evidence, and evidence of human expression was studied through written and visual “texts”. A text-centered paradigm became almost inevitable.

Up through the first half of the twentieth century, the discussion of genres seems to have precipitated out of diverse discussions of different types of products of human expression. These diverse discussions were not necessarily in dialogue with one another and only gradually merged into discussions of genre *per se*. The formalization of such categories not infrequently led to general, prototypical descriptions of the grouped items within the Aristotelian paradigm. However, it was easy to overlook the intuitive and practical motivations that initially produced many of these categories of texts, perhaps based on a single feature such as its form (sonnet), content (myth) or context (wedding song). Discussions of genres as text-type categories in literature, music and the arts were concerned with addressing sets of unique works, even if these works might have slightly variant texts according to different published editions or performances. Some types of text were potentially one-of-a-kind works within a culture, such as an “anthem” or national “epic”. These types of texts were categorized according to their social perception or even governmental status and were assembled with corresponding works in other cultures into a genre category. A step was added in the typologizing of folklore: individual documented texts of performance or dictation had first to be categorized as either versions of a single, ideal or prototypical text (a particular narrative, song, etc., equivalent to a work; see Jason 2000) or unique outcomes of a more variable tradition (e.g. laments). These ideal types were then organized into larger categories, which by the twentieth century had become in part a practical necessity of organizing archives in order to find research materials. However, the criteria

for their typologies were mainly inherited through research discourse on the one hand and shaped in relation to current research emphases and priorities on the other. Across disciplines, such categories were formed in order to talk about sets of texts, often differentiating them from other categories, whether distinguishing “memoir”, “biography” and “novel” or “legend”, “folktale” and “myth”. These were accepted as genres without critical concern for what qualified a category *as* a genre. The philosopher Benedetto Croce (1995 [1902]: ch. 19) went so far as to reject scientific typologization in literature altogether. The outcome was that categories now described as “genres” have not been determined according to consistent criteria. (See also Frog, this volume.) The closest thing to a unifying feature of “genres” was that they were (mostly) categories of “texts”.

The acknowledgement that genres could change also did not expel thinking about genres as ideal categories within their particular cultural-historical contexts. Indeed, categories such as “novel”, “legend”, “eulogy” and “myth” continued to be projected as genres that transcended times and cultures even if they might only come into being under certain historical conditions and were not necessarily present in all cultures. Genres continued to be seen as objectively existing as taxonomic frames of reference for thinking about individual texts. The recombination and hybridization of genres or their features could be acknowledged in individual products, but they were deviations or violations of genre norms. This was especially evident in folklore taxonomies where the documented text was only a reflection of an ideal formal text and thus such variations were viewed in terms of “corruption” and “contamination” within the framework of the Classic Historical-Geographic Method (esp. Krohn 1926). The priority of the formal text in such categories becomes more evident because even alternative approaches that sought to focus on variation and processes of transmission remained within a text-based frame of thought, such as Carl W. von Sydow’s (1948) approach to the adaptation of tales to their local cultural environment or the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp’s (1958 [1928]) rejection of formal typologies of tales altogether to argue that the folktale genre was characterized by what today might be described as a generative grammar of narration, with a limited number of structural units that will occur in a predictable organization (see also Apo 1986; Frog 2013). Genre categories, however, remained intact, ideal, and approached through texts which – as texts – were isolated from the people who used and received them.

The discussion of genre theory was rather heated among the formalists in the Soviet Russia during the 1920s (see e.g. Pesonen & Suni 2001), which also gave rise to the innovations of Mikhail M. Bakhtin and the so-called Bakhtin Circle (Medvedev/Bakhtin 1978 [1928]; Vološinov 1930 [1929]; Bakhtin 1981; 1986; see also Tihanov 1998; Renfrew 2006; Steinby 2009; Juntunen 2012: 530–532). They criticized Saussurean linguistics and Formalist literary theory for an overly mechanical view that disregarded the social and historical dimensions of language. Instead they viewed language as fundamentally interactive and social, thus unable to exist as a synchronic system apart from its historical and social context. (E.g. Medvedev/Bakhtin 1978 [1928]; Vološinov 1973 [1929]: 65–68; see also Tihanov 1998.) Their

reaction produced an early turn toward meanings carried by expression, reorienting from construing genres in terms of formal features to emphasis on ideology: literary genres became viewed as socially constructed modes of knowing and understanding, an approach that soon Bakhtin developed into his theory of “chronotope” (1981: 84–258), describing the customarily representation of a particular time-space environment in a genre of literature that “defines genre and generic distinctions” (1981: 85; see also Isomaa 2005; Ingemark, this volume). This approach was also applied to language more generally: more or less any distinguishable category of utterance was seen as receiving meaningfulness through its association with all preceding utterances of that type or of that “speech genre” placing these genres in relation to genres of literature (Vološinov 1930 [1928]; later Bakhtin 1986: 60–102). Literary ideas of Romanticism about genres being able to mix and interpenetrate were reconceptualized in terms of “dialogism” – the idea that utterances within a complex text of one genre could be bounded instantiations of other genres, which thus became subsumed to the rhetoric and pragmatics of that larger text. “Monologic” literary genres were closed to other forms of discourse in contrast to “dialogic” genres that were flexibly able to embed utterances of other (monologic) genres. In his later work, Bakhtin redefined these categories in terms of “primary” or “simple” genres in contrast to “secondary” or “complex” genres that “absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres” (1986: 62). The theories of the Bakhtin Circle and Bakhtin’s later work produced a distinctive new way to look at the dynamics of meanings and had profound influence when they were finally introduced to the West in the wake of Post-Modernism, and they are readily reinterpreted through current theories and methodologies as viable tools in research today (Lindfors, this volume; Savolainen, this volume). Nevertheless, these theories were not formulated with today’s frameworks and analytical vocabulary, even if Bakhtin’s own thinking continued to evolve over a period of decades: the “sociological poetics” of the Bakhtin Circle highlighted that genres are constructed socially and that this is essential to understanding meanings, but they were nevertheless bound up in the thinking of the text-oriented paradigm that they sought to move beyond. The innovations of a dialogic approach were centrally concerned with the discursive construction of meanings in the rhetoric and dialogicality of “complex” genres like the novel. However, the majority of literary genres – not to mention folklore – remained conceived largely as in text-centered paradigms as “more or less fixed pre-existing forms into which one may then pour artistic experience” (Bakhtin 1981: 3) that were “by convention suspended from any mutual interaction with alien discourse” (Bakhtin 1981: 285). When these ideas were carried into the West, they were also interpreted according to the current text-centered paradigm: dialogicality was conceived as conferring meaning in relation to other texts and genres in a textual universe irrespective of the knowledge and understandings of people who produced and received them. The hold of the text-oriented paradigm was profound.



### *From Text to Interpretation*

The discussion of “genre” seems to have come into bloom in the second half of the twentieth century – it became a hot topic. This coincided with a number of developments that are difficult to disentangle from one another. Categories identified as genres had tended to be regarded as ideal and even universal across the first half of the twentieth century. Advances in epistemological reflections and analytical knowledge about conceptualization turned the focus to the categorization process itself. Post-Modernism overthrew the hegemonic modelling on which the earlier ideas were based. Presumptions of an objective, uniform view were replaced by the acknowledgement of diverse, intersecting perspectives, subjective interpretations and a multiplicity of voices – which enabled a shift in attention to precisely that multivocality and previously marginalized voices and views as uncharted territory for research. This process had numerous ramifications for genre as a term and concept and its use as a tool in research, penetrating into different disciplines at different rates and in different ways.

Beginning in the late 1960s and especially in the 1970s, the Post-Structuralist movement challenged ideal models and categories as templates through which culture was projected, and turned attention to meaning-generation. Bakhtinian dialogism entered the West through this conduit and the emergence of discourse on so-called “intertextuality” became particularly prominent. “Intertextuality” was Julia Kristeva’s (1980 [1969]) term to describe the meaningful interpenetration of texts and genres in her introduction of Bakhtin’s dialogism to the west, and the concept was nurtured especially in a circle of French literary scholars (see Allen 2000; Savolainen, this volume). Kristeva’s approach remained very much entangled with the text-centered paradigm, construing a universe of texts and genres with a reality of networked relations independent of people. Even Roland Barthes’ famous manifesto “The Death of the Author” (1977 [1968]) seeks centrally to affirm the intertextual universe as a frame for the meaningfulness of texts beyond the author, which the reader can then observe but with no consideration of the subjectivity and limitations of experience of such a reader. Nevertheless, this turn toward relational meanings changed the way people looked at how images, motifs and different varieties of language were meaningful in generic contexts: meaningfulness began to be viewed through patterns of use, which simultaneously led people to attend to such patterns. Perhaps more significantly, it turned attention to “genres” as metasemiotic entities – i.e. genres were viewed as somehow recognizable as such by authors and audiences. When the situated use of the language, structures and expressive devices were recognized as associated with a genre, this was perceived as meaningful and affected how the text was interpreted – even when one set of generic markers were found embedded in another genre. In linguistic anthropology, this was later described as a principle that “No element can enter into the work purely on the basis of its form, without importing its value coefficients with it” (Hanks 1987: 671), and it fed into the interest and concern that “how something is said is part of what is said” (Hymes 1986: 59).



Although it is often appealing to attribute such developments to particular individuals, this may perhaps be better regarded as offering expression to changing interests and attention developing in many areas of research. In folklore research, there was a gradual shift in attention to perspectives of individuals in concrete situations. This turned attention from continuity of “texts” in transmission to confer value on variation and folklore as a living phenomenon in communities and social networks, effectively redefining the discipline (Frog 2013). The shift of attention to living communities led to the reevaluation of earlier overly-ideal models of genre as well as to heated debate regarding genres as analytical tools constructed by researchers as opposed to vernacular categories in living communities (Ben Amos 1976; Honko 1989; see also Hakamies, this volume; Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume). Changes in technologies also affected documentation: audio and video recordings gradually superseded simple text transcription and correspondingly also the data being correlated and analyzed. All of these developments were connected to the movement toward performance-oriented approaches to genre, most familiar through the work of Richard Bauman (1975). The turn to performance fundamentally – if gradually – broke down the text-centered paradigm. The phenomenon that had previously been fossilized as “text” and resituated for analysis on a desk in the researcher’s office now extended to a whole spectrum of aspects of expression brought into consideration, such as voicing, gesture, facial expressions, spatial relations and so on. More significantly, however, it became reclassified as a situated event in a social setting that was considered reciprocally essential for considering the resulting textual features of the event. These changes in perspectives evolved into increasingly sophisticated views of genres as generative frameworks for the production and reception of texts.

In retrospect, the theorization of reception seems an inevitable outcome of Post-Modern interest in the meaningfulness of texts, evolving in literary theory and aesthetics alongside the turn toward performance in folklore research. In a sense paralleling Bakhtin’s chronotopes as the conventions for representing a particular time-space environment within literature, Hans Robert Jauss (1970), for example, theorized historically changing “horizons of expectations” that would be socially constructed in the particular time-space environment where texts were produced and received. Just as emic and etic categorizations were debated in discussions of folklore, “[t]he theory of literary genres [was seen] at the point of seeking a path between the Scylla of nominalist scepticism that allows for only aposteriori classifications, and the Charybdis of regression into timeless typologies” (Jauss 1982: 78). Discussion of literary genres as dynamic, flexible and capable of change over time nevertheless continued to hold the riddle of how one got from diverse individual texts to understandings of genres and back to texts again. Here, what Ludwig Wittgenstein (1986 [1953]: esp. §67) referred to as “family resemblance” was brought into service (see Fishelov 1993). Family resemblance is basically the idea that things get associated with categories in the same manner as members of a family who all have many features in common although no single feature is necessarily

shared by all of them. The category becomes understood in terms of the constellations of features that form similarities among its members which reciprocally allow the recognition of associations with the category through appropriate constellations of features. This model for thinking about genre became familiar especially through the work of Alastair Fowler, who approaches genres as possessing a prototypical repertoire of formal and thematic features that each work reflects differently (Fowler 1982: 41). The boundaries of this repertoire are not strict or clear but more or less fuzzy and open to interpretations. Jauss (1982) pointed out that the particular genres or textological “families” will be both limited within particular socio-historically situated horizons of expectation and also received within the system of genres within that horizon (see also “tradition ecology” of e.g. Honko 1981; 1985). Such theorizing of genre sought to avoid Aristotelian taxonomies in which classifications define the works that they describe. Instead, genres became considered as socially operating frameworks or metasemiotic entities: they are learned, become recognizable and carry meaningful associations; they also enable the creation and interpretation of artistic works and communication through them that cannot be properly understood without knowledge of the genre framework (Fowler 1982; Juntunen 2012: 534).

In tandem with these processes, whole new fields of study were emerging, and the term and concept of “genre” was adopted into their disciplinary discourses. For example, as discourse analysis emerged as an area of inquiry, Robert E. Longacre (1968: 1–50) presented “genre” as a term to refer to “a class of discourse types when that class is defined by certain common characteristics” defined according to function in discourse such as “*narrative, procedural, expository, and hortatory*” (Longacre 1968: 1, emphasis original). These formally defined categories describe variations on an expressive strategy with certain conditions that were so broad that they might be seen as super-genres from the perspective of literature or folklore studies. The term “genre” was also adapted to emerging discussions in linguistics where the variety of genres that may be distinguished and analyzed is significantly broader than in literature, folklore and the arts in order to cover any text or utterance we meet in everyday life – at home or at work, in education, bureaucracy or popular media (see also Bakhtinian “speech genres”). The developments in linguistics and the associated terminology evolved to some degree independently of those in literature, folklore studies and media studies during the era of disciplinary separatism; but since the 1990s there has been increasing dialogue between them, which has also affected discussions surrounding “genre”.

Linguistic approaches to genre can be roughly divided into two groups: those that focus on concrete texts and their structure, and those that concentrate on the practice of the production and use of genres (Heikkinen & Voutilainen 2012: 17, 24). Theorizing genres in linguistics was dependent on a shift of attention from what Ferdinand de Saussure (1967 [1916]) called *langue*, or “language” as an abstract hegemonic system, to *parole*, or “speech” and its situational variation in language practice. This shift in linguistics participated in a much broader shift that affected many areas of

the humanities, such as the turn to situated performance in folklore studies mentioned above (Frog 2013). The historical icon of structural approaches to language is of course Saussure's own work, and structural approaches are quite familiar in studies of both literature and folklore – whether in the form of Vladimir Propp's mechanical *Morphology of the Folktale* (1958) mentioned above, the narrative grammars of Roland Barthes (1977 [1966]) or Algirdas Julien Greimas (1977), narrative schemes proposed by William Labov (1972), Teun van Dijk (1977) or Walter Kintsch (1977), or Claude Lévi-Strauss' (1967 [1958]) approach to structural oppositions that are purportedly in the background of myths, stories, and just about everything else. In a sense, broadly structural approaches can be considered to have dominated much of the history of Western theories of genre, whereas concentration on the practice in production, use and interpretation belongs primarily to the last half-century. It should nevertheless be stated explicitly that the different approaches are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary, yet the differences in focus, materials studied and research questions has also led to developing concepts designated as “genre” differently.

The best-known structural linguistic approach to situational language use is what became called Systemic-Functional Linguistics, pioneered by M. A. K. Halliday and advanced by his circle (e.g. Halliday 1973; Halliday & Hasan 1985; see also Shore 2015). Systemic-Functional Linguistics emerged through the analysis of contextual variation in language use. A communicative context was defined by variables including e.g. the social roles of participants, the situation and subject matter as well as the communicative channel. According to this model, the instantiations of the “language system” in recurrent situation types have a functional structure. The types of linguistic variation were, in different stages of the development of the theory, called either “genres” or “registers” (see Shore 2012: 150). The situation became complicated when different representatives of this school began to use both terms as complementary, although defining them differently (see Shore 2015: 64, 66, 68–71). For example, Halliday's student J. R. Martin defined register in a hierarchical relation to genre as a “system of staged goal-oriented social processes” (Martin 1997: 13) which can include various registers. Martin's model posits that each stage fulfils a particular function and thereby leads the text towards its goal (see also Eggins & Martin 1997; Eggins & Slade 1997: 236–237, 243). This model of genre is directly comparable to Labov's linear scheme of short narrative as consisting of *abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution* and *coda*, van Dijk's (1977: 16–18), which incorporates a hierarchy of structural elements, and Kintsch's (1977: 38–39), which also allows chains of several episodes in the same narrative. Martin also distinguished “genre families” as sets of genres sharing certain features but differing in others, as well as “macro-genres” or genres such as school textbooks which may incorporate and organize other genres corresponding to what Bakhtin described as “complex” genres like the novel (Rose & Martin 2012; Shore 2015: 70). The approaches to genre have become quite complex, but they are not uniform even within Systemic-Functional Linguistics. Diversity in uses of the term genre increases as one looks at other branches of sociolinguistics, ranging from the statistically

oriented studies of corpus linguistics to those that move beyond structural approaches to focus on practice (see e.g. Biber 1995: 7–10).

In the group of approaches to genre that are practice-based in linguistics, such as in new rhetorics, genres are defined as rhetorical actions which emerge in recurring situations: genres are seen as embedded in social practice, and therefore culture-specific and constantly changing (Miller 1984: 159, 162–163). From this perspective, the development or spread of new modes of communication and changes in cultural, social or political life can produce changes in generic practices. At the same time, genres also produce and shape social life. Such practice-based approaches in linguistics parallel developments in folklore studies as genres have been correspondingly reconceived in terms of situated performance rather than in terms of objectified “texts” that are merely reproduced. Similarly, critical discourse analysis focuses, for example, on the ways that political changes shape governmental media strategies, involving new roles of media genres and genre chains (Fairclough 2000; Solin 2012). From this point of view, genres are studied as parts of communicative networks of genres, discourses and styles that “mix” in different ways and socially structure difference and variation in what Norman Fairclough (2010: 291) describes as “orders of discourse”. These approaches attend to the dynamics of the mixing and hybridization of genres in social life that have been of increasing interest and concern in genre studies (e.g. on this phenomenon in Kalevala-metric poetry see Tarkka 2013 and this volume). Although each discipline may focus on different primary materials, their changing interests in genre and how genre is reconceived clearly resonates across them.

Conceptions of genre as a category and phenomenon were radically revised across the second half of the twentieth century and within that process these conceptions also were carried into a variety of newly emerging fields. Many developments occurred across this time, but perhaps the most fundamental was in the turn from treating language and texts as somehow ideal and objective entities to viewing them and their meaningfulness in terms of interaction between people and between the meaning-potential of language and texts and the people who produce and receive them. The result was that genres were no longer viewed as “more or less fixed pre-existing forms into which one may then pour artistic experience” (Bakhtin 1981: 3) and instead became frameworks for meaning-production and interpretation in diverse forms of communication. The text-oriented paradigm had been overcome.

### *Genre Theory Today and Tomorrow*

The development of the term and concept of genre and its diversification in use has also not been without challenges and controversies. Part of this difficulty has perhaps inevitably been due to the fact that while some scholars sought to renovate the concept, others continued to address it within the frames of earlier uses and interpretations. If genre theory is seen as taking form through the works of Aristotle, the history of theorizing genres can

be seen as an arc of nearly two and a half millennia dominated by formal description-*qua*-definition typology. Not long ago (relatively speaking) began the increasing struggle with the realities of mixed and hybridized forms, and, particularly across the last half-century, a return to Plato's antecedent concern with reception. A corresponding shift can similarly be seen in conceptions of genres not so much in terms of typologized products but as "laws" or conventions operating to structure expression and interpretation in practice and communication (e.g. Derrida 1980; 1992). However, the sorts of mixing and superimposition of genres that Plato condemned are now valorized, which has correspondingly brought the validity and value of genre as a concept into question (e.g. Derrida 1980; see also Bendix & Hasan-Rokem 2012, *A Companion to Folklore*, in which "genre" is scarcely addressed).

The changes in recording and communication technologies across the twentieth century produced myriads of new genres from radio theater to Hollywood cinema, and more recently to the still more rapid developments of information technology and digital culture. Alongside the developments and applications of genre as a term and concept in research in the humanities, genre has been used to typologize webpages to improve the quality of results with search engines (Rosso 2005) while, according to Alexis C. Madrigal (2014), by the end of 2013, Netflix had 76,897 tags for typologizing video material that enabled their service to recommend movies according to "personalized genres" such as "Emotional Fight-the-System Documentaries", "Period Pieces about Royalty Based on Real Life" and "Foreign Satanic Stories from the 1980s", although today recommendations by these personalized genres seem to be concealed behind the label "Because you watched ...". At the same time, these new technologies have interacted with ever-changing communicative needs and practices in societal life, constantly producing new variations and adaptations of existing genres while also producing new ones. It has never been clearer that generic practices are in a constant flux, varying by situation, media, culture or network and over time. Folk genres of parodic mocking of authorities readily illustrate the impact of the historical change in the long and winding progression from preindustrial mock sermons to photocopied joke versions of workplace bureaucracy and, finally, to YouTube remixes of politicians' speeches that get shared through digital networks. In each case, the vernacular parodist's communicative role, the audience he reaches, the communication technologies available to him, and consequently, the competence he needs to accomplish his performance, are completely different. The multimodality of forms carried by these technologies is in some ways as revolutionary as the introduction of writing into pre-literate societies so much earlier.

As happened with the initial introduction of writing systems, these more recent technologies have profoundly impacted language use in the communicative contexts that they have enabled, and they therefore echo back into other areas of social life. E-mail, SMS text messaging and "chat" on the internet have made writing with acronyms and emoticons part of everyday colloquial communication. Internet broadcasting platforms such as YouTube have produced something of an explosion in the range of vernacular

expression. The digitalization of mass media, starting in the late 1970s, resulted in a convergence of technical and media industries: materials which had been handled separately in film, audio tapes, photographs and print could now be edited together with computers – soon with home computers as well. Websites allowed a convergence of genres that now included video clips, sound, images and text. (Fagerjord 2010: 188.) Henry Jenkins (2006: 2) refers to this as “convergence culture”, which later turned towards divergence through the industrial production of various combinations of technologies. Anders Fagerjord suggests the result is “remix” – a “rip and create” culture in which pieces of various technologies and performances are combined and juxtaposed. He suggests that this is a genre movement which creates new genres by remixing previous ones. Selected characteristics of older genres can become relatively stable new media genres for special purposes, such as playing with conventions for presenting fact and fiction as entertainment. (Fagerjord 2010: 188–192.) YouTubers use pieces of home videos, popular fiction, news releases, digital games and advertisements – just to name a few sources – to create new performances which, in networked communities, already form a myriad of genres recognized in the media circuits to which they belong. The variety of genres and expressions in digital communication channels is stunning. These new forms of expression may seem at first sight to have a curiously liminal status between, on the one hand, the fixed and unique status of artistic works familiar to research in literature and the arts, and, on the other hand, the amorphous and ever-evolving social forms familiar as folklore. With their multimodality that defies text-centered genre definitions and their simultaneous fixity of forms in constant variation, they challenge the ways scholars are most accustomed to conceptualizing genres and thresholds between expressive forms and media.

However different the emergent genres linked to today’s technologies may seem, they also conform to the basic patterns of socially shared frameworks for the generation of multimodal texts – “text” understood in the broad sense of a “coherent complex of signs” (Bakhtin 1986 [1976]: 103) – that simultaneously play a fundamental role in the interpretation of those texts. As John Miles Foley (2012) has highlighted, looking across the types of expression found in different media and comparing how they operate and vary interpersonally reciprocally illuminates the different traditions compared. The operation of a phenomenon such as genre is clearly bound up with the media technologies through which it is realized, whether it is the verbal art of oral Homeric epics, the written texts of medieval Icelandic sagas, ever-evolving as they were copied out by hand again and again, a modern novel or movie in countless identical copies, endless variations of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* ever clothed anew in different actors, sets and interpretations, or multimodal blogs about politics and food, internet memes, Instagram gifs or YouTube remixes. Nevertheless, the insights gained from how the phenomenon works in one type of media provides a point of reference and frame of comparison for how it operates in others. Such insights may be at an abstract level of theory and analogy, but looking across such genres also brings into view fundamental dynamics of culture in practice, wherein diverse genres and their resources are in interaction. By looking at different types of genres, new insights become possible.



Although the value and relevance of the term and concept “genre” has been questioned in fields central to its developmental history, the term has spread rather pervasively through a wide range of disciplines in the humanities, which attests to its utility. Amid all of the variation in how the term may be used and understood in the different approaches and disciplines involved, genre has been elevated to a central position. The variation, debate and development across the history of its theorization has above all highlighted that whether it is defined as an etic universal concept applied to products of expression or as a category inductively explicated on the basis of raw data, genre is invariably a tool that is defined by researchers for discussing and analyzing phenomena in human expression. The term has been used in a variety of ways that center around the typologizing of entextualized products of expressions or the frameworks for generating and interpreting such expressions. Just as looking across categories identified as genres in different media and historical environments can shed new light and innovative perspectives on the phenomena compared, so too can the different approaches to genre and the ways that it is used and handled as a tool. Such uses include frameworks for looking at relationships between genres, their interactions and hybridization, such as Bakhtinian dialogism, Martin’s genre families and super-genres, as well as the concept of remix. These uses also include developing genre in relation to other related concepts such as “register”. Just as the term “genre” moved from other fields into linguistics, the term “register” moved from linguistics to other disciplines: it was developed in social linguistics as a term for a variation of language according to communicative context (see Sampson 1997: 699–703; Agha 2007; 2015; Shore 2015) and has been adopted or adapted as a tool in several articles in this collection (see e.g. Frog, this volume; Koski, this volume). Definitions of these terms in relation to one another have varied considerably (e.g. Biber 1995: 7–10; Koski 2011: 322–324), although the difference in many respects tends to place products of expression in focus in the case of genre and the language and other expressive resources used to produce expressions in the case of register. Both terms are nevertheless analytical tools defined by the researcher and calibrated to the object of research and the questions it sets out to answer. Bringing these terms and concepts into dialogue across approaches and different disciplines in which they are used has produced innovations and insights as well as had a stimulating effect on research (Agha & Frog 2015). This diversity and long history of debate surrounding genre and the potential of innovation through multidisciplinary discussion are the background against which the present collection has emerged.

### *A Multivocal Discussion*

The present volume brings together a number of perspectives, approaches and applications of genre in different disciplines. Appreciating the wide

range of expressive forms and the rich variety of scholarly perspectives on genre, we do not seek a consensus about the meaning and use of the term. Instead, we hope that interaction between disciplines, scholarly traditions and approaches can prove fertile and lead to deeper and more all-encompassing insights in the variation of human communication. The contributions are thematically organized in five sections, offering multiple, intersecting perspectives resulting in a dynamic image of the particular topic. The articles presented here are no more homogeneous than the discussion of genre itself. Many of them wrestle with controversial topics, present alternative approaches and carry discussion in new directions. Genres are, in this volume, approached as analytical tools and vernacular categories, as collections of textual items and as discursive strategies. The reader is invited to ponder who is entitled to define the characteristics and boundaries of a genre, and how genres as local communicative devices are utilized, combined and shaped for the needs of self-expression, argument and meaning-making. At the same time, the different sections of the collection are woven together by recurrent themes, genres, theories and interpretive frameworks found across the articles, producing cohesion among the many voices and views of the discussions offered here to manifest the larger whole.

#### I THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO GENRE

The volume opens with a section concentrated on broad theoretical questions of what genres are and how we define them. The problematics of the diversity of approaches to genre especially prominent in folklore studies are first reviewed in “Genres, Genres Everywhere, but Who Knows What to Think?: Toward a Semiotic Model”, where Frog proceeds to set out an innovative new approach to genre according to a four-aspect model. The four-aspect model builds on earlier approaches to genres and genre systems by taking into consideration formal aspects, conventions of content represented by a genre or what it enacts, conventions of situated use, and also its roles or functions within society and situation in the broader semiotic system. Frog places emphasis on the flexibility of genre as a research tool and the model that he describes will be of wide interest whether as a model to be adopted or as a frame of reference against which scholars can consider and discuss their own definitions of the term. A central problem in both definitions and uses of genre in research is the distinction between analytical constructs used as research tools by a researcher and categories that have social reality in the world. Tomi Kokkonen and Inkeri Koskinen wrestle with precisely this issue from the perspective of the philosophy of science in “Genres as Real Kinds and Projections: Homeostatic Property Clusters in Folklore and Art”. They discuss the potential for both types of genre categories to be applied as tools in research for producing different kinds of information. Kokkonen and Koskinen adapt the concept of a “homeostatic property cluster” to offer a new way of thinking about the sets and systems of elements and features characterizing a genre. Conceptually, this approach is in line with those that treat genre according to the Wittgensteinian principle of family resemblance (e.g. Fowler 1982). Its innovation is to apply a philosophical term and concept



that places emphasis on the shared features that generate the resemblance, providing a means of designating and discussing them, rather than placing emphasis on the identification of belongingness to a group sharing such features. At the same time, the authors highlight the limitations of the different categories for genre classification and the hazards of confusing projections and empirically existing real kinds when discussing particular material. Together, these opening articles offer a number of valuable perspectives for viewing genre and the problematic issues surrounding the term and concept in research. This section provides a background against which subsequent discussions can be considered.

## II RELATIONS BETWEEN AND WITHIN GENRES

Theoretical discussions are by no means limited to the opening section and are carried forward in the following section that takes up questions of distinctions between genres, their relations to one another, and how they interact and combine in practice. Where the first section addresses theoretical questions at a broad and abstract level, these articles concentrate on more specific genres or sets of genres, beginning with Kaarina Koski's strong opening in "Legend Genre and Narrative Registers". This article reassesses the distinctions between the closely-related genres of legends, fabulates and memorates. Koski presents an innovative adaptation of the register theory of Systemic-Functional Linguistics and its determinant variables *field*, *tenor* and *mode* in order to look at variation between closely-related categories of texts, with attention not to variation in and between linguistic registers but variation at the level of what is communicated – *narrative registers*. She shows that these products of expression that have been classed as separate genres or subgenres can be accounted for as situated variation within the genre of legends. The new theoretical model for looking at variation in narrative that Koski offers can be easily be adapted to other genres of expression and fruitfully combined with other research tools, opening new avenues for future research.

The theme of belief in traditional practice is carried forward by Rebecca M. C. Fisher in "Genre, Prayers and the Anglo-Saxon Charms", viewed from the perspective of philology. Fisher returns to the problem of the relationship between genres as ideal categories that are constructed through the history of research and the social realities of genres in the past. She confronts the problems of differences between etic genre categories that were applied by researchers across much of the twentieth century and the emic categories of the vernacular culture being studied. The academic constructs of genre categories are placed in contrast to the vernacular categories discernible through the corpus, where the categories that scholars saw as disparate in earlier research appear to be applied together as complementary within a larger contextual whole. Fisher's contribution highlights the role of ideologies and preconceptions of earlier researchers in producing and shaping artificial categories that still impact how we view traditions today. The complementary perspectives of Fisher and Koski foreground the need to review and question genre categorizations that we may take for granted and the potential for advancement in research when the relations of such

genres are reassessed from a new angle.

The discussion of genres' potential for the juxtaposition and recombination continues in the contribution of Antti Lindfors. The article "Notes on Reflexivity and Genre in Stand-Up Comedy Routines" highlights the multivocality of genres and their potential to construct meanings in performance and communication. In a synthesis of theoretical models, Lindfors attends to "the use-value of various speech genres in oral performances, in their pragmatics, interrelations, and social implications" (p. 152). He introduces stand-up comedy as a genre founded on engagements with other genres as recognizable strategies of expression that can be wilfully inhabited for the production of contextual meanings. Particular attention is given to the processual aspect of this genre, not only in development through a progression of thematic unity but also through strategies of semantic and contrastive parallelism that create cohesion in otherwise unrelated embedded texts. The theoretical approach is valuably illustrated through the empirical data of the particular case, and the insights it offers make it a useful model that can be used to interrogate other traditions in new ways.

The rhetoric of multivocal texts is carried into the discussion of Kalevala-meter poetry by Lotte Tarkka in her revealing discussion of "The Poetics of Quotation: Proverbial Speech, Entextualization and the Emergence of Oral Poems". This article brings the section full circle by returning to the theme of distinguishing genres from variation within genres on the model of registers. Here, the distinction is between the genre of proverbs proper and the flexible register of proverbial speech as well as poetic aphorisms. Tarkka looks especially at the interplay between proverbs and other genres of Kalevala-metric poetry, where metrical proverbs can be embedded, where lines of epic can function as proverbs, and where the practice of performing a meaningful series of proverbs and aphorisms could be used as a strategy for generating poems. The exploration of resonance between different expressions interwoven in this poetry presents a valuable way of looking at how genres can operate in interaction, as well as itself resonating with the dialogic manner in which the different perspectives on genres and corpora contained in this section of the volume complement one another, examining the thresholds of genres, relations between them and variation of the resources identified with genres in different contexts.

### III BETWEEN FOLKLORE AND LITERATURE

Questions about relationships between genres extends to long-standing questions about relationships between literary and oral genres that have customarily been divided across the disciplines of literature and folklore studies. The third section of the volume advances questions of the relationships between genres along this trajectory, opening with Ulla Savolainen's "The Genre of Reminiscence Writings: Applying the Bakhtin Circle's Theories of Genre". A well-grounded theoretical basis is established in order to address this topic by looking at childhood memories of Karelian child evacuees in archived autobiographical writings on the one hand and Finnish novelist Eeva Kilpi's published memoirs and fiction on the other. Savolainen's examination of these two different kinds of texts is aided by

the Bakhtinian approach to genre in order to understand the overlaps and links between genres as important dimensions of meaning-creation. In the article, the emphasis is not on seeking to set reminiscence writings apart as a category distinct from other categories but on analyzing the characteristics that connect reminiscence writing with other genres. Her study underlines the dynamic and pervasive networks of relations between collected reminiscence writings in the archives and other historically oriented or retrospective forms of narration, such as literary memoir, oral history accounts, and autobiographies. Together, the analyses of Savolainen, Lindfors and Tarkka develop a vibrant view of the subtle interplay and interpenetration of genres and the multivalence of generic strategies in social practice.

The utility of Bakhtinian concepts for examining the interpenetration and hybridization of genres comes forward again in Camilla Asplund Ingemark's "The Chronotope of the Legend in Astrid Lindgren's *Sunnanäng*". Bakhtin defined the chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 1981: 84). Ingemark employs this as a tool to address the adaptation of traditional legends as resources in the production of literature, as seen in the case of two short stories by Astrid Lindgren from the collection *Sunnanäng* ['South Meadows']. Ingemark argues that the chronotope of the legend is infused into these stories and thereby provides them with their special atmosphere. Shedding light on this relationship is used to bring home a methodological point: only through analysis in terms of chronotopes does the major influence of legends on these stories become directly observable, which is why it had not been recognized before. Ingemark highlights the potential for adapting different tools for genre analysis to reveal new knowledge in the study of particular empirical data and for understandings of the operation of genres more generally.

The use of oral genres in the background of written literature is also taken up by Helen F. Leslie-Jacobsen, who turns from legends in contemporary literature to the formation of early vernacular medieval genres. In "Genre, Eddic Poetry, and the Origin of the Old Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*", she gives attention to the vernacular prose saga literature of medieval Iceland and a category of these sagas concerned with the mytho-heroic past of Scandinavia. Leslie-Jacobsen places focus on the role of poetry integrated into these sagas. The article considers the evolution of this subgenre from a background of oral epic discourse. This background opens the question of whether that history produced conventions that conditioned the production of new written sagas by motivating the integration of verse in prose. Leslie-Jacobsen situates this discussion in a broader systemic model of interaction between subgenres and their potential to interact with one another and produce hybridized forms. She gives particular consideration to translations of continental romance literature that interacted with the vernacular mytho-heroic sagas both in the emergence of their written form and in their later variations. Leslie-Jacobsen reopens the issues discussed by Fisher concerning the potential tensions between genres as analytical constructs

circulated by scholarship and real kinds in variation, and returns the reader to Koski's discussion of alternative ways of looking at closely related genres or subgenres and interactions between them.

Of course, among the longest and most heated sites of debate concerning relationships between oral and literary forms has concerned oral poetry, which became especially prominent in the discussions of Oral-Formulaic Theory, which in fact evolved from Milman Parry's (1928a; 1928b) arguments that Homeric epics were indeed oral poems (see Foley 1988). This topic is here taken up by Alexandar Pavlović, who turns from the adaptation of oral epic discourse to written prose genres to focus more directly on the interplay of orality and literacy in oral epic forms. His article "From Traditional to Transitional Texts: South Slavic Oral Tradition and its Textualization" reviews this problem against the background of research on Oral-Formulaic Theory, looking at the different forms in which interactions between orality and literacy may be realized. Pavlović opens these questions in order to query whether "transitional texts" realized at these interfaces should be regarded as a distinct generic category. His discussion, which emphasizes formal features in comparison, complements the preceding articles of this section, which together offer a multifaceted look at the ways in which oral and written discourses interact.

#### IV EMIC AND ETIC DEFINITIONS

Genre provides a framework for both grouping texts as belonging together and also for interpreting them individually. In either case, identification with a genre is also an interpretation which produces information about the particular text and how it should be understood. This operation of genre identification highlights the potential significance of differences between working with definitions of genres as universal categories or abstract constructs inherited from the discourse of earlier scholarship or the vernacular categories of living practices. The fourth section of this volume turns from the questions of interplay between genres in practice to the tensions and potential of defining genres from different types of perspectives.

In "Proverbs – A Universal Genre?", Pekka Hakamies launches discussion with an analytical review of the debate surrounding this problem in paremiology, pursuing a synthetic perspective on the issue. Hakamies provides an important background for other contributions to this section by presenting a case that is representative of controversies surrounding the distinction between etic and emic categories in folklore studies during the latter half of the twentieth century. These debates contested earlier models of genres as ideal and universal categories that produced the perceptions of genre today and the associated directions of genre research. Hakamies connects with that history of discussion, enabling a moderated framework for considering the genre of proverbs in particular, while showing that the perspectives of the present are unavoidably developed through that past. Liisa Granbom-Herranen advances this discussion of proverbs by turning attention to the category as it is manifested in culture of the present day. In "The Genre of Proverb: A Relic or Very Much Alive?", Granbom-

Herranen offers perspectives on the resituation of the proverb in current cultural environments. She reviews a range of uses of the proverb in Finnish culture with attention to how this category of expression is perceived in society along with its adaptations into different media and social networks. Together, these discussions of proverbs provide a view from multiple angles of the issues and challenges surrounding the identification of a particular genre and the correlation of such a genre with similar or equivalent practices of different groups.

The problem of categorization is explored further through living song traditions in northern India by Mrinalini Atrey. In “Major Generic forms of Dogri *lok gathas*”, Atrey introduces and reviews the diverse types of *lok gathas*, a term broadly designating narrative poetry, outlining the features of these different song varieties and reviewing the various classifications that have been proposed that may foreground vernacular terms or general analytical categories. Atrey draws attention to the embedding of historical information in narrative forms analogous to Bakhtinian chronotopes (see also Ingemark, this volume) and also considers the life and death of different varieties of *lok gathas* as the traditions and their social functions evolve in relation to historical change (see also Leslie-Jacobsen, this volume). In this work, the discussions of Fisher and Koski on questions about the boundaries and relationships between genres are complemented by quite different empirical data that reminds the reader of the research potential of living traditions in India to offer insights into the functioning of dynamic systems of genres.

The section is brought to a close by turning from enduring songs with socially circulating texts to a spontaneous and transient form of humor in Vesna Trifunović’s “Manifestations of Humor in Serbian Folklore Material: An Example of *šala*”. Trifunović argues that, based on its form and usage in a contemporary Serbian context, *šala* refers to utterances and acts and therefore should not to be confused with humorous narratives. The meaning of *šala* is broader than, for example, “joke” in English language: it also encompasses other notions such as pranks. Trifunović reveals that this everyday and seemingly simple form of humor has a complex nature and serves special functions in communication, such as the confirmation of shared identity among group members as well as testing social norms. This article underscores the culture-dependence of genres as well as their durability: the ephemeral nature of the *šala* has not prevented it from remaining in the community’s memory as a durable, shared phenomenon, any more than proverbs or textually stable songs. This contribution unites with the preceding contributions of this section to foreground the multidimensionality of genres in cultural practices that stands in parallel to the diversity of perspectives on genre as a concept.

## V THE POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

A major emphasis in genre research today is on regarding them as socially conventional frameworks for the production and reception of texts. The dynamics of relations between genres in practice as well as how they are defined and understood as categories from different perspectives inevitably

links to agents and agencies in meaning-making processes. Customarily, it is people – the communities or the researchers – who define a genre. However, genres themselves also engage in the defining and meaning-making processes within communities. The third section takes as its point of departure Ray Cashman’s “Genre as Ideology-Shaping Form: Storytelling and Parading in Northern Ireland”, in which he shows how two different genres shape the political atmosphere and the relations between different sects, structuring oppositions. Cashman applies Bakhtin’s idea of monologism and dialogism. Annual commemorative parades are performed monologically by only-Catholic and only-Protestant organizations separately, while local character anecdotes function dialogically and create unity in the community. Cashman offers an elegant conceptualization of the capacity of local genres not only to express but also to instil coexisting ideological tendencies in the community on the one hand and to manage the relationships between the two groups on the other. The meanings and distinctions are made by people who engage in the parades and in narrating, but the genres provide the traditional means to strengthen and mitigate the social distinctions. Cashman’s introduction to this section offers valuable insights into the roles and functioning of genres in structuring society.

The uses and meanings of genres are not restricted to performative social contexts: meaning-making can also occur more subtly in the collection of folklore and archiving processes. The hermeneutics of folklore collection has been an oft-considered topic. Attention has predominantly fallen to the interview situation’s creation of an exceptional discursive space in which folklore can be realized through interaction. However, collection can also produce new arenas for discourse in which the applicability of established genre categories become problematic, and the new context of prompted expressive behaviour may produce whole new genres of texts. Engaging theses of genre discursivity opened earlier by Savolainen, Pauliina Latvala examines the composites of generic strategies manifested in texts written for archives about the Finnish Civil War in “The Use of Narrative Genres within Oral History Texts: Past Representations of the Finnish Civil War (1918)”. She considers the combination of multiple genres that folklore collection campaigns have produced and situates these artefacts of expression – the physical documents in the archives – as narrative testimonies of history. Her discussion highlights that the ways in which researchers perceive the texts when valuing and interpreting them is structured historically through disciplinary discussion and presuppositions that identify them with genres and interpret them through that lens.

The construction of meanings also relates to the question of who has the authority to assert or devalue what is said. Greg Dalziel analyzes the motives and methods of scholarly and authoritative categorization of rumor in “The Reputation of Genre: Understanding the Changing Meaning of Rumor”. He evaluates the attempts in various disciplines to find a satisfactory definition of rumor. Rumor is identified as a genre which itself carries a stigma and labels the truth-value of the text to which it is attached. Dalziel suggests that instead of trying to find a stable definition for such a genre, we should ask by whom and for which purpose an item is categorized as rumor. Unverified



information is not always false, and often the disapproval of spreading particular information has a political basis. Rumor is a category which is often given to a verbal utterance only in retrospect, whereas a rumor can cease being a rumor when the information is verified. This contribution underlines how identifying something as belonging to one genre as opposed to another itself confers meanings and also valuations as part of the frame of reference through which expressions are interpreted, a key point which resonates through many of the preceding contributions to this collection.

This section and the volume as a whole is brought to a close with Vesa Kyllönen's study of a meaning-making process which engages both a novelist and the novel's reader. In "Textual Politics of the Interpretative Act: Generic Reading and the Metaphysical Detective Story", Kyllönen turns attention to the role of genre and interpretive frameworks in the reader's interaction with literary texts. Kyllönen points out that reading involves political participation because the very act of reading shows interest not only in the meanings connecting to the text that are shared among a community, but also in changing, contesting or supporting those meanings. He investigates a genre called the metaphysical detective story, which has been defined as a liminal and transgressive group of texts connected to the late modernist narratives applying conventions of the detective story. This genre includes works by such authors as Umberto Eco, Thomas Pynchon, Paul Auster and Alain Robbe-Grillet. Together, these kinds of texts formulate a detective genre with new mixtures of registers and styles. Kyllönen argues that a special feature of the metaphysical detective story is that it mimics the reading act itself and therefore reminds its audience that the act of interpretation not only affects and changes the form of the text but also acts on the reader as well. According to this approach, the transformation is determined in the process of reading on the basis of shared configurations of meanings in these texts as well as of formal qualities of the genre that guide and restrict the reader. Considering these dynamics in the process of reception carries us full circle from theoretical problems in categorization, distinguishing categories and interactions between them, to the consequences of ideal and empirically real categories and their socio-political implications, and finally to how those categories, real or imagined, reciprocally affect us in the very process of our perception of them.

#### MULTIFACETED PERSPECTIVES

The present collection lays bare the diversity of approaches to genre and many discussions surrounding it that are current today. Genre is fundamentally a theoretically-based research tool, and precisely this is the site of tensions and controversies surrounding the identities and uses of "genre" within different methodological frameworks. Theory is thus fundamental to approaching genre but also often presents the most challenging area to penetrate. The opening section, *Theoretical Approaches to Genre*, is therefore comprised of contributions which may be in some respects the most demanding for a reader precisely because they are oriented to such a broad frame and background for considering the term and concept. However, these contributions also establish a number of themes and concepts that

will be opened, illustrated and discussed in later sections from different angles and in relation to different materials. Contributions to the second section, *Relations between and within Genres*, is concerned with precisely the issues of assessing and testing the thresholds of genre and the relevance of typologies of categorization. The third section, *Between Folklore and Literature*, advances these considerations to the dynamics of interfaces between oral and written culture where genres can be most challenging to approach and analyze. This builds toward the fourth section, *Emic and Etic Definitions*, which penetrates into the issues and functioning of categories identified or constructed as genres. The final section, *The Politics of Meaning-Making*, is anticipated by discussions in the preceding sections as it shifts the questions of the distinction of typologies of categorization to the roles and functions of genres in relation to interpretation, both in practice and in research. These sections present a progression of thematic centers, yet each of those themes is simultaneously also recurrently found in every section, situating both individual contributions and whole sections in dialogue with one another. This dialogicality permeates the volume with resonances and binding cohesion whereby *Genre – Text – Interpretation* forms a whole.

## NOTES

- 1 When approaching this concept, particular attention is given here to the English term *genre* and its cognates. Outside of French, *genre* is particular to the concept addressed here. This facilitates unambiguous technical and analytical use of both the term and concept. Translation of the term frequently follows the French etymology with a vernacular word connected to biological classification that may be used metaphorically or generally for “type, sort, kind” (e.g. German *Gattung*, Spanish *género*, Finnish *laji*; cf. however Icelandic *tegund* [‘model’]). This difference becomes relevant when advancing to a more refined definition to which these other terms may not be as well suited owing to their broader patterns of use.
- 2 Plato’s concern for the manner of representation appears in the context of his theory of ideal forms, of which reality is analogous to a shadow. He also felt that the mimetic performance of others’ words could threaten the identity of the performer (*Republic*, Book III), and that representations of reality through poetry are falsifications that could corrupt the intellect (Book X).
- 3 The idea of art as imitation, and the idea that each work represents one particular natural genre defines both the literary theory of Classicism and of Neoclassicism. However, in seventeenth and eighteenth century Classicism imitation was viewed in terms of ideal models of Classical literature and only later returned to the emphasis of Aristotle and Plato on imitation of “nature” or “reality”.



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# Theoretical Approaches to Genre I



# 1. “Genres, Genres Everywhere, but Who Knows What to Think?”

## Toward a Semiotic Model

The formation and distinction of categories and typologies – the ability to generalize and abstract – is a cognitive phenomenon that is essential to human thought and to the signification systems through which human thought has the capacity to operate (see e.g. Lakoff 1986; Goldberg 2006). “Genre” has become a term for approaching categories of cultural expression reflected or realized in “texts” when such texts and categories are addressed in formal and analytical discourses. The discussions and debates on genre in the West have been ongoing for close to two and a half millennia. Some of the major written works on these subjects have been in circulation since the fourth century B.C. Plato, for example, complains about transgressions of rules governing genre in his *Laws* (Burgess 1859), while Aristotle offers a more clear-cut analysis with discrete typological distinctions in his *Rhetoric* (Cooper 1932). This does not mean that “genre” or its cognates was used as a term by these authors, nor that these authors distinguished categories or types in the same way as is done today.<sup>1</sup> The term and concept “genre” is presently encountered across a wide range of disciplines and is used in a variety of ways which are not necessarily consistent or compatible.

The present paper will open some of these questions and issues, approaching the problem from the perspective of folklore studies where the term and concept of genre have perhaps been explored, tested and developed most rigorously across the past half century. Discussion will begin by considering the term and concept “genre”, including various approaches to it in more recent scholarship and the variation in its use across different fields. This overview will highlight the reality that genre is a construct of research and academic discourse shaped by research interests and research priorities – a view which will hold irrespective of whether genres are handled as *etic* types or categories that are imported by researchers for the description and analysis of material, or genres are *emic* types or categories that are observed as emergent implicit vernacular categories or explicitly designated and described by their users. In either case, “genre” is always a term employed as a practical tool by the researcher, who determines the broad typology to which it will be applied. The researcher also determines the level of expression at which generic categories will be distinguished, as well as the



level of sensitivity to variation that will mark these categories' inclusion, exclusion, and boundaries between them. The term and concept of genre will then be addressed in folklore research and the variation encountered in that field, which will subsequently be situated in relation to the broader overview of genre in order to sort the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. This review will provide some foundations for distinguishing categories describable as "genres" from categories and typologies which are "not genres" in a more refined sense. It will also discuss some riddles of generic categories and their use, such as whether a summary of an epic is still an "epic" or whether something is a "joke" because it makes people laugh.

The core of this paper outlines an approach to genre through semiotics, which has the potential to draw several of the diverse definitions of different disciplines into harmony. I advance a four-aspect model that contextualizes an individual genre in a genre system and more broadly within social and semiotic systems. Genre is here considered to operate as a text-type category, considering "text" in the broad sense of a coherent and delimitable arrangement of signifiers and/or signs. However, the understanding of a genre-as-text-type category provides a frame of reference for receiving and interpreting texts-as-generic-products and other texts that may engage it as a frame of reference (in e.g. parody, Bakhtinian dialogism, etc.). Perception as a "type" of semiotic practice involves, if to varying degrees, a construal of normativity both of texts-as-generic-products and of the metapragmatics of the entextualization of such products (e.g. in what situations they are or are not used, by whom, why, with what outcome, etc.). Conscious or unconscious perception of a genre-as-text-type allows the understanding of the genre to be reflexively applied or even situationally required as a model for entextualizing expressions (see also Agha 2007 on registers). In this case, the genre and its features operate as a system of social resources that can be flexibly applied in text production. From this perspective, the resulting texts-as-products are not the products of a genre as an ideal text-type; they are rather produced in relation to a genre as a semiotic resource. This is a usage-based approach equipped to be extended from emic categories to etic scope by a researcher. The conception of genre summarized here will be considered in terms of the aspects of generic *form* and the *content* or *enactment* of expression that combine to form texts-as-generic-products, genre *practice*, which constructs metapragmatic norms of entextualization, and *functions*, which situate a genre in relation to other genres and in relation to social semiotics more generally. The outline of the four-aspect model will be followed by consideration of some basic determinants on variation, as well as of horizons of descriptive models of a genre. If it is conceded that not all vernacular categories are "genres", this approach can also help refine and delimit the concept in folklore studies, where genre otherwise exhibits almost chaotic diversity.

## The Term "Genre"

"Genre" has become a term particularly associated with formalized distinctions between text-type categories in analytical discourses. Use of the term normally implies that it designates a category appropriate as an analytical tool. However, use of "genre" has varied considerably by time, location and discipline: in spite of the term's function as an analytical tool, its use frequently appears more practical than consistent. The term was introduced in this role when a number of categories were already established as tools for research in the different disciplines where it came into use. At that stage, many such categories were intuitive or practical groupings: "ballad" was distinguished in terms of sung poetic form, irrespective of narrative content; "myth" was distinguished through either a narrative's special status in the eyes of a living community or its historical connection with religion, irrespective of form or functional use; "incantation" was distinguished in terms of functional use, irrespective of (verbal) form or content. Such categories were later labelled as "genres" when this word became a formalized term for "type". In itself, this is not a problematic development in the use of the term "genre"; it is simply a phenomenon of language. However, the value of "genre" as an analytical term is compromised when "genres" are not defined according to consistent criteria because the categories described as "genres" are incommensurate. In other words, comparing different "genres" is then not simply like comparing "apples", "oranges" and "peaches" but is instead like comparing "apples", "purple" and "think".

Of course, the issue of commensurability is an issue of categorization generally and not dependent on using the term "genre" *per se*. Many fundamental categories took shape as tools in different disciplines before commensurability was seriously brought into question. For example, folklore research initially identified and reduced individual orally documented texts as variations of a particular, ideal text of a narrative, song, etc. (see Dundes 1962; Honko 1989: 14). These text-types were then organized into larger categories in archives, grouping them according to typological similarities of the ideal texts, and these categories were most often labelled by familiar vernacular terms such as "folktale", "riddle", "origin" (see Ben Amos 1976c: xiii; Frog 2013: 20–21). The aim was the practical ordering of vast quantities of material so that a researcher could find commensurate material for the (comparative) investigation of a particular text-type or group of text-types (see e.g. Krohn 1926). However, organization was according to typological similarity *or* historical relationship, compromising the coherence of materials represented in any single category: material from potentially any other genre or resource could be included owing to its relevance to the dominating historical-comparative research priorities of the time (see also Frog 2013: 19–23), without distinguishing their relationship to the organizational category as such. Precisely these (fuzzy) typologies, largely intuitive groupings later equated with "genres" of such ideal texts, provided a fundamental organizational principle for archiving and publication, which reciprocally constructed problematic images of genres as ideal or universal types (see also Ben Amos 1976c). As the problematic nature of early

images of folklore genres was foregrounded, attention gradually turned to contextual variation, meaning-generation and performance. By placing the magnitude and diversity of folklore material increasingly in dialogue with social practices, folklore research richly elaborated genre theory, especially across the past half century. Nevertheless, the vocabulary and categories rooted in the nineteenth century remain fundamental to the discipline. As Lauri Honko observes:

Genres are named at least on the following criteria: 1. content (e.g. animal tale, saint's legend), 2. form (chain tale, wellerism), 3. style (yoik, priamel), 4. structure (unfinished tale, repetitive song), 5. context (cult myth, dance song), 6. function (warning legend, charm), 7. frequency (popular saying, idiosyncratic belief), 8. distribution (migratory legend, local legend), 9. origin (exemplum, broadside). Sometimes two or more criteria may be applied simultaneously in defining a genre; examples of this are the lament (form + function) and the riddle song (content + structure). (Honko 1989: 17.)

Such diversity was complicated where different disciplines handled the same materials with different text-type distinctions that were oriented to different research priorities. This produced, for example, a parallel concept of genre in anthropological research (see also Briggs & Bauman 1992). The discussion of “genres” seems to have exploded in the wake of Post-Modernism. In cultural studies and folkloristics, this emerged as a shift in focus from continuities and text-products to contextual variation and expressive performance.<sup>2</sup> Ideal “etic” genres were problematized as “relative and ambiguous, dependent on culturally-accepted canons of differentiation rather than universal criteria” (Finnegan 1977: 15). Such genres were challenged or even completely rejected.<sup>3</sup> Attention shifted to emergent “emic” categories that had previously remained largely “invisible” to scholarship,<sup>4</sup> and how emic categories “relate to other forms in the same network of communication” (Ben Amos 1976: 231). Rather than resolving disparities in uses of “genre”, these were doubled and tripled as etic and emic genres were contrasted, used in parallel, and not always clearly distinguished. On the other hand, “genre” was taken up as an analytical term in emerging fields that connected with the changing interests in folklore studies, such as discourse analysis and sociolinguistics (see e.g. Longacre 1968: 1–50; Labov 1972: 359–370; 2002: 10–11; Sampson 1997: 704; Nunan 2008; see also Frog, Koski & Savolainen, this volume). In addition, Post-Structuralism provided conditions for the enthusiastic reception of M. M. Bakhtin’s “dialogism”. Although “dialogism” was rooted in an ideology of ideal genres,<sup>5</sup> it offered a new approach to meaning-generation through the contextual juxtaposition of typologies (or genres) of language (see also Briggs & Bauman 1992: esp. 146–149).<sup>6</sup> Along with Bakhtin came V. N. Vološinov’s *rečevyx žanry* [‘speech genres’],<sup>7</sup> an approach to “utterances” as physically, socially and temporally contextualized in discourse<sup>8</sup> that eventually penetrated into ethnopoetics, linguistic anthropology and folklore studies (especially through Bakhtin 1986 [1952–1953] as in e.g. Hanks 1987: 670; Bauman 1999). This diversity may seem to border on chaos, yet the developments across the past several

decades may also sign-post solutions. The concentration here is on folklore, but the principles under consideration are wide-ranging, extending to literature, art and other areas of culture.

### *Toward a Definition*

Formalized use of the term "genre" in research and analysis is a construction of individual researchers and disciplinary discourses in dialogue with research materials, research questions, and inherited patterns of use of the term. The diversity and disparity in the handling of this term have been enabled by its widespread use for individual categories in isolation from one another. These circumstances have produced the situation noted above: a researcher can (hypothetically) identify any grouping of research materials as materials of a certain type, label that type a "genre", and then reciprocally construct a definition of the particular genre on the basis of shared qualities of the materials (see also Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume). The circularity of category construction may be tempered by a dialectic development of the definition in relation to the grouping of materials. Nevertheless, the problem remains that "genre" becomes a term for the particular category to be addressed analytically rather than a term for an analytical category of a particular type that functions as a research tool applicable to different materials. Addressing the issue of "genre" as an analytical category and advancing toward a new working definition will here be done through presenting and discussing a series of postulates, of which the first is:

*(1) If "genre" is to function as an analytical tool, qualification as a genre must be determined according to consistent criteria.*

Before pursuing relevant criteria for the qualification of genre as a category, it is necessary to acknowledge that diverse and incommensurate categories were accepted as genres before there was any attempt to define genre as a tool in research and analysis. As a consequence, a working definition of genre as an analytical tool cannot simply be abstracted and formalized by comparing all categories conventionally called "genres", because these categories are not all referred to as "genres" on the basis of qualities that they share with one another. However, if Postulate 1 is accepted, this leads to Postulate 2:

*(2) If the categories conventionally designated as "genres" have not been determined according to consistent criteria, it follows that not all of these categories will qualify formally as genres when consistency of criteria is given precedence.*

Postulate 2 does not deny the potential validity of diverse categories, either as social realities or as practical research tools. This postulate merely makes explicit the inevitability that if the term genre is defined as an analytical tool, not all categories that have been referred to as "genres" will necessarily qualify according to that definition. The question of determining *which* criteria should qualify "genre" as a category highlights the fact that the

analytical term is a construct. This remains true whether the definition is oriented to emic or etic categorization and leads to the hypothesis advanced as Postulate 3:

*(3) The general value and utility of “genre” as an analytical tool stands in relation to: (a) the range of materials to which it is applicable; and (b) the range of questions and analyses to which it is relevant and expedient to employ.*

The relevance and practical value of the term “genre” is implicit in the degree to which it permeates instruction, research, analyses and publications today. As an analytical term, genre could of course be defined on the basis of a single category (e.g. ballad, greeting, belief). However, Postulate 3 suggests that such a definition will have limited value and utility for application to other materials or for the range of materials to which it can be applied. This does not mean that the immediate (and perhaps presently impracticable) goal should be the determination of criteria that are universally applicable to all disciplines. The emphasis on folklore here nevertheless promotes developing the criteria to be readily adaptable across a range of categories of cultural expression. These categories of cultural expression are not limited to any single mode of expression and may be multimodal. They may potentially also be characterized by embedding other genres or as highly permeable categories readily open to drawing on features and strategies of other genres. In many cases, the objects of folklore research intersect with genres of other disciplines (e.g. anthropology, literature studies, media studies) and the objects under scrutiny may range in scope from epics that parallel novels in their length to sayings and dialogic practices that are at the level of a phrase, sentence or the interrelationship between utterances. For these reasons, the qualification of genres of cultural practice should be sufficiently flexible to be applicable across this range of diversity, which gives rise to the hypothesis presented as Postulate 4:

*(4) The greatest general value and utility of “genre” as an analytical tool can best be achieved by developing a definition and approach through the dialectic engagement of academic discourses concerning genre, its definition and use as a tool, rather than placing emphasis on specific genres or groups of genres as a point of departure.*

The “discourse heritage” of folklore studies – i.e. the ever-accumulating body of utterances concretized through publications of the discipline’s discourse (Frog 2015a: 101–103) – has maintained widely varied use of the term “genre”. The significance of the category “genre” continues to be taken for granted rather than defined,<sup>9</sup> or to be distinguished from categories that are “not genres”. For the most part, genres tend to remain defined on a case by case basis while the definition of “genre” as a category remains implicit, whether it is used in addressing an abstract category applied across cultures such as “epic” (e.g. Honko 1998; Foley 2004; Martin 2005), or in constructing images of local emic genres (e.g. Ben Amos 1976a; Kallio 2013).<sup>10</sup> The increased attention to interactions between genres did not lead to a clearer distinction of “genre” as a category from other types of categories,<sup>11</sup> which

had compromising implications for attempts to model "genre systems" without consideration of the commensurability of categories identified as genres (e.g. Honko 1989). Rather than focusing attention on refining "genre" as an analytical tool *per se*, much of this discourse has concentrated on advancing from understanding genres as ideal types that define (entextualized) cultural products to viewing genres as frameworks in relation to which texts and expressive behaviours are realized and interpreted, how these could be used in relation to meaning-generation, and their variation or interpenetrability in practice (e.g. Tarkka 2013). Folkloristic approaches have increasingly subscribed to approaches of linguistic anthropology and ethnopoetics that "emphasize the linguistic constructedness of all forms of discourse" (Harris 1995: 524) and the characterization of genres through "a constellation of systematically related, co-occurrent formal features and structures" (Bauman 1999: 84; see also Hanks 1987: 670). These trends have become fundamental to approaching genres across disciplines and can be characterized by Postulate 5:

(5) "*Genres*" operate as generative frameworks for the production of expressions and in relation to which such expressions are also received and interpreted when the genre is recognized.

According to Postulate 5, recognisability of the genre of expression is fundamental to the processes of successful interpretation (see Abrahams 1976 [1969]: 194). Implicit in this postulate is a supposition that an expression can be recognized as an expression of a certain genre – or at least related to a certain genre (see also Agha 2007 on registers). When genres are viewed as generative frameworks rather than ideal categories to which individual products of expression are (or should be) necessarily subordinated, then not all expressive products will necessarily reflect the criteria of a genre equally or in the same way (Fowler 1982: 41). Genre recognition merely maps an identity onto that expression whereby "how something is said is part of what is said" (Hymes 1986: 59), situating it in relation to a categorical identity and framework for interpretation. However, not all expressions generated in relation to the genre as a framework will necessarily qualify as generic products *per se* (e.g. parody), which highlights that genres cannot simply be extrapolated and defined as analytical categories on the basis of materials that have been gathered together according to inconsistent criteria (e.g. typological similarity on the one hand and genetic relation on the other). In such cases, according to Postulate 5, not all examples relevant to a genre will have equal weight when developing an account of that particular "genre" as an analytical category, nor will all examples that have been archived under the heading of that genre (e.g. for comparative research) qualify as generic products and need to be accounted for by the description of the analytical category.

Evolving definitions of genre in linguistic anthropology and ethnopoetics concentrate on formal and structural features of language use on the one hand and social or behavioural interaction on the other. These definitions have been well-suited to the shift in research emphasis to the discourse



contexts and practices in which folklore is used “today”. It is also suited to many of the genres of folklore that research has turned toward as “classic” genres have disappeared from Western cultural arenas. When extended from language to other forms of signification, these approaches can also be readily applied to current multimedia genres that provide frameworks for individual expression via electronic communication, from smilies to internet memes (as in Figure 1, below). However, definitions focused on formal qualities and behavioural interaction as two categories of criteria are not well-suited for more structured narrative and poetic genres like epic, *Märchen* and the ballad, which cannot be defined without a third category of criteria related to represented or communicated content (see also Abrahams 1976 [1969]; Ben Amos 1973a).

The form–interaction approaches belong to a more general trend in developing uses of “genre” especially in disciplines that have only emerged or distinguished themselves since the mid-twentieth century. This trend involves the integration of both formal aspects and functions or social contexts, most often with concern for meanings, communication and/or representation. Like the rising concern over “genre systems” or “genre families”, these approaches tend to situate different genres in relation to one another. (Cf. Longacre 1968: 1–50; Labov 1972: 359–370; Sampson 1997: 704; Martin 1997; Bhatia 2004; Nunan 2008.) These approaches to genre seem to have developed to a greater extent in a dialectic process with material that was not as burdened by inherited categories (like “epic”) and with greater attention to defining genre as an analytical category of a particular type for distinguishing and studying flexibly generative expressions in practice. These same trends are also observable in literature studies: attention has turned to genre as a socially recognizable modelling system for the production and reception of texts (e.g. Todorov 1981: 62) as “a semiological procedure” (Jauss 1970: 12) that occurs as a historical process of internalizing these models on the level of individuals in relation to the changing prominence and significance of individual textual models. When discussions of genre in folklore studies is situated in this broader cross-disciplinary context, the same trends are observable. Even regarding highly structured genres that have always received attention for their formal features, emphasis has turned to contextual variation and significance in communication (e.g. Foley 2002; Siikala 2012; Kallio 2013). In folklore studies, as in other disciplines with long histories, these trends have continued to compete with the diversity of earlier uses of the term genre carried by the momentum of the disciplinary discourse heritage through which specialists are inevitably initiated into the field. Looking across these approaches, use of “genre” as an analytical tool exhibits variation in relation to research emphases and the materials under discussion. Nevertheless, Tzvetan Todorov’s observation (regarding literature) that use of “genre” within any one discourse “must be interpreted at the level of the investigation and not of its object” (Todorov 1977: 248) can here be advanced to the following synthesis:



(6) *Academic discourses exhibit a general pattern of considering genre in terms of a socially assimilated mechanism governing the production and reception of texts as meaningful expression; a genre is qualified by (a) formal aspects such as language and structures, (b) meanings, significance or representation, (c) uses, goals, or social contexts, and (d) relationships of genres to one another and/or to society.*

Among the different aspects of genre listed in Postulate 6, formal features tend to be highlighted as essential indicators that make a genre recognizable and thereby enable the appropriate reception of the expression (Abrahams 1976 [1969]: 194). Postulate 6 suggests that multiple types of factors should be accounted for in qualifying a category as a genre. In this case, "poetry" or poetry in a particular meter or meters would not qualify as a genre if this only designates formal quality of representation; "myth" would not qualify as a genre if it only designates the quality of content represented or communicated; "joke" would not qualify if it only designates a quality of interpersonal interaction.

When Postulate 6 is acknowledged, much of the variation of "genre" across different types of uses appears rooted in tendencies at the level of investigations that are variously rooted in a discipline, the diversity of approaches or research questions within a discipline, and according to the object of research. For example, studies of discourse will delimit the utterance as the fundamental unit of investigation, even where this is situated in dialogue. When "genre" is analyzed at that level, genre categories may appear incredibly broad, such as Longacre's (1968: 1) "*narrative, procedural, expository, and hortatory*" genres of utterance, or the focus of investigation may narrow these considerably to categories of utterance nearer Vološinov's (1930 [1929]) speech genres. In literature, a work as a textual whole becomes the basic unit against which genre is defined, although a novel can be approached as permeated by discourse genres (see also Bakhtin 1986 [1952–1953]; Martin & Rose 2012), while the particular investigation will be a determinant on whether the definition of the "novel" as a genre is bounded by culture and historical period or extends to include *The Tale of Genji*, medieval Icelandic sagas and so forth. Similarly, in linguistics the acknowledgement that "[e]ach genre has its own characteristic structure and grammatical form that reflects its social purpose" can nevertheless allow oral directions to a bus station, a recipe for pumpkin pie scribbled on an index card and electronic instructions for opening an e-mail account to all be situated in the "genre" of "procedure" (Nunan 2008: 57). The same types of variation appear quite prominently in folklore research, where the primary unit is a textual or performative whole, even if these are embedded in larger contexts. Rather than emic and etic definitions being competing or mutually exclusive, these are distinguished by the scope of material considered, whether local, cultural or international, and whether synchronic or across a vast scope of history (see also Ben Amos 1976a: 215). Folklore research is more unusual because the primary units may vary considerably according to the research questions and more specific object of investigation: a wedding may be approached as a unit even where weddings are characterized as an organized arrangement incorporating many other

genres of oral performance, or the unit under investigation may be the proverb, of which many may occur in the contexts of a countless variety of different genres. Rather than arbitrary inconsistency, this can be viewed as an aspect of the adaptability of genre as a tool, expressed as Postulate 7:

*(7) "Genre" exhibits flexibility as an analytical tool in its ability to be calibrated to units of different magnitude, the scope of material to which it is applied, and varying degrees of sensitivity according to the conventions of disciplinary investigation.*

Postulate 7 does not resolve the question of "how much variation is permissible before [...] texts represent different genres" (Nunan 2008: 58) as such. Instead, this postulate acknowledges that there may be variation in the distinction between two or more genres, and also in whether different categories should be regarded as different genres or as subgenres within a single genre: the analytical category "genre" may be recalibrated according to the conventional units addressed within a discipline and the aims of the particular investigation. This postulate highlights that genre is a dynamic tool for research rather than genres being wholly objective, uniform and invariable categories. The seven postulates outlined here provide foundations for outlining a new approach and definition.

### *Genre as Social Semiotic*

Following from Postulate 5 above, genre can be reasonably approached as an essentially semiotic phenomenon – i.e. related to signs (see also Todorov 1977: 248). More specifically, genre functions as an iconic sign (on which, see e.g. Sebeok 1994: 28–31, 81–92): it allows a produced text to be identified as a text of a certain genre, and it is the recognition of that identity that allows the text to be appropriately assessed and interpreted. This is the unifying basis for Postulates 6–7 and will be developed in the following sections as a semiotic approach to genre as a category and analytical tool.

As a social phenomenon, genre must be approached in terms of what is socially transmitted. The characteristics of a genre must be assessed according to the criteria of emergent products associated with it. Although genres of written literature may be unambiguously verbal, folklore genres are transmitted, maintained and socially negotiated through cultural practices. Genre is therefore bound to practice (Hanks 1987; see also Bourdieu 1977). The verbal element is only one aspect of oral and physical expression that constitute a unified whole; although verbal text may be isolated for reasons of analysis, it remains inextricable from the realities of multimodal human expression (e.g. Lord 1960; Fine 1984; Foley 1993 [1990]; Pawley 2009: 7). Moreover, formal and structural aspects are not randomly applied: people *do* things with them in social, situational, spatial and temporal contexts (e.g. Vološinov 1930 [1929]; Agha 2007). The social value of genres as tools and resources for rhetoric and economy in communication is directly connected with their recognisability in when, where and why they are applied (see also e.g. Foley 1991; 1995; Briggs & Bauman 1992).<sup>12</sup> Those uses are connected

to what a genre conventionally "does" – what it communicates, such as a narrative, greeting, etc., or what it actualizes, such as ritually accomplishing change of state like marriage or magical healing. In other words, genres are not purely signifiers and signification systems; they are used predictably, to do predictable things under predictable circumstances.

Genre has been approached according to a simple Saussurian dual model of signifier (*form*) and signified (*content/enactment*) as the two aspects of a sign (e.g. Todorov 1977: esp. 248). Some definitions have complemented these aspects with a third descriptive aspect aligned with contexts and conventions or metapragmatic norms of use to address social patterns of who, where, when, why and how a generic product is actualized through expression (*practice*).<sup>13</sup> Taken together, these three aspects can be employed to construct a descriptive account of an individual genre. Yuri Tynianov has emphasized that "the study of isolated genres is impossible outside the system in which and with which they are in correlation" (quoted in Todorov 1977: 249). Whereas early approaches to folklore addressed genres in isolation, the identification of any genre now presupposes a genre typology. Within that typology, other genres form a context in which the particular aspects of each genre are shaped and their conventions are realized (e.g. Ben Amos 1976a: 230–231; Honko 1989: 15). The context of these relations may be approached through the complex model of a "tradition ecology", addressing the co-existence and interaction of different traditions according to a biological metaphor.<sup>14</sup> The three-aspect description of the individual genre is thus complemented by a fourth aspect, describing the relationship of the individual genre to social and semiotic functions within a broader genre system (*functions*).

### *A Usage-Based Approach*

Cultural expression is here considered through a usage-based approach,<sup>15</sup> according to which exposure to and participation in the cultural activity of a genre (including the discourse surrounding it) allows individuals to internalize it and develop competence in it (see also Bakhtin e.g. 1986 [1952–1953]: 80–81; Honko 2000a; Hymes 2001). "Genre" is posited as a category identified with products or outcomes of human expression that has social reality: it is thus perceivable by individuals in interaction with one another or in other reception of expressions or "texts", whether verbal, visual, melodic, diagrammatic of an activity sequence, etc., even if perception of genre is not fully conscious. The usage-based approach theorizes that internalization is a subjective response to the repeated encounter with generic products that become associated through constellations of perceived similarities and the discourse surrounding them. This process leads to a gradual abstraction of the category whereby the genre-as-text-type can be recognized in reception and operates as a framework for interpreting the expression being entextualized (e.g. performance of a knock-knock joke or scientific conference presentation) or that has been entextualized previously (e.g. a 1980s horror film or an auto-repair manual). At the same time, the genre-

as-text-type reciprocally operates as a model for generating expressions that others may or are intended to interpret in relation to that framework (see also Agha 2007). “Genre” can thus be considered at its base to be an identity-bearing entity as a metasemiotic social reality. A crucial aspect of the internalization process is that it is through situated experiences of generic products. What is recurrent in situated experience will vary considerably between oral ritual poetry or televised presidential addresses and between the variable contexts of proverbs or active reading of a printed novel – not to mention instructional YouTube videos or quizzes on Facebook. Nonetheless, the abstraction of a genre extends from recurrent features of texts-as-generic-products to metapragmatics internalized through recurrent situational conditions, features, outcomes, social interpretations, evaluations and so forth that co-occur with texts-as-generic-products.

According to the view offered here, genres are characterized by constellations of textual features and conditions. Oversimplifying somewhat, when a sufficient number of these co-occur, then they act emblematically to activate the genre-as-text-type model as an “enabling referent” (Foley 1995: 213) for appropriate interpretation. It is thus not necessary for all texts-as-generic-products to manifest all features and conditions of the genre, nor will all texts which activate the genre-as-text-type model necessarily be generic products. The features of a text through which it can be recognized can be discussed in terms of Wittgensteinian “family resemblance” (Fowler 1982) or a “homeostatic property cluster” (Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume). The term *genre partial* will here be used to refer to individual features connected with the production and recognition of texts-as-generic-products. At the same time, conditions linked to a genre provide models for when one may or should employ a genre, when a certain genre is expected, and/or the significance or outcomes of its use. Individual genre partials may have varying degrees of prominence and emblematicity for the genre, but they will probably not be exclusive to it. Genres may also cluster in what David Rose and James Martin (2012) have called “genre families”, sharing a number of genre partials that lead them to be associated while they are distinguished by others (Shore 2015: 70–71). Constellations of shared partials can allow the associated genres to be highly interpenetrable (Tarkka 2013). The usage-based model extends these to also consider extra-textual conditions, which may also be shared or distinguish closely related genres. Conventions for handling these features may potentially be quite flexible. For example, a poetic song text can be performed in different manners and contexts that may alter it formally or shift the genre with which the product would seem associated (Kallio 2013). Particular genre partials may develop significance through their uses across genres so that variation in poetic meter may carry connotative significance (Quinn 1996). The fluidity with which genre partials move between text-types within a genre family may also make it difficult or impossible to distinguish unambiguous “genres” and prompt attending to features and their meaning-potential in different combinations and circumstances (Kallio 2015). In other cases, fluidity may be in the capacity for genres to

embed other genres or to adapt and assimilate partials from other genres (Bauman 2004; Savolainen, this volume). Interpenetration may develop where different genres are organized into a *genre chain*, or conventional use in a sequential series that can reciprocally affect the individual genres through aims and relations within that chain (Mäntynen & Shore 2014: 752–753). In addition, a broader associative grouping of genres according to, for example, communicative purpose, produces what Vijay Kumar Bhatia (2004: ch. 3) has described as a *genre colony*, in which partials of more prominent genres may be adapted into minor ones, inviting hybridity and shaping the evolution of genres within the colony.

In use, genres have reality at the subjective level of the individual and the emerging intersubjective spaces of communication. Within that frame, the social metasemiotic entity of the genre functions as an “enabling referent” (Foley 1995: 213). In other words, each individual handles and manipulates the genre on the basis of a personal, subjective knowledge and understanding with expectations concerning the knowledge and understandings of others; others interpret expression on the basis of what they subjectively know and understand with expectations about the speaker, performer, or other source or mediator of the expression (hence “intersubjective”). Those subjective and intersubjective understandings develop through exposure to and participation in cultural practices across a full spectrum of cultural activity – from epic poetry and proverbs or television commercials and blogs about food to parody and contesting discourse. The subjective reality of a genre is therefore always bounded by both the space and time that describe the limits of an individual’s experience (see also Jauss 1982). Of course, the intersubjective spaces of expression and reception may be spatially and/or temporally quite different where text has been materially, electronically or orally mediated. Nevertheless, genres live through social practices, and social practices do not exist in isolation: they are maintained in relation to one another within and across communities and participation networks.

Whatever its communication environment, a genre is *socially negotiated* as an intersubjective referent – the “enabling referent” through which expressions are apprehended as meaningful as (or at least in relation to) expressions of a certain type. In other words, people not only use genres as frameworks for producing expressions, they also talk about texts-as-generic-products and the norms of genre practice, respond to these in other ways (e.g. leave the room) or perhaps do not even link them to the genre at all. Variation emerges at intersections of convention, competence and intention within actual situations (noting that displays of competence may not reflect social convention). The ability for a genre to function as a referent is dependent on its recognisability, and recognisability places constraints on variation as a social process (Abrahams 1976 [1969]: 194). Patterns of individual variation can nevertheless impact social processes and play a role in the development of variation as a historical process. Approaching the transmission of culture through practice provides an essential model for how both slow and rapid changes in the cultural activity of a tradition

become socially conventional, although participants in the tradition may only be aware of contemporary conventions – conventions which they help to construct and maintain – with no concept of historical variation (see also Gills 1996).

In analysis, an ideal description of an emic genre should approximate the intersubjective referent of the tradition that is being subject to social negotiation, including a model of its ranges of variation in actual social processes. The researcher can calibrate the scope of “genre” according to the research materials and aims, stretching and further abstracting the category to be increasingly inclusive of groups, networks and cultures, but less specific to any of them, and probably significantly reducing and despecifying characteristic genre partials and genre conditions. From this view, models of “ideal” or “universal” genres develop as abstract frames of reference of maximal scope – if they qualify as genres at all.

### *Aspect 1: Form*

A genre is characterized by “a constellation of systematically related, co-occurrent formal features and structures” (Bauman 1999: 84) – i.e. its system of signification where genre partials are concentrated: it is the system of language, images, symbols, motifs and broader structural patterns for their organized arrangement as they are used for the particular genre. In the present approach, *form* will designate this signification system. Form can be divided into three levels of signification: mode, primary and secondary (and higher) orders of representation.

*Mode* refers to what mediates signs of the signifying system, whether verbal, visual or multimedial. For example, language as a signifying system may be mediated by voice (signals) or written text (signs). Conventions of mode may include melodies, meter and voicing, noting that a change in mode (e.g. from sung performance to dictation) can impact entextualization (Ready 2015: 21–24), while a genre may have more than one available mode conventional to it (e.g. Honko 1998). These conventions may extend more comprehensively to the performer as a signifier embodying the performed role. Karelian laments, for example, were reclassified by lamenters as “singing” if performance did not express personal grief bodily (Stepanova 2015: 268): a lamenter was an embodied signifier.

The *primary order of signification* or representation is the main level of signs and the structures characterizing communication, such as language, images or some combination thereof. The primary order of signification can be practically approached in terms of a “register”. In linguistics, *register* emerged as a term for variation of language according to communicative situation, including social roles and participant relations (see Sampson 1997: 699–703; see also Halliday 1978; Agha 2007). It overlaps with so-called speech genres (Vološinov 1930 [1929]; Bakhtin 1986 [1952–1953]) and the terms “register” and “genre” are sometimes conflated (Biber 1995: 9–10; see also Frog, Koski & Savolainen, this volume). As attention to the multimodality of expression has increased, register was expanded to all elements with the



capacity to signify and the constructions governing their combination (e.g. Foley 1995; Agha 2007). Here, "genre" is viewed as a text-type category that entails the practices and frameworks for producing and receiving texts-as-generic-products; "register" is viewed as a signification system of a particular order for the production and interpretation of texts. Like genre, register is a tool that can be calibrated according to the research inquiry (Frog 2015c). This may be a speech register (customarily discussed as inclusive of "mode"), entailing not only words and conventions for their meaningful combination, but also e.g. fundamental metaphors through which signs are interpreted, devices of style or texture such as parallelism and repetition, as well as aspects of structure organizing larger units of representation such as stanzas, songs in a cycle, etc.<sup>16</sup> It may also be a broader performance register, involving e.g. props, costuming, music, spatial relationships, etc. In historical genres known only through text-scripts, however, it may only be possible to distinguish the linguistic register and the most general features of mode, as with the Homeric *koinê* and its meter. Many folklore genres are quite marked at this primary order of representation, in which case the linguistic register will readily index that genre – i.e. activate the genre-as-text-type entity as a frame of reference. Bakhtinian "dialogism" or Julia Kristeva's "transposition" also tend to manifest at the level of shifts or juxtapositions in linguistic registers, embedding them in another genre. The form of the host genre may allow a shift in emblematic features of mode such as to verse form (e.g. Bauman 2004: 15–33) or mode may be subordinated (e.g. to an epic meter). Genres may also have embedded speech registers, conventional strategies to represent different speech varieties within the genre, such as complaint in epic (e.g. Tarkka 2013) or trolls' speech in legends (for examples, see af Klintberg 2010), and even exhibit embedded genres that refer to genres in social practice but do not formally correspond to them (e.g. incantations in legends and *Märchen*; telephone conversations in movies, which now omit "goodbyes" unless they are marked as meaningful). Other genres may be nearer unmarked speech, whether marked with a clear formulaic cuing device (e.g. *Did you hear the one about ...* opening a narrative joke) or more fluidly integrated into conversation (e.g. memorates; see also Koski, this volume). Some genres may be characterized not by a stable register at the primary order of representation but rather by register relations, such as internet memes structured as an image (photograph, painting, drawing) combined with text of virtually any linguistic register to produce effect through the juxtaposition (Heimo & Koski 2014).

The *secondary (and higher) orders of signification* consist of signs and symbols mediated through the first order, like images and motifs mediated through language and the conventions for their organization in narration or incantations. Signs at secondary (and higher) orders of signification belong to generic form where they become conventional to the genre, of which an indicator is when their regular patterns of use allow them to develop distinct semantics, associations or interpretations within the genre.<sup>17</sup> This can be quite pronounced, for example, in genres like the riddle or proverb, which may also exhibit conventional structures for the organization of these elements (see also Abrahams 1976 [1969]: 197), or in lyric forms where



symbolism may be distinctively structured (see also Ahola *et al.* 2017). Some genres are more strongly marked at secondary orders of representation than at the primary order, as for example in belief legends (Koski, this volume), while in others these orders become interfaced, as happens with the language conventionally used to represent an image in kalevalaic epic (Frog 2010b) or conventional image elements in iconography that are used to emblematically render a symbolic motif (see also Bradley 2013). Constellations of images and motifs can also communicate recognizable, meaning-bearing units of larger scope like a story-pattern at a still higher order of signification (see Frog 2015b: 38–41). In practice, the hierarchy of orders may converge. In South Slavic epic, for example, a particular formulaic expression “he cried out” at the beginning of a song simultaneously activates the motif of the imprisoned hero and a higher order narrative pattern of the whole epic wherein that motif is only one element (Foley 1995: 96); in iconography, the primary order of representation may render a single scene as no less emblematic of a whole story.

Actualizing expression through a generic framework is the actualization of expression through the generic form, which is here discussed in terms of three “layers” of communication: mode, primary and secondary (and higher) orders of representation. The different layers should not be conflated nor should the role of genre in shaping the significance of images, motifs, and still higher order units of representation be underestimated. This does not mean that generic form will always be ideally realized, but rather that emergent generic form is governed by socially recognizable conventions fundamental to genre as an enabling referent. The use of those conventions in emergent expression then simultaneously participates in maintaining their social recognisability. Their recognisability reciprocally allows evaluations and interpretations to be embedded at the level of the form of communication (Briggs 1988: 19).

### *Aspect 2: Content/Enactment*

Generic form, as a signification system, is always employed to signify something. What is signified may vary considerably from genre to genre. Here, the signified is addressed according to two very broad or loose categories referred to as *content* and *enactment*. In many genres, the generic form is rather unambiguously employed to signify specific content – i.e. it represents information or knowledge as in oral history, a legend or lyric song. The sort of information that these present can differ considerably from genres of proverbs, internet memes and riddles. There is quite a range of diversity here, but this is no different from the signifiers of individual words such as *chicken*, *purple* and *juggle* similarly all presenting basic propositional information although nouns, adjectives and verbs do not easily fall into a single class of word. Other genres may *do* things rather than represent them. What they signify may function as an illocutionary speech-act (on which see Austin 1962; Searle 1969) or a performative expression that affects social realities (Agha 2007: 55–64). For example, a genre may greet,

curse, marry, etc. What expressions signify may also actualize something as reality at a mythic level. For example, the unseen world can be addressed and possibly described in magical or ritual contexts in order to accomplish interactions with it, to remove the cause of a disease from a patient, etc. (Frog 2010c; Stepanova 2014). This might be compared to the signifiers of individual words such as *hello*, *yet* or the expletive *fuck* that lack basic propositional information and instead affect the relation between discourse participants, between verbal expressions, or signify a relationship of the speaker to an event or phenomenon. Content and enactment should not be seen as exclusive categories: a genre may conventionally signify both, for example, carrying content in the verbal description of a bride, deceased individual, or the inhabitants in the unseen world, while that content is simultaneously essential to an enactment that will change social, physical and/or mythic realities (see also Abrahams 1977). The content/enactment aspect of individual genres may vary considerably: it is not the purpose here to outline a typology of them. This aspect characteristic of a genre also does not limit uses of a genre in particular situations: employing a genre to valorize a historical individual as a narrative's hero and incite an audience to sympathize with him or her could situationally qualify as an "enactment" as discussed here, but that would not qualify it as an aspect of the genre-as-text-type as a social phenomenon.

The importance of the content/enactment of a genre should not be underestimated, because the conventional patterns of content/enactment that are signified through generic form reciprocally produce the predictability and meaning-potential of that generic form. This is an aspect of genre which holds prominence for linguistic and discourse studies, where genre is directly linked to functions in communication (see also Briggs & Bauman 1992). Folklore genres may be highly complex in this regard. For example, ritual dialogues may be constituted of different roles and parts and also whole performances of other genres, whereas traditional epic tends to be characterized by the same sort of complexity that Bakhtin attributed to the literary novel.<sup>18</sup> It is also important to recognize that the value and significance of form for many "classic" genres of folklore is directly dependent on and constructed through an essential set of socially recognizable "texts" that are distinguished by their content material. For example, the understanding of a genre of "epic" emerges through, and is dependent on, socially recognizable epics; a genre of "proverb" is correspondingly dependent on socially circulating proverbs. The formal rendering of unfamiliar texts and contents may be received through the understanding of the genre – i.e. a narrative presented as an epic will be received as an epic, or at least in relation to the genre.<sup>19</sup> However, genres are not necessarily freely generative of new texts or the representation of new content: "new" epics are not constantly being advanced and those that are will not necessarily be accepted as "epic" or even reperformed by others at all. For the present discussion, it is sufficient to observe that genres are not simply formal, but are also conventionally employed to represent or "do" certain things. Accordingly, a genre will exhibit a conventional form–content/enactment relation. Like form, the content/enactment aspect is genre-dependent: it can be described on

a case by case basis, but within the general model outlined here it should be approached in quite general terms of “appropriate” versus “inappropriate” within an intersubjective space.

### *The Form–Content/Enactment Relation*

It was stated above that genre functions as an iconic sign for a generic product. This can be approached according to the Saussurian model of the sign as a combination of *signifier* and its *signified* that together form a meaningful unit (Saussure 1967 [1916]: 97–100).<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, generic form functions as a signifier while appropriate content/enactment is its signified; in combination, these function as an iconic sign of a generic product:

Signifier	+	signified	=	sign
Form	+	content/enactment	=	generic product

When a generic product is approached in terms of a form–content/enactment relation, the absence of either form or content/enactment means an expression does not qualify as a product of the particular genre. It is quite natural to address a children’s prose rendition of the *Odyssey* as an “epic” or to archive and approach prose summaries of traditional epics as “epic” (e.g. SKVR I<sub>1</sub> 723). In these cases, the content of presentation is sufficiently indexed with a generic form of realization that content alone can metonymically activate the broader frame of the generic form and its significance. According to the present model, however, these are not “epic” in the sense of a text-as-generic-product. Content without form can only be considered *metonymically* identified with a genre; a summary of an epic is therefore not an epic *per se*, it is only *metonymically epic*.

Within the present model, the rather simple distinction of “appropriate” versus “inappropriate” content/enactment is equally relevant to whether the product of an expression employing generic form realizes a generic product. Appropriate content/enactment aligns with the conventions of form in uses of generic production, being both consistent with its indices and affirming them. When the content is inappropriate, it does not align with the conventions of form and accordingly does not qualify as a generic product. This does not mean that the form has not been used in an intentional or meaningful way. For example, parody frequently employs form in order to generate meanings through contrast with content, whether parodying the genre, such as the *Batrachomyomachia* [‘Battle of Frogs and Mice’] parodying Homeric epic through epic form, or trivializing content by contrasting it with the form of a less serious genre such as the fairytale (e.g. Clunies Ross & Martin 1986). In these cases, the formal features of genre are mapped over actual content, and meaning is generated through the correlation and contrasts of that content with what is conventionally appropriate (see also Bakhtin 1981: 44–48, 51–68). The same may be done with an enactment, such

as an expression that corresponds in form to a question–punchline–answer joke with a strategic aim of not being funny in order to communicate a very different message. These uses of form can be considered only *metaphorically* identified with the genre: the *Batrachomyomachia* is accordingly not an epic *per se*, it is only *metaphorically epic*; a question–punchline–answer joke intended not to be funny is only *metaphorically* a joke of that type.

Addressing generic metaphoricality and metonymicality target the relation of form and content/enactment to a particular genre. Juxtapositions of form of one genre with content/enactment of another can be viewed in terms of a type of hybridity that Anne Mäntynen and Susanna Shore (2014: 746–748) have described as *genre appropriation*, which they illustrate through a music review presented as a cooking recipe. Defining texts-as-generic-products in terms of a form–content/enactment relation raises questions about categories such as “incantation”, “joke” or “internet meme”. Rather than being grouped on the basis of content, these categories are centrally defined in terms of the generation and reproduction of texts as social enactments while there may be a variety of distinct formally definable text-type groups within each category. It can thus be asked whether these are in fact “genres” at a quite high level of abstraction, or whether they might be described better as “genre families”, sharing in a number of genre partials but distinguished by others, or perhaps “genre colonies”, grouped through enactments and conditions of practice that invite situational interpenetration or hybridization although the individual genres remain formally distinct or their hybridized forms evolve into new genres.

### *Aspect 3: Practice*

The signification of content/enactment through generic form always occurs as an individual or interpersonal activity in a context and invariably in relation to patterned social behaviours that can be considered to reflect and construct conventions associated with the genre or its metapragmatic norms of use. *Practice* is here employed as a blanket term for conventions of who, where, when, how and why actual applications of generic form and content occur. Practice designates patterns of concrete contextual application rather than specific meanings or broad social and semiotic functions that may remain implicit or unconscious – *practice* refers to a typification of what people *do* with a genre in immediate and concrete terms and the structuring of the context in which it is done.<sup>21</sup> It is inclusive of users (who may be characterized by age, gender, occupation, social role, etc.), social and situational contexts of use (e.g. public events, private dialogue, in secret), temporal contexts (e.g. time of day or year, holidays), spatial or physical contexts (e.g. indoors, outdoors, in the forest, field, near water) and situations (e.g. putting a child to sleep, greeting visitors), immediate goal-oriented intentions of application (e.g. abuse, pedagogy, entertainment, information sharing). Practice also has negative characteristics. Negative characteristics are conventions of who, where, when, why and how the genre is *not* used (e.g. a child giving a sermon, telling jokes at a burial). Of

course, conventions of practice vary considerably between genres and across cultures. Nevertheless, this aspect of the model concerns the situational embeddedness of genres in use, what is recurrent of those situations and how that affects the both the genre and expectations concerning it. In other words, if the form–content combination operates as an iconic sign of a generic product, conventions of practice construct the metapragmatic norms of that sign’s use, or associations and expectations about the who, where, when, how and why it is used, whereby the genre reciprocally provides a model for action in such situations (even if the action requires a specialist role, like a priest).

Practice is most easily addressed for genres with specialized and limited applications. The narrower and more regularized the patterns of practice, the more strongly any practice will index those conventions. This degree of indexicality enables use of the genre to actualize and confer structures of context (e.g. role relations) onto any situation (see also Agha 2007). For many genres, however, practice may also appear as the most flexible of the three aspects outlined here and may appear highly diversified. Rather than rigorously limited by prescriptive conventions, practice may congregate around one or several patterns of social activity or behaviour. The particular conventions may appear very liberal and they may even appear at first glance to be characterized by only a single, broad feature such as a structure of interactant roles with genres of joke. Nonetheless, there is no genre which is without conventions of practice and which can thus be employed freely in any social context. For the present, general model, the practice of a genre may be approached in broad terms of “appropriate” versus “inappropriate”. According to this model, practice governs aspects of production and reception. It therefore does not govern whether or not an emergent expression is a generic product as an iconic sign *per se*,<sup>22</sup> although it may facilitate that sign’s recognition and affect its interpretation. Practice governs the pragmatics of that sign in use and the ongoing negotiation of that sign’s values, associations (indices) and rhetorical potential or emotional investment as a socio-historical process.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Form–Content/Enactment–Practice Constellation*

Although no description can be wholly without interpretation, the elucidation of the three aspects of a genre outlined above will construct a descriptive model of that genre’s conventions. The precise role and prominence of any one aspect will vary from genre to genre, which will be characterized by its particular qualities in a particular constellation. Practice holds a central role in the social construction of genre. Practice is, first and foremost, the contextual actualization of a form–content/enactment relation in generic expression. Consequently, practice has a central role in how form and the corresponding content/enactment interrelate and are regarded socially, both independently and in the production of texts-as-generic-products. Instantiations of generic products produce indexical associations with whom, where, when, why and how the genre is used as metapragmatic norms. Thus, if laments are always

performed by women, lament performance can be assumed to index gender and performance by a man would be marked as deviation from conventions of practice (Stepanova 2014; 2015). The patterns of use not only construct the conventions of practice; they also construct how form and its content or enactment are understood, their meaningfulness and their meaning-potential. For example, the more exclusively a genre is associated with a particular religious or secular authority, the more it will index that authority in other contexts (see also Briggs & Bauman 1992). Similarly, prominent or exclusive association with ritual contexts leads a genre to index those contexts which reciprocally inform its social significance and its reception in other contexts (e.g. Stepanova 2014). Conversely, the practice of an epic genre only where it is performed freely alongside narratives of other genres as secular entertainment and in common conduits of transmission with them will lead the index of the epic genre to converge with those other genres or for the specific epic narratives to be appropriated by those other genres (e.g. Siikala 1990b: 14–19; Siikala 2002: 28; Frog & Stepanova 2011: 202; see also Bhatia 2004; Mäntynen & Shore 2014). Under such circumstances, in order for the epic genre to maintain a status distinguishable from other narrative genres, extra-generic uses of the specific content narratives (i.e. "epics" outside of epic generic form) would presumably be required (e.g. talking about them as of epic quality). Thus the form–content/enactment relationship produces an iconic sign through which generic products are recognized and interpreted, but it is social practice which constructs, maintains and also historically develops the distinctive qualities, meaningfulness and social significance of genre as an iconic sign.

Form, content/enactment and practice operate as a system, and no one aspect can change without impacting the others because they are reciprocally informative in constructing the genre for its users. Use of a genre is inevitably correlative with intention.<sup>24</sup> Insofar as practice takes the form of patterns of use and these are internalized in conjunction with the genre, the internalization of genre cannot be divorced from intentionalities. Intentionality is inevitably steeped in ideologies, and ideologies provide frames of interpretation and evaluation for any expression.<sup>25</sup> Some genres become embedded in ideologies of relative valuations structured through participant role relations and contexts of practice (e.g. courtly praise poetry, ritual lament), which in turn structures features of generic form and conventional interpretations (Frog 2015c: 88). Conventions of practice may also situate genres in dialogue with ideologies (e.g. jokes, legends, oral history), which may structure conditions for use of the genre and its situational variation as a tool for negotiating contested ideologies and interpretations. Using a genre (or not doing so), whether it is reproducing a legend or "sharing" (i.e. reproducing) a meme on Facebook, is to express a relationship to the genre-as-text-type or the specific text-as-generic-product and to whatever the item of folklore might refer to; it may also potentially imply alignments or disalignments between these and the corresponding views of the addressee or audience (see also Du Bois 2007). When the form–content/enactment–practice system is engaged in the situated use of a genre, ideologies may intersect in complementary and contrasting ways.



Figure 1. A “Batman slapping Robin” meme. “Meme” is an emic term among internet users for just about anything that spreads rapidly and widely through their networks, presumably as an adaptation of Richard Dawkin’s coining of the term for self-propagating units of culture, although now divorced from his theories. The term has been developing a narrower use to designate a kind of internet folklore, of which a typical variety is “an image (or video) and a text which expresses a message neatly and humorously”



(Heimo & Koski 2014: 6). Leaving aside the video variations, “memes” in this narrow sense are a variety of “image macros”.<sup>26</sup> “Image macro” is a relatively recent term for an image with one or more juxtaposed verbal expressions that has developed diagrammatic iconicity as a multimedial text-type category – i.e. as soon as we see the organization of image(s) and verbal text(s) in social media or on a t-shirt, the formal arrangement is recognized as an “image macro”, and this activates a framework of expectations for reception and interpretation. Image macros exhibit a number of formal classes, of which perhaps the most common is a photograph with one or two phrases directly superimposed on it. “Memes” are distinguished from “image macros” by being reproduced with or without variation in a community or network so that they become socially recognizable and shared with a distinct diagrammatic iconicity that allows variations to be recognized as variations of a particular meme-type, such as the so-called “Batman slapping Robin” meme depicted here. Being a “meme” thus necessarily entails a meme-type; it might be distinguished from image macros generally in the same way that “proverbs” as socially recognizable text-types are distinguished from “proverbial speech” (Tarkka, this volume). Both proverbs and memes thus share a referential quality of text-as-social-knowledge integrated in the genre’s functions, but a difference remains that, unlike proverb-types, meme-types include variation on the type to the extremes of recognisability because active generative variation is a basic part of genre practice (even if not all users actively vary them). According to a post by Brian Cronin on the site of CBR – Comic Book Resources (1 January 2009), the original panel of the “Batman slapping Robin” meme is from DC Comics’ *World’s Finest* #153: the original panel has been reversed so that Robin’s speech is read as preceding rather than following the slap. The diagrammatic iconicity of the meme-type allows for its variations not to be limited to the attributed speech: different characters may give or receive the slap, objects may be placed in the characters’ hands, etc., yet it remains the “Batman slapping Robin” meme-type with its many variations that acts as a frame of reference for interpretation.

#### Aspect 4: Functions

The three-aspect constellation presents a descriptive model for an individual genre in a particular environment. This is complemented by a fourth aspect of *functions*. Functions are distinguished from use in practice: use



in practice describes social conventions of concrete realizations of genre products by individuals; functions describe the roles filled by a genre within the genre system, and within broader social and semiotic systems. In other words, practice is descriptive of *what people do with a genre*, or *how, when, where and why a genre occurs* in social activity; functions describe *the role of a genre* in broad social, cultural and semiotic senses and *how a genre accomplishes this* – not through individual occurrences, but through the broader patterns of use. Functions may be related to socialization (e.g. entertainment, instruction), personal practical physical realities (e.g. health, economic resources), or the semiotic system and ideologies (e.g. epic). Whereas practice constructs normativity in the metapragmatics of a genre's use, functions construct relationships to the practice of other genres and to cultural semiotics more generally: functions are at the level of organizing principles of *which* practice is customarily employed in particular situations and with what degree of regularity, as well as relative valorizations and referential hierarchies in which the genre participates. The relationship between practice and functions narrows to the degree that use is specific to certain social or semiotic roles within a genre system. It may nevertheless remain relevant to distinguish between, for example, the practice of courtly praise poetry in terms of conventions of how it is used and contextually deployed (Clunies Ross 2005) from functions of courtly praise poetry in structuring social relationships between participant individuals in situated practice and as political propaganda (e.g. Abram 2011: 120, 141). A genre will, of course, often serve multiple social and semiotic functions or the practice of the genre or its products may exhibit a broad range of different uses that may connect (or appear to connect) with diverse functions. This is to be expected for socially central traditions which provide a community or cultural group with prominent, emotionally invested resources and common frames of reference. Within a genre system, multiple genres will fill similar or corresponding functions, often with particular emphasis, strategies or contextual relations (cf. "genre colonies" in Bhatia 2004). Functions should therefore not be viewed as necessarily exclusive to each genre or invariable in living social practice.

A primary or characteristic function may be a key feature in the distinction of one genre from others, or be identifiable as the distinctive center of a genre which may flow into others at the peripheries of its range of use in practice. For example, epic genres are generally characterized by a function of providing socially centralized identity representations and representations of society and social practices which can in turn be employed as resources for various personal and social aims or needs. In this case, the genre's function can be directly related to particular epics (content) holding iconic associations with social identities for a group or culture which are maintained and reinforced through how they are used (practice), situating them hierarchically in a position of greater authority relative to those of other genres (e.g. Honko 1998; Foley 2004). When this function associated with particular epics (content) is sufficiently linked to conventions of representation and communication (form), new or unfamiliar narratives or narrative material presented in the same way become identified as "epic"

(or at least asserted as of epic quality) through the genre as an iconic sign indicating “epic” (rather than of narratives more generally). At this point, the genre is characterized by the social and semiotic functions of the epics that are its products, including a hierarchical relationship to other genres that may participate in the same and related functions. Thus legends may also engage in corresponding functions of negotiating personal identities and social realities as quite a flexible resource. However, legend genres are generally characterized by a central function of narrative resources for the communication and negotiation of beliefs in relation to their connections to, and relevance for, the physical and social realities of living communities in which legends are told.<sup>27</sup>

The relevant and necessary functions of a genre will vary from cultural environment to cultural environment. The functions of any genre will also develop structural relationships to other genres according to patterns of social practice, which may considerably extend those functions, limit them, or even displace them with alternatives (in which case a whole genre could potentially lose its social position in the genre system as “epic”, for example). Honko (1981b; 1989) proposed that communicative and functional labour were distributed across genres; social and semiotic functions are not evenly distributed across them. Where functions of different genres overlap, those genres may fill the same function in different contexts (e.g. oral joke and internet meme) or accomplish it from different angles (e.g. lament and elegy).

### *The Four-Aspect Model of Emergent Genre*

The modelling system outlined here can offer a frame of reference when approaching genres and their products. This approach enables the following working definition of “genre”:

*(8) A genre is a text-type category that entails a generative framework for the production and reception of expressions, and which, as an analytical category, is qualified by four aspects that may vary in relative prominence: (i) an aspect of form, which signifies that expressions are generic products or to be considered in relation to the particular genre, (ii) conventional content or enactment realized through that form, which together with form qualifies a generic product, (iii) conventions of practice, through which the social significance of the genre and its products are constructed and maintained as significant and meaningful, and (iv) social and semiotic functions of the genre developed in relation to the practice of other genres, social life, and the semiotic resources available for expression, communication and meaningful action more generally.*

This configuration of qualities distinguishes genre as a category from other types and typologies. According to this approach, the aspects of form and content/enactment together qualify a generic product, but generic products remain only texts-as-generic-products and cannot be fully understood without practice as the social aspect of producing and receiving such texts.

These three aspects enable a basic model of the genre, while functions extend that model to the operation of the genre in society in relation to other varieties of expression. In addition, some distinctions that were formerly considered to describe a difference in genre can here be seen to describe something else (e.g. "distribution" in the distinction between "migratory legends" and "local legends"). In cases of genres that have been identified primarily or exclusively on the basis of only one aspect, this approach requires consideration of other aspects that might be overlooked. For example, personal experience narrative is easily considered a genre without formal conventions, but as Linda Dégh observes:

The telling of a personal experience is a social act, as is any other narration. It has rules and strategies. Tellers reach their appropriate audience using communal (traditional) means to succeed in their goal: personal gratification, identity presentation, status elevation, or other, while the listener's expectation is met. This means that the manner of telling, the choice of words, phraseology, stylistic turns, emphases, must follow the local etiquette, fitting the referential framework shaped by tradition. (Dégh 1985: 104.)

Similarly, the current approach demands a critical assessment not only of genre as a category, but also of qualifying generic products and approaching the relationship between individual expressions and generic categories. For example, "singing" the same personal experience narrative in a metrical form would, according to the present model, equate to translating its content into a different form (Lotman 1990: 15). In this case, the product of expression would most probably be associated with a different genre.

The four-aspect model outlined here is primarily descriptive of genre as a type of expression within a broader typology. As such, it constructs a frame of reference for approaching emergent texts-as-generic-products, as well as of adaptations of generic form or conventional generic contents for different applications, mixing and juxtaposing generic strategies, and so forth (see also Hymes 1975; Mäntynen & Shore 2014). It must be stressed that this approach does not bind genre-identity to any single aspect in the four-aspect model. Addressing genre as an analytical category is therefore distinct from and complementary to studies concentrated on, for example, particular plot resources (e.g. tale-types, motifs) that may be mobilized across multiple genres of expression, or potentially diverse genre resources actualized according social context, practice, or broader function. This model may also be situated in dialogue with research on emic categories of expressive behaviour, not all of which may qualify as genres according to this approach. Modelling genres according to the four aspects here also enables more sophisticated and structured consideration of synchronic and diachronic variation within and across genres as well as in cross-cultural comparisons of genres and their products.

## *A Usage-Based Approach to Variation*

Approaching genre as a framework for emergent expression and the corresponding reception of such expression requires consideration of factors that promote or determine variation in those expressions. There are a number of factors that can be considered potential determinants on variation – and also on the choice of genre as a resource in expression (see also Halliday 1978; Hymes 1981). Variation in generic expression is in part related to an individual's competence, understanding, communicative intentions and so forth (see also Briggs 1988; Stepanova 2014). The mode of expression is also significant: mode is entailed in the conventions of form of many genres, which will vary from spoken to written modes of expression, from sung to dictated and so forth (see also Tannen 1982; Honko 1998: 75–88; Saarinen 2013; Heimo & Koski 2014; Ready 2015; Halliday's "mode"). Shifts in mode equate to a form of translation (Lotman 1990: 11–19), and may also involve adaptation to a new generic form or "genre appropriation", such as turning an internet meme into a parade banner (Heimo & Koski 2014: 7). The user's stance (Du Bois 2007; Jaffe 2009) or attitude in application may be especially significant in shaping variation – serious, dismissive, joking or otherwise (cf. Hymes's "key"; Halliday's "tenor"). Stance can also be internalized with a genre, potentially creating a tension between the valorization of events linked to a sordid youth and an individual's conservative views when telling of them later in life (Siikala 1990a).

The broad *social domain* of expression in which a genre is instantiated may also be a determinant on expression, whether linked to an occupation, societal role, public or private sphere, etc. (cf. Bhatia 2004; Halliday's "field"). What is presented through a genre may equally impact variation. *Subject* is here used with reference to a specific phenomenon or material at the level of content or enactment in expression, such as death, lawyers, a troll or Santa Claus. A *subject domain* refers to the broader network of elements or phenomena associated with a subject (e.g. court rooms, briefs, etc. associated with the subject "lawyers") or may also be used to refer to a broader category (e.g. supernatural beings, including trolls, elves, etc.; cf. Halliday's "field"). Subjects and subject domains can themselves become associated with strategies of representation including levels of language, images, motifs, and potentially also larger units and structures such as whole narratives and narrative patterns (e.g. Ingemark 2004). However, this does not qualify the subject or subject domain as a genre within the present approach, but it interfaces with aspects of a genre in practice. Nevertheless, subject and subject domain can result in variation in form and/or content/enactment when realizing a generic product. The same subject and subject domain may also be evaluated from different perspectives not only by genre but by social domain. Ideologies readily nest where a social domain links to a stance on a subject (e.g. religious life in the public sphere, family life in the private sphere), which can become embedded in the practice of certain genre, genre family, or genre colony within that social domain and vary across social domains, as well as simultaneously developing laterally across them and outside of them (see also Frog 2015b).

Patterns of social activity lead locations and times – both separately and in combination – to become conditioning factors on appropriate and inappropriate expressive behaviour (cf. Hymes's "setting"; Halliday's "field"). The same expressive behaviour may be regarded very differently in a courtroom and in an Irish pub or on a public beach. Temporal contexts are equally significant. Thus an alleyway at night presents a different environment than on a sunny afternoon; in many places in the West, Sunday is still a day shaping behaviours and social activities; different holidays are associated with different activities as are different seasons. This sort of conditioning extends to underlying cognitive models, to the extent that "[t]he set of beliefs and desires actualized in one situation [...] may be profoundly different [...] from the set of beliefs and desires at work in another" (Kamppinen 1989: 19). Put simply: we are more likely to be afraid of ghosts in the dark. However, these social constructions of spatial and temporal contexts engage with *practice* to shape how and whether certain genres are realized within them, and how those genres will be received.

Expression is normally directionally oriented in the sense of having an addressee, direct or indirect (and sometimes reflexive) audience, or as a goal-oriented enactment. The relationships and roles of individuals (or other beings, such as God, a bear, the dead, etc.) shape the intersubjective space of interaction and accordingly open generic expression to variation. The presence or absence of individuals within the sphere of possible observation also functions as a potential determinant on expression, even if they are not engaged in the particular situation. (Cf. Hymes's "scene" and "participants"; Halliday's "field".) For example, the language and images employed may be edited or censored if the use is in the presence of children, members of the opposite sex, clergy or drug addicts. Even if there is no more than a haunting possibility that a policeman or one's parents might "walk in", expression may be tempered and adapted accordingly. Conversely, virtual environments enable the construction of a remote identity, which can liberate an individual from inclinations to censorship in other contexts. Time, location and those present intersect as factors as, for example, when a woman enters a pub where normally only men are seen, or when a new parish priest interviews a bare-legged washerwoman, etc. These factors only increase as role relations and personal relationships are introduced for consideration. Across these sorts of contexts, what is appropriate or inappropriate is shaped in relation to (varied) small-groups and social networks – e.g. the regulars at the pub, the local washerwomen – and conventions are tested and negotiated through new and emerging situations in which appropriate versus inappropriate expressive behaviour may reflect competence (or its lack), or may present conscious and meaningful displays (e.g. disapproval).

The social and semiotic functions of genres develop through regular patterns of practice, but these are often implicit at the level of the metapragmatics of organizing the practice of different genres in relation to one another and may remain beyond metadiscursive address. Genres are conventionalized social resources that allow varying degrees of flexibility. That flexibility allows variation in relation to diverse determinant factors

present or potential in the context of expression. Assessment of qualities of both practice and functions through evidence of a genre may be significantly problematized by variation. On the one hand, contextual variables may affect the form and content/enactment of generic products in varying ways, but they may have a transformative effect on individual examples as evidence of practice, and the significance of conventions of practice in the construction of a genre's functions can lead such evidence to obscure as much as we might want it to reveal. On the other hand, research materials for large numbers of genres have been dependent on exceptional factors impacting the context of documented expressions. This is because folklore genres are in general oriented socially in the present rather than oriented to the generation of physically or electronically enduring utterances, noting that the circulation of materially and electronically mediated expressions are only *potentially* historically durable.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, corpora of data even collected today may be implicitly selective owing to the aims, interests, and presuppositions in documentation, or they may reflect a motivated social pattern of variation or adaptation that has produced historically durable data and thus only represent a narrow range of the broader practices of the genre that the genre reflects.

### *Problems of Horizons and Historical Genres*

A description of an emic genre could, ideally, present an approximation of the intersubjective referent of the tradition that is being subject to social negotiation, including, for example, ranges of acceptable variation in actual social processes. Such an approximation would be an ideal reflection of the social reality of the tradition at the level of a small-group community or social network with limited horizons (see also Jauss 1982). This abstraction would provide a frame of reference for approaching individual competence and contextual variation in specific performance situations. It would also provide a frame for considering the significance of an individual's understanding of the tradition and relationship to it (e.g. Siikala 1990a). However, even the best hypothetical model will remain an academic construct as a descriptive tool for analysis, and this tool can never do more than approximate a social reality.

Every tradition is ultimately rooted in the subjective understandings of individuals engaging in social processes, and there will always be variation between the subjective understandings of those individuals, and still more variation in their projections of intersubjective realities. Moreover, their projections of intersubjective realities will normally – if not always – be context-specific interfaces with spatial, temporal and social realities of the situation rather than the more ideal hypothetical model of the emic tradition arrived at by a researcher. As the horizons of this hypothetical description are extended to be inclusive of other communities, differences in the understanding and use of the emic genre across those communities will necessarily be minimized. The more widely the horizons are extended, the less sensitive the model becomes to specific small-group traditions.



As the abstraction advances to the level of a regional area including many communities, it becomes less relevant as a frame of reference for approaching individual performances and performers than as a frame of reference for approaching traditions at the level of small-group communities or social networks and their relationships to one another. As the scope extends further and advances toward a tradition across a broad linguistic-cultural area or extended international networks of communities on the internet, it becomes increasingly removed from social realities and its value shifts to approaching broader social and historical processes.

The particular constellation of aspects of any genre will be locally dependent on social realities in the relevant communities and participation networks. These constellations change as a historical process within small-group communities and through their networks. Whether these develop slowly or rapidly, fluidly or in fits and starts, they produce variation across communities of whatever type. As they do so, their social and semiotic functions may change in the process of adapting to the changing milieu. For example, changes in the social arena or in the tradition environment (e.g. women begin frequenting a men's pub, a closed virtual community becomes public) can incite situational variation and hybridization in practice that may stabilize into new conventions of form, content or practice as a process, which could ultimately affect the functions of a genre. Especially more extensive changes in society (e.g. the Soviet revolution, globalization) can rapidly evolve social conventions of genre-as-text-type, many of which may be "boundary genres" (Hanks 1987: 677) or genres produced in the fusion of different frameworks or their adaptation to new media, social environments or uses that may be quite localized, unstable or relatively transient – a factor to consider when faced with the impression of extreme variation, rapid evolution and transience of genres of internet folklore. A genre's evolution may also span centuries. For example, kalevalaic mythological epic adapted to changes in culture in different ways across North Finnic cultural areas. In the region of Olonec, it became divorced from the ritual life of the community and its applications were centrally as social entertainments with other narrative traditions, leading it to be treated more in the manner of secular folktales (Siikala 2002: 28; Frog 2010a: 81–82). In Ingria, similar processes led the genre to drop from men's traditional practices and it was maintained only in the women's singing tradition in the context of other women's songs, leading to its development into a so-called "lyric-epic" form, in which earlier mythological narratives were even performed in the first person (Siikala 1990b: 14–19; Frog & Stepanova 2011: 202; see also Kallio 2011: 399). Historically, these are reflexes of the same genre although they underwent a loss of inherited genre partials while assimilating others through hybridization with different genres through changes in practice. These changes were interrelated with changes in the genre-as-text-type's functions within the genre system and in society. They maintained at least parts of a common core of epic songs, although reconfigurations of genre partials and changing alignments with social domains in practice affected them in both form and content. The differentiation between these songs and fairytales was narrowed in one region while these songs came close to



women's lyric narratives in the other. The "songs" were in a sense the same, yet their genre-as-text-type was perceived quite differently, returning us to the question: "how much variation is permissible before the two texts represent different genres?" (Nunan 2008: 57, on linguistic genres).

In general, the flexibility of "genre" as an analytical tool shifts attention away from whether variations should be considered to reflect "the same" or "different" genres, which is determinable by the researcher according to the investigation rather than by the term "genre" itself. Flexibility of the tool is important to consider with genres in which the scope of investigation must consider potential shifts in conventions as a historical process. Such shifts may occur across communities that are otherwise quite close, affecting genre partials, features of practice as well as the genre's functions, so that the local variations may exhibit a "family resemblance" although the commonalities shared by all remain relatively limited. The social conventions of prose narration, for example, may therefore not be readily discernible on the basis of only a few examples, and it might not even be apparent whether a few examples should be considered to reflect the conventions of one or several small-group communities. On the other hand, if the kalevalaic traditions of Olonec and Ingria are seen as "the same" genre, the criteria of the genre must be defined with sufficient flexibility that both historical variations can be accounted for. Practicalities may, in certain investigations, invite simply referring to these as "the same" genre because they are historical reflexes of a common antecedent. However, extreme caution (and clarification) is required in cases such as these that have been quite problematic in research. Motivations for this use of "genre" are frequently rooted in examining continuities in formal elements and/or particular plot resources that might be adapted across genres. In this case, the respective traditions each underwent a different genre shift that affected it in fundamental ways. The four-aspect model can be employed as a tool for assessing differences between these traditions of Olonec and Ingria and the developments that gave rise to them. At the same time, the continuities of formal genre partials and plots should be placed in dialogue with considerations of genre rather than treated as reflecting a common genre at the time when they were documented.

### *Cultural and Cross-Cultural Genre Typologies*

Cross-cultural genre types are a reality of academic discourses. These are no longer ideal, prescriptive models of universal genres today, but rather provide a frame of reference for approaching and comparing traditions (Finnegan 1977: 15). Cross-cultural genre type descriptions have generally had a Eurocentric origin, and in several cases are even rooted in Classical models.<sup>29</sup> They have not escaped decades of ongoing re-evaluation and testing against the traditions of diverse cultures (Honko 1989: 16; see also Hakamies, this volume). Cross-cultural typologies are necessary because they provide tools, vocabulary and frames of reference for accessing research on unfamiliar traditions and for considering the relationship and relevance of that research to our own. A frame of reference is essential for

any cross-cultural comparison, whether this is oriented to considering common historical roots, reciprocal influence between groups or cultures, or comparison is purely typological. It should be stressed that typological comparisons are fundamental to a broad range of cultural research: they stimulate perspectives on how cultural practices function, their potential for users and what users do or do not do with them. This is less significant for investing a single tradition in a single culture on emic terms, but cross-cultural typologies may nevertheless sensitize a researcher to aspects of a tradition or its social functions that might otherwise be overlooked or simply taken for granted.

The basis for qualifying cross-cultural typologies is itself problematic. Tzvetan Todorov has emphasized that absolute classifications of genres are impossible when all aspects of a genre can vary to some degree independently of one another: "Any static classification must keep one of these faces the same, whatever the [others'] variations" (Todorov 1977: 248). Within the four-aspect model, *form* is necessarily culture-dependent, even where the corresponding genres found across cultures are historically related (e.g. European ballad traditions, the modern novel), and the same is true of conventional *content* or *enactment*. This compromises their value as criteria for a cross-cultural genre typology. Conventions of *practice* are perhaps still more culture-dependent – i.e. who uses the genre when, where, why and how. These three aspects of a genre account for a genre's specific features and its actualization in real-time contexts. Although any of these features or their combination might be taken up as the basis for a cross-cultural comparison, it is important to distinguish that none of them can be applied consistently as a base criterion for cross-cultural genre typology. In contrast, social and semiotic *functions* – what the genre *does* and *how* it accomplishes this – more abstractly accounts for the relationship of a genre to other genres and semiotic resources as well as to society or to social and natural environments. This leads to the following postulate (which has been more commonly arrived at intuitively rather than analytically):

(9) *The social and semiotic functions of a genre are consistently definable in terms of roles and relations, which can be compared across cultures independent of incongruities between culture-specific elements, structures, contexts and participant roles characteristic of other aspects of the genre.*

Of course, not every culture will maintain every genre, and perhaps the majority of genres of cultural expression outside of the internet will be relatively limited in their international distribution. Postulate 9 may initially seem problematic for the analysis of genres in earlier historical periods, where information is potentially quite limited and may even be restricted to texts-as(?)-generic-products. However, it should not be confused as a necessary point of departure for analysis, but rather something advanced toward – even if findings of earlier research may make it possible to cut to the chase, so to speak, in this respect. When dealing with historically remote genres, *if* cross-cultural comparisons are being made, they will almost certainly begin from form and content/enactment. However, if the *Odyssey* and *Beowulf* are being compared to twentieth-century evidence of South

Slavic epic traditions, it is necessary to distinguish what is being compared. This may be a comparison of form (e.g. formulaic language in relation to meter), of content (e.g. with the Indo-European “return song” plot), or of the form–content relation (e.g. formulaic language in recurrent themes). However, comparing these as texts-as-generic-products of epic genres entails (a) a model of epic as a cross-cultural category of genre-as-text-type, and (b) inferences or interpretations that relate the limited textual sources to that category irrespective of culture-dependent features. If comparison remains based only, for example, at the level of form and content, then “epic” will spill over into other long stories in verse about heroic figures, such as Faroese ballads and Icelandic *rimur* cycles, or – more likely – aspects of practice and functions that distinguish “epic” from these traditions will simply be implicit. Methodologically, the advance to comparison of genre must be kept in view because in most historical comparisons a generic correlation is at least to some degree *inferred* with an aim of filling gaps in our knowledge concerning actual practice and functions with those aspects of a hypothetical genre model.

Any cross-cultural genre will always describe a pattern of equivalence rather than identity. Considering the fourth aspect function in this regard should help temper the deep-rooted Eurocentric models that have frequently led to one or more of the first three, culture-dependent aspects of a genre as defining or essential characteristics in a cross-cultural typology (e.g. length as a defining qualification of “epic”). However, culture-dependence or tradition-dependence of a genre’s aspects of form, content/enactment, and practice certainly does not mean that these will be arbitrary in relation to the genre’s functions – quite the contrary: function may condition other aspects. For example, functions of a proverb as a genre in discourse and embedded in other genres is dependent on its being a short atomic unit of utterance; a riddle genre is correspondingly dependent on structure of the context as a dialogic engagement of limited (if variable) duration; an epic genre is dependent on the social relevance and negotiation of the social significance of the narratives maintained in the genre; etc. The history of genres’ evolution may also be relevant for consideration when developing broad comparative genre typologies. For example, kalevalaic epic mentioned above or some internet genres-as-text-types have potentially evolved several distinct forms to some degree independently among different groups and networks, while quite widespread and familiar genres-as-text-types such as the European *Märchen* can reflect the historical evolution of a much broader phenomenon. It should also not be taken for granted that shared language or national borders defined a shared “culture” prior to electronic communications and globalization: any survey of variation in a tradition should consider the question of when a cross-community comparison or a cross-regional comparison becomes equivalent to cross-cultural comparison (e.g. Frog 2014). Once again, even where a genre model is ideally or broadly descriptive, it is a construct that functions as an analytical tool, and the scope of the tradition subject to abstraction and the degree of historical orientation therefore become functions of research priorities rather than being social realities themselves.

## *Genres, Social Resources and Application*

This discussion has sought to highlight that genre is a versatile and practical research tool that is conditioned by the primary units of analysis within a discipline and the priorities of the particular investigation. The four-aspect semiotic model of genre advocated here for folklore genres approaches them as a text-type category of a particular type that simultaneously operates as a system of socially circulated semiotic resources that can be flexibly applied. These resources include genre partials that are not necessarily exclusive to any one genre and may carry distinctive semantics evolved across different genres or that may vary between genre colonies, genre families or between individual genres. As social phenomena, genres-as-text-type-categories also index metapragmatic norms of practice including their outcomes, as well as having broader social and semiotic functions among other genres in the broader genre system. Different genres have their own ranges of flexibility in form, content or enactment, and practice. Moreover, texts are always realized *in relation to* conventions rather than invariably attempting to realize those conventions in an ideal way. The model produced with this approach will only retain most detailed accuracy when calibrated to small communities and social networks, becoming increasingly removed from actual social activity as the scope of the model is extended to be increasingly inclusive of more communities, networks, cultural groups, until, at its maximal scope, it is at an extreme of abstraction for comparative analysis.

The approach outlined here may seem overly ideal or "clean" as a model of genres which may be much more "messy" in realities of social interaction. However, this four-aspect model is developed as a tool for abstracting genres-as-text-types as a frame of reference for addressing texts-as-generic-products as well as texts that are produced in relation to one or several genres-as-text-types, whether in generic parodies, hybrids, transpositions or appropriations, in texts-as-would-be-generic-products resulting from lack of competence, misunderstanding or perhaps just getting confused – and so forth. Distinguishing genre partials and also factors and features in metapragmatic norms facilitates looking at relations between genres in genre families and genre colonies, as well as looking at variation in dialect, sociolect or idiolect, and at hybrids, historical change, situational variation and so on. The distinction of emblematic genre partials can also be reciprocally used to look at their potential uses in other genres for meaning-generation, or how emblematic genre partials and features of practice are taken up in revivals, transforming them and reinterpreting them through modern ideologies. The distinction between practices and functions made in this model provides a means of differentiating between what individuals customarily do with a genre and what the genre does in society and in relation to other genres, which has not previously held a place in defining genre as a text-type category. This framework takes a step toward bringing the definition of genre in folklore studies into alignment with those of other disciplines, which will hopefully increase dialogue between disciplinary approaches to yield insights beneficial on all sides. Crucial to this approach is acknowledging "genre" as an analytical tool and the potential for its

calibration. The model is “clean” because it is developed for the application of “genre” as a tool with potential for greater precision in research, which is not to suggest that the social reality of genres is correspondingly pristine and sterile.

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### NOTES

- 1 Cf. for example the use of *genos* as a term in Classical Greek musical analysis (Nagy 1990: 99–101).
- 2 For a brief overview of this paradigm shift, see Honko 2000b; see also Frog 2013.
- 3 This position was advocated especially by Dan Ben Amos (e.g. 1976; see also Hakamies, this volume).
- 4 Yuri M. Lotman addressed this phenomenon in terms of semiotic reality; that “from the point of view of the modelling system, [such things] are not bearers of meaning, as it were do not exist” (1990: 58).
- 5 Bakhtin’s dialogism was therefore generically bound – e.g. the novel’s engagement in dialogism by representing and commenting on patterns of language use and on other genres is a function of the novel as a genre that sets it apart from other genres, which were considered monologic (see e.g. Bakhtin 1981). Thus Bakhtin saw this as a binary opposition rather than as a consequence of aspirations to verisimilitude occurring on a spectrum tempered by a genre’s conventional formal and stylistic constraints on expression (see Todorov 1981: 18–19).
- 6 Bakhtin’s dialogism arrived in the West as Julia Kristeva’s (1980 [1969]) “intertextuality”, which she later redesignated “transposition” (1984 [1974]: 59–60; see also Allen 2000). The Bakhtinian model tends to conflate “genre” with the resources associated with the particular genre. This conflation owes in part to the formulation of the model before an infrastructure of terms, concepts and research findings was available for addressing the phenomenon, which can now be much more effectively addressed through register theory (on which see e.g. Halliday 1978; Foley 1995; Agha 2001; 2007; Agha & Frog 2015).
- 7 For different uses of this term and how it is qualified, see e.g. Vološinov 1930 [1929]: 20–28, 97–101; 1973: 17–24, 95–98. The work of Vološinov and others

- of the so-called "Bakhtin Circle" has often been reattributed to Bakhtin (see e.g. Ivanov 1978; see also Bakhtin 1986: xv), but this is problematic (see e.g. Wehrle 1978: xii).
- 8 This approach never advanced to a typology beyond listing diverse criteria of users and contextual factors (increased in Bakhtin 1986 [1952–1953]). Rather than delimiting "genre", this idea of speech genres opened to more or less any socially distinguishable type of language or language use.
  - 9 For example, John Miles Foley (e.g. 1988: 109–110; 1993 [1990]: 3–17; see also Foley 2002: 34–36) consistently highlights "genre-dependence", but precisely what is meant by genre remains implicit.
  - 10 Discussions of vernacular genres not infrequently further compromise definitions of genre by collapsing the distinction between use of vernacular terms and the cultural practices associated with them. The designation of a genre with a vernacular term does not necessarily indicate a formalized awareness of how that genre should be distinguished from others, nor that all members of a community use the emic term consistently. Categories designated by vernacular terms may also not correspond to genres as such. In addition, the lack of a specific term for a genre in a language does not indicate that the relevant category of cultural expression and its conventions remain undistinguished and unevaluated.
  - 11 See also Tarkka (2013: 94): "genres are analytical categories constructed by the researcher using diverse criteria."
  - 12 "Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication" (Bakhtin 1986 [1952–1953]: 91).
  - 13 E.g. Ben Amos 1976a; although it should be noted that the performance-oriented turn involved a reaction against early content-oriented folklore typologies, as a consequence of which content could be marginalized as a criterion for generic categorization (e.g. Briggs & Bauman 1992) with an outcome that the earlier form–content binary qualification could appear reinvented as a form–practice binary qualification (e.g. Bauman 1999).
  - 14 See e.g. Honko 1981b; 1985; for an overview of the concept and history of the term, see Kamppinen 1989: 37–46; on biological metaphors in folklore theory, see Hafstein 2001.
  - 15 The model briefly sketched here is based on the theory that I refer to as the Activating Power of Expression developed in my dissertation (Frog 2010a), associated work with methodological emphasis on comparative studies of the evolution of traditions into different forms and their synchronic "dialectology" (e.g. 2010b; 2013a–b), and more recent refinements and advances in uses of register theory (e.g. 2015a–b).
  - 16 This is equivalent to proposing that, although line-breaks may belong to a written register in order to indicate the conclusion or onset of a paragraph as a structural unit, the paragraph unit itself does not belong to the written register insofar as the paragraph as a unit is not determined by the meaningful and structured combination of signs of the first order of representation (i.e. words and grammar) but by the meaningful and structured combination of what these communicate or represent at the next order of representation. Similarly, page-breaks in printed academic publications are determined formally by the mode of representation, and can vanish when the printed mode is exchanged for oral delivery or publication as continuous text on a webpage.
  - 17 As Lauri Honko has observed, "*genre subordinates [...] theme*" so that "the same theme behaves differently from one genre to another" (Honko 1989: 15, emphasis original).



- 18 Bakhtin (1981) considered the novel exceptional in its capacity for “dialogism” without consideration of its relation to the verisimilitude to which certain genres aspire and that the formal conventions of certain genres (e.g. metrical expression) can condition strategies employed to aim at such verisimilitude.
- 19 See also Atray (this volume) on the composition of *karak gathas* to confer divine status on the person whose life is narrated, making it the life of a god.
- 20 For example, the sequence of sounds /hors/ is a signifier for the being or category “horse” as a signified, which together constitute the spoken word “horse” as a meaningful sign.
- 21 On the “structure of context”, see e.g. Dundes 1980 [1964]; Abrahams 1968: 145–146.
- 22 This view is contradictory to some performance-centered models of genre (e.g. Bauman 1984) which would require features identified here with practice to qualify a generic product. For example, a child performing a ritual only allowed for adults would, according to such a view, not qualify as a generic product because conventions of practice were not realized. Within the present model, an inappropriate person in the role of performer can break down the form–content relation in situations where there is reason to treat participant roles as signifiers belonging to the aspect of form (see also lamenters in the section “Aspect 1: Form”, above). In this respect, the thresholds between aspects of a genre as discussed here are also subject to calibration by the researcher, and they may also potentially overlap or intersect.
- 23 This is similar to the phenomenon addressed as Bakhtinian “intertextuality” by Charles Briggs & Richard Bauman (1992: 146–155); it overlaps with the broader phenomenon described by John Miles Foley (1995) as “word power”; see also Asif Agha’s (2007) approach through indexicality.
- 24 Human expressive behaviour is not random, and is naturally and intuitively apprehended with a “presumption of semioticity” (Lotman 1990: 128); i.e. that it is meaningful (see also Heimo & Koski 2014 on meaningless memes).
- 25 Such levels range from whole languages (Kroskirty 2001) and the broad structural genres of linguistics (Halliday & Martin 1993: 37) to the register of a genre’s primary order of signification (Vološinov 1930 [1929]; Agha 2007), secondary and higher orders (Frog 2015b) and specific contents (Frog 2012) or mythic actualizations (Stepanova 2014).
- 26 I am grateful to Kaarina Koski for bringing this term to my attention and her comments on the distinction between “memes” and “image macros”; see also “Image Macros” at Know Your Meme: <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/image-macros>.
- 27 “One might say the question of belief–nonbelief is an active problem in any community where legends are told” (Dégh & Vázsonyi 1976 [1971]: 109).
- 28 Cf. Bengt R. Jonsson’s observation that “*the natural state of oral poetry is to remain oral* and [...] such poetry is rarely written down without a real incitement” (Jonsson 1991: 145, emphasis original), the latter part of which might be rephrased for internet folklore as “such folklore is rarely archived without real incitement”.
- 29 This is unsurprising considering the history of scholarship, and is little different than the challenge faced by the international tale-type system (Uther 2004), which was originally modelled at the beginning of the twentieth century on the Finnish archive holdings and in comparison with collections available in the library.



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## 2. Genres as Real Kinds and Projections

### Homeostatic Property Clusters in Folklore and Art

There are several possible ways of classifying the products of human culture, for example as texts, oral stories, movies, or songs. Genre-classification is a type of classification that aims to capture a group of, say, texts, that share some relevant properties in their style, thematic contents, or narrative techniques (Bakhtin 1986). Accordingly, the study of genre has largely concentrated on the analysis of textual structures from this point of view. But though genre-classifications are fairly often classifications used by the research community rather than by people producing the genres (or “participating” in the genres), they are nonetheless often thought to be something that researchers discover in their research subject, not simply something they project onto the subject. Many genres in folklore and in literature, in music, and in films are socially constructed by people, not projected by researchers. Therefore, for a researcher, these classes are a part of reality external to the research and exist independently of the research and researchers themselves.

In comparative literature, this has led some genre researchers to pay attention to social action and the social production of meaning, especially to the interaction between the text, its production, and the reception – the discursive community – that underlie genres as cultural phenomena, not only the structure of the products of this activity (e.g. Fowler 1982; Jauss 1982; Miller 1984; Barton 1994; Frow 2006). This shift of attention is a move toward explaining *why* texts and other cultural products tend to take forms that can be categorized as genres, but at the same time, it is a shift *away* from the concept of genre as a tool for textual analysis. Both conceptions of genre may be useful. In contemporary folkloristics, genre is also studied not only as form, but as communicative practice. Fixed typologies used in older folkloristics and the idea of “universal” genres have been criticized. Nevertheless, some universal genre concepts are taken to be useful tools (Ben-Amos 1976a; Honko 1989; Shuman & Hasan-Rokem 2012). Furthermore, classifying texts and other cultural products can serve diverse needs, such as archiving folklore for the use of other researchers or archiving films in a film archive for further access on multiple search criteria (such as director, stars, or theme), both of which rely on the practical usability of classification, not on the existence of a classification-independent and rich clustering of shared properties due to an underlying social production.



In this paper, we apply some tools from the philosophy of science in order to clarify certain distinctions relevant in the study of genre. We do not try to make a theoretical contribution as such to folkloristics or comparative literature, let alone present empirical discoveries. Instead, we make meta-theoretical observations about the use of genre concepts, hoping that they will constitute a methodological contribution to the study of various phenomena related to genres and theory formation on them. The main point of the paper will be the clarification of the distinction between two types of genre notions that should be kept separate: genres as *real kinds* and genres as *projections*. By “real kind”, or just “kind”, we mean a class that reliably shares a large number of properties. This renders it epistemically justified to make generalizations across the class: a genre as a kind is out there, and new properties of the whole genre can be discovered by making observations of a limited number of texts belonging to a given genre. By “projections” we mean conceptual constructs that researchers make on the basis of a number of properties, but that do not necessarily capture real kinds, nor allow generalizations that would lead to new discoveries. Instead, such classifications are projected onto the texts under study for some specific research purpose: this kind of a genre is a projection of the research practices and theories; it is a theoretical tool. This is an important distinction, as it is directly linked to what can be done with genre concepts, and what genre theories are about. We are going to use the idea of *homeostatic property clusters* (Boyd 1991) to analyze how kinds work and how some genres, as socio-culturally created real phenomena, are real kinds. In summary, *a kind does not have to share a structure or an essence in order to be a real kind*. But whether it is a real kind or a projection has great methodological significance for how it is treated in theories and what kind of research methods and inferences about it are epistemically justified. We also make some observations about what gives the basis for genres as property clusters: the social activity producing, maintaining and transforming the genres as kinds. We examine especially how the classification itself and awareness of it affects what is being classified.

We will start by distinguishing three aims that genre classification may have: classification for organizing materials (e.g. for archiving or as the basis for further analysis), classification for analysis (e.g. interpreting a text *as an instance of a genre*), and classification for purposes of making generalizations about the research subject. The first two roles of genre concepts belong to the projection use of genres. The third presupposes a more substantial notion of what a “genre” is. After this, we will explicate the notion of homeostatic property clusters and apply it to genres as kinds. Then we will make some remarks on what it means that people and their practices constitute the mechanisms that produce and sustain homeostatic property clusters. Finally we will draw some conclusions about what consequences all this should have for theories and practices related to genres. The main conclusion is that the research object is very different in the case of genre as a projection as opposed to genre as a kind, and that the relation between the text under study and the theoretical tools used is likewise very different.

### *What is the Purpose of Genre Classification?*

The concept of genre and various genre concepts (such as “fantasy” or “legend”) are used for *classification* of the research subject in several disciplines, including folkloristics and various art studies. The reasons for using genre terminology may vary both in the broader aims of the classification and in the basis on which the classification is made. They may also vary both between disciplines and within them. One reason for classification is simply the organization of the research object (e.g. texts, performances, or movies) for practical or theoretical purposes, such as archiving or further analysis. The basis for classification may be whatever serves those purposes. This could be, for example, some particular property or a group of properties (that set a group of classified objects apart from other objects) in the content, style, narrative techniques etc. of a text. The classification may use a definition specifying these properties, but alternatively the basis of the classification may be a similarity to a *prototypical* instance of the class: a specimen defines the class and the membership of the class depends on closeness to the specimen, without reference to any particular property of this prototype (see Putnam 1975; Rosch 1977; Lakoff 1987). In both cases, however, classes may be vague and the boundaries between them are permeable and fluid rather than distinct. Some instances may belong to a class only partially or be hybrids. The members of a category may have *family resemblance* (Wittgenstein 1953) with each other rather than shared essential properties: each member of the group resembles most of the other members, but in different ways, just as all the members of a family resemble each other in different ways. But no matter how the properties that the classification is based on are chosen or defined, the membership of the genre is a consequence of having these properties. If the purpose of classification is simply organizing the research material according to a property, then which texts go together depends on the definition of the genre.

In other words, genre categories like this are *projections*: they are constructed by researchers. But they are projections for a purpose. They are tools. Not every possible way of classifying expressions serves a purpose. There must be a theoretical or practical need that entails the criteria used in the classification. Genre-concepts may be, for example, tools for organizing the research materials for further investigation, or for archiving, or they could serve a central function in the interpretation of a text. In any case, if the need for classification were different and were done by using other properties as a basis, the classification would end up being different as well. Many instances that need classification may also fall “in between” the used categories. They may therefore be classified as members of either class, as “hybrids”, as a category of their own, or just something uncategorizable. For example, detective stories could be seen as a hybrid of crime stories and mystery stories or a genre of their own. Decisions about how to classify new instances may be a matter of just that: decisions, whether of a researcher or of a wider research community. These kinds of decisions are not true or false – the justifications for them can only be better or worse, depending on what kind of practical purposes the classification is used for. Classifications

of this kind are not fixed to infinity, but *finite*. Each new decision shapes the category. But it is worth noting that only the *classification* is constructed. The classes still bind together real objects that have the similarities that the researcher is looking for. Although projected classifications do not go any deeper than the properties that are the basis for the projection, there is every reason to be a realist about the classes as far as only these properties are considered. Furthermore, the properties themselves may be of interest in research.

Let us consider for instance the “western” genre. It can be defined, for example, as fiction taking place west of the Mississippi River between the American Civil War and the First World War. This definition does not necessarily imply any clustering properties that are not implied by the definition itself. Let us suppose, for the sake of the argument, that the fiction that is captured by this definition is unified only by those things that are directly implied by the definition, such as the places, life-styles and so forth. The definition nevertheless refers to a mythical time and place with cultural significance. This is itself a sufficient reason to ask questions about the “western” as a class of literature. A researcher may be interested in, for example, how nature is used as a narrative motif in “western” fiction. The result may not be a uniform view that could be generalized as a typical “western” view of nature, but it would still be an answer to a research question that can be considered reasonable.

On the other hand, we might discover generalities in “western” fiction that can be used in making a theory of typical “western” fiction (see e.g. Newman 1990). This theory may serve the purpose of being a basis for an analysis and interpretation of a text or a movie. It might even be that a significant portion of what falls into the definition of “western” by the definition above does not belong to this category, but it could still serve an analytic purpose. If we have a clear picture of what kind of properties a stereotypical “western” story has and how they are related to each other, we have a theoretical tool to analyze a text or a movie *as* “western” fiction. We could even take a novel or a movie that does *not* take place in the proper mythical west but in, say, the modern-day American west or in Australia, and we could have an interesting analytical perspective for analyzing it *as* a “western” through the theory that has been developed for analyzing proper “westerns”. There is, in fact, even science fiction that takes place in frontiers of outer space instead of the old west but still uses the themes, tropes, and narrative styles of the “western” and can be illuminated by analyses from this perspective (Abbott 2006; Mogen 2007).

If genre categories are used like this, as projective tools for research and interpretation, treating a particular text as a member of a genre is not right or wrong, it is simply useful or it is not. Using a genre analysis is not presupposing the text to belong to any specific category of texts (which would be a correct or incorrect ascription), but merely that analyzing it from this perspective tells us something interesting. There are works that exhibit some of the characteristics of a genre without (fully) belonging to any, and hybridization of genre tropes is a common narrative device in literature, TV, and cinema (see Altman 1999). In such cases, the work to be analyzed

might not be a representative or even a real member of a genre, but the genre analysis might tell something interesting about it. For example, the 1990s television series *X-Files* mixes detective stories, horror, fantasy, and science fiction, and does not fall easily into any of these categories. Approaching the series through each genre as a lens brings a new and potentially interesting perspective by directing the focus of the analysis toward different things (such as different narrative or stylistic devices or properties of the characters or storylines) and enabling the conceptualization of the same details and characteristics in alternative ways. But the same is actually true for the genre categories themselves, when used as mere analytic devices in this way: they are not right or wrong, just useful or unhelpful, whether for the purposes of research or archiving, or for reaching the right audience in marketing. This also means that there may be several overlapping, alternative classificatory systems applied to the same product of expression, and that the same genre terms may be used differently in different theories and by different researchers. For example, a researcher who is interested in fantasy literature as an extension of fairytales may use a very different concept (and theory) of fantasy from that used by a researcher who is interested in contemporary fantasy genres and of how it differs from and is related to the genre of science fiction. The two researchers may end up misunderstanding each other and disagreeing about which stories should be included, but they are both using artificial conceptual constructs as tools for their own research purposes. One way of classifying does not exclude a completely different way of classifying focused on different features or criteria. Different practical purposes for classification may lead to different ways of classifying the same objects – and the same terminology, for example genre titles like “fantasy” or “legend”, may be defined differently by different researchers, in different theories, or in different disciplines. If practical purposes are what motivate the classification, there are no right and wrong classifications, only classifications that are more or less practical and efficient for the questions at hand. Different ways of conceptualizing the same texts, or different ways of using the same term for a class, may cause problems in communication between researchers, especially in interdisciplinary contexts, but here we must endorse methodological pluralism, not purism, about what counts as a valid way to categorize.

There is, however, another reason for classifying the research subject. This is the traditional idea of “carving nature at its joints”, as Plato put it in *Phaedrus* (265d–266a): the world in which we live consists of “natural” classes or *kinds* that share properties, and a traditional idea of the aims of science has been that science attempts to discover true natural kinds, their properties, and their law-like relations to each other (see Bird & Tobin 2012). In this case, the classification either captures the natural order or does not; it is right or wrong. Classification is not only the researcher’s way of ordering things according to some chosen properties – it is how the research subject itself is self-organized. It is often thought that looking for such classes of “natural order” is what *natural sciences* do, but for humanities (and for *human kinds*, that is, the categories used in humanities and social sciences) the story is very different – and for many good reasons, some of which we

will mention later. However, this old separatist idea of a methodological contradistinction between natural and human sciences is falling out of fashion among philosophers of science for a couple of simple reasons. First, the traditional picture of natural sciences as well as of natural kinds does not apply outside physical sciences (including chemistry) even among natural sciences. Biological kinds, for example, are very different from chemical kinds like gold or water that have traditionally acted as prototypes of natural kinds (see Wilson 1999). Second, although there are real differences between disciplines regarding issues like “naturalness” of classification, they are a matter of *degree* in precision, distinction, and the possibility of exceptions that ranges from physical sciences through biology and social sciences to humanities.

It seems quite clear that in the humanities too, classifications like genre categorizations, at least sometimes, refer to groups of objects that fall together “naturally” in the sense that the research subject itself (e.g. a tradition or an art form), has a structure of its own that the researcher may or may not capture. The researcher does not project the classification, but tries to discover pre-existing kinds. This difference is important. If researchers *try* to refer to such structure, they could be right or wrong about it. It is not only about usefulness any more. There is a clear difference between the two cases – projected and natural (or perhaps “quasi-natural” in a human context) classification – even though both have their uses in research. Some ideas that have been developed for making sense of natural or “quasi-natural” kinds in biology and social sciences apply to humanities, too. We will discuss them shortly.

But why is this difference so important, except for purely philosophical reasons? The answer is clear: it has several methodological implications. The most important difference between projected categories and categories that capture (quasi-)natural kinds is in what can be done with the categories regarding *inductive inferences*: whether or not *new properties* can be discovered from a sample and generalized as properties of the whole category in an epistemically justified manner. Kinds are what give grounds for that. An extreme example of kinds would be an *essentialist natural kind* such as a chemical element like iron or water that has a virtually infinite number of properties that are shared by all its instances. In this case, we could define the category with a handful of properties (e.g. the molecular structure), but the similarities within the category would not be limited to those. With a category like that, if we have identified it correctly, we could make *new discoveries* of its properties using only a small sample of the kind, and generalize those findings across the whole class. However, if a genre category is nothing more than a projection, there is no epistemic justification for making inductive inferences like this. All we can say about that category in general is what we can say in general about the properties we use for the classification itself. We are not entitled to study a handful of instances of such a category *as* members of that category and think that our observations could be generalized to the whole category. We discussed the westerns as an example of a genre defined by a single property, but since westerns do have other (discovered) shared properties in addition to what is in the

definition, let us take an analogical but hypothetical example. Let us say we are interested in fiction written about France between the Napoleonic wars and the First World War (but written after that) and let us say we label this as a new genre of “post-Napoleonica”. This could be an interesting research topic and we could perhaps make generalizations that relate to how the France of that time is depicted later. But in order to make those generalizations, we would need to study a statistically significant amount of post-Napoleonic fiction. Still, it is very doubtful that we would find a significant number of shared properties not directly related to the post-Napoleonic time itself and to the beliefs the later writers have about it.

The kinds that we have been calling “quasi-natural” so far are something in between projections and essentialist natural kinds. We will argue that at least some genre concepts, although not necessarily all of them, refer to “quasi-natural” kinds. It is important to notice that the possibility of making inferences across the whole category depends partly on how “natural” the category is: the more natural, the more we are justified in trusting the generalizations and inferences made about the category. Furthermore, the possibility of having substantial theories about particular genres, making generalizations on the properties of that genre beyond those properties that are used to *define* it in the first place, depends (partly) on whether the genre concept captures a real kind. In what follows, we will introduce and apply some philosophical tools to clarify this distinction and assess its significance.

### *Genres as Homeostatic Property Clusters*

The concept of natural kind, in its classical use, refers to a class that can be found in reality with recognizable borders and a set of properties shared by its members (see Bird & Tobin 2012). In human sciences, the difference between a clear natural kind and a purely projected class (i.e. an artificial classification based on contingent properties) is a matter of degree with possibly nothing to be found at either end of the spectrum. The real members of classes may share only partially the properties of what would be considered a prototypical representative of the kind. The distinction is still meaningful, for the more “natural” a class is, the more properties its members can be assumed to share and the stronger the generalizations and claims about the class can be. Partial natural kinds can be found in a human social context in the form of “homeostatic property clusters”. There is no shared essence or uniform structure (as in some kinds in natural sciences, such as chemical kinds), but some properties are linked together (they *cluster*) in a reliable way because something binds them together. This binding factor may, of course, also be an essence or a shared internal structure, but it does not need to be, and in human sciences in general it rarely is. The heart of the matter is not, however, whether this “binding factor” is an essence or not, but that something binding the properties together exists. For example, people have implicit ideas about what kind of properties (style, plot turns, character types etc.) go together in a given genre and these ideas inform both readers and writers: recognition of a property triggers expectations



and the writer builds on them. In other words, members of a natural kind share several independent features that do not result from projections made by researchers.

Natural kinds make inductive inferences possible. For example it is possible to gather information about laments in a certain region, to find a number of recurrent features, as for example in the Viena region of Karelia, where laments exhibit common stylistic and grammatical features, alliteration and parallelism, use of common images, and a common distinctive lexicon. The region could be extended to all of Karelia, where laments would share all of these basic features but to a lesser degree, because for instance the common lexicon of each region was somewhat different and the features shared across all regions were fewer. The region can be further expanded to include all Finnic laments across different Finnic languages, in which case the shared features are increasingly abstract. (Frog & Stepanova 2011: 204–209; Stepanova 2012: 264–273, 282–283.) It is even possible to expand the field under consideration cross-culturally: Finnic and Baltic laments, for instance, also share such stylistic and grammatical features as repetition, alliteration, and parallelism, combined with a consistent conception of death and the otherworld, although the language and images employed are culture-dependent (Stepanova 2011). Within any one of these frames – with some reserve, of course – it is possible to infer that these features recur in all laments of the particular region.

Genres do not always resemble natural kinds. By now it should, however, be clear that sometimes they do, and strongly: it is possible to make inductive inferences about them. For example, it is possible to make fairly reliable inductive inferences about Finnic laments or detective stories. Nevertheless, Finnic laments and detective stories are kinds that are much more prone to changes and much less homogeneous than many paradigmatic natural kinds, such as iron. Firstly, like most kinds in the humanities, they are historical: the properties we are interested in have not always existed, they have not always clustered, the clusters change over time, and they will some day cease to exist. Secondly, even though it is possible to make inductive inferences about Finnic laments or detective stories, members of the kind – individual laments or detective stories – nevertheless also differ from each other. They do not share a uniform structure, as some natural kinds in the physical sciences and chemistry do. Certain features are prevalent within the boundaries of the kind, but not all individual specimens share all of these features, and additionally, the boundaries of the kind are somewhat fuzzy. Thirdly, as is the case in many kinds in the humanities, Finnic laments and detective stories as kinds are constructed and dependent on people's ability to conceptualize, understand, and give meaning to things they do. Given these differences, is it possible to see for example Finnic laments as analogous to natural kinds? This question is related to the question of the possibility of "universal genres", which we will set aside for a while for concentrated discussion in the following section. Nevertheless, we may also ask: is it possible to treat Finnic laments as kinds that enable inductive inferences in the way natural kinds do, without losing sight of all these differences? We claim that it is.



Actually, the first two differences do not set the laments apart from kinds in the natural sciences. Especially in biology, many kinds are historical, their boundaries are fuzzy and their distinctive features are unevenly distributed within the kind. For example, animal species are historical, in spite of the fact that they have often been used as paradigmatic examples of natural kinds alongside the chemical elements. It is entirely possible that not a single member of a species has all of the properties that characterize that species. There are, of course, going to be properties that are shared by all members (such as having a skeleton), but these may all be properties that are shared by other species, too, so they cannot be used as defining properties of the given species. In addition, the boundaries between species are often fuzzy, and speciation itself is a gradual differentiation process (see Wilson 1999). Similarities between biological and cultural spheres have, on other issues, led researchers to apply biological models and ideas to culture and traditions in order to capture their shared or analogical structural properties, especially similarities in cultural and biological change (e.g. Honko 1985; Sperber 1996; Mace *et al.* 2005). What we shall do next is to apply Richard Boyd's (1991; 1999) ideas of natural kinds as homeostatic property clusters, which was developed to make sense of how and why it is possible to make inductive inferences about biological kinds like species, to similar kinds in humanities in general and to genres in particular.

A homeostatic property cluster is a set of properties that cluster reliably (they maintain homeostasis), and thus form a kind. This happens because of some internal or external mechanism, not for example because of some essential factor that unites the research subject and from which these properties would necessarily follow. This mechanism explains why the properties cluster. Biological species are a good example of this (see Boyd 1999). The first thing to understand about biological species is that there are no essences of species. Species are basically collections of individuals that are related to each other more closely than to some other individuals (to which they are also related, given the common ancestry of the species) and that resemble each other in various ways. The original resemblance comes from the common ancestry, and as long as there is a gene flow between the different parts of the population through breeding, the genetic variation remains continuous and distributed across the population, maintaining the unity within the population. This is a process that constitutes a causal mechanism ensuring the clustering of certain properties within the population. So, even if no specific animal belonging to the population has *all* of the so-called species-typical properties, it is possible to say that the kind in question, the species, has these properties. If the mechanism (interbreeding) breaks down and the population is divided, random changes (genetic drift and mutation) and natural selection will make some properties specific to only some descendant populations. However, they are still very similar. As differences between populations grow, they eventually end up developing new, clearly differentiated property clusters, but this is a gradual process. Thus, a kind can be historical and sometimes its borders with neighbouring kinds are not sharp, and nevertheless it is not a projection, but something "out there" that researchers discover. The mechanism that causes the clustering of the

properties also enables inductive reasoning: a researcher can, for example, study the properties of a limited number of animals belonging to a species, and make the inductive assumption that the findings largely apply to the whole species, even if not all discovered properties can be expected to be shared by all of the individuals.

Many human kinds and cultural categories have similarities with species. For example, there are property clusters that we call genres: stylistic, thematic and narrative properties cluster within a text, and same properties come together time after time – and there are reasons for this. In the case of literature, the readers and writers (as well as critics and publishers) as a community have assumptions, often implicit, about the properties of the genre, and of those properties belonging together. They have developed these assumptions by engaging in the social practices of this community (e.g. reading and learning to make connections, or using these assumptions as a writer to communicate implicitly and to build expectations). These social practices maintain the cluster. For example, there are properties that go together in detective stories. A competent reader recognizes some of these properties and this guides her reading, making her able to predict what is going to happen, to interpret things in a text in a certain ways, even though she would not interpret them in that way in another text, and so on. These expectations are socio-cultural, readers acquire the knowledge of them (explicitly or implicitly), and the writers use the conventions guiding the expectations, knowingly or not, whether they go by them or break them, maybe even changing the conventions. These factors constitute the socio-cultural mechanism that keeps the properties of the detective story clustering: the practices bring about the conventions that result in similarities in the members of the genre. These mechanisms explain why certain properties are frequently found together. To explicate the internal logic of detective story framework is to explicate the conventions that are in play in the mechanism.

### *Laments as a Local Kind – or a Universal One?*

Genres also differ from species, since they have a fundamental semantic element. If Finnic laments do form a homeostatic property cluster, the mechanism that produces and sustains that property cluster is necessarily social and cultural. Such cultural mechanisms can be surprisingly stable. Ron Mallon (2003) has used the idea of homeostatic property clusters when discussing social roles, and he points out that customs produce quite stable property clusters. For example, men in Western countries wear pants, not skirts. This is a very stable property, and fully a result of a convention. Also kinds whose existence depends fully on conventions can be remarkably stable. This may be the case especially if the convention is deeply interconnected with other conventions and changing it would therefore have drastic social consequences. It may also happen when a convention has an important social role. Finnic laments might be a good example of the latter: the genre had an important social function, as Lauri Honko (1974) notes: laments were

a socially regulated way of expressing sorrow, and that function was interfaced with use in public rituals in which grief was expressed, such as funerals and weddings. As long as a genre has such an important social role, it is likely that it remains stable and alive. Then again, after the disappearance of the role, the genre is prone to disappear as well. If the mechanism that produces the clustering of properties, and thus sustains the kind, is robust enough – that is, if it is not disturbed by small changes and it works reasonably reliably – it is justifiable to call the kind in question a homeostatic property cluster. If the social mechanism related to Finnic laments was such that it ensured their continuous existence, and the clustering properties such as alliteration and metaphorical language stayed fairly reliably the same, it was – and is – possible to make inductive inferences about the laments produced by that mechanism. However, the mechanism that ensured the continuous existence of Finnic laments was interconnected with traditions of ritual practices within a pre-modern cultural environment. The mechanisms producing those ritual practices ceased to function in the process of modernization and especially in relation to the changes introduced with the Soviet era, with the consequence that the mechanisms producing laments were also affected and gradually ceased to function in a self-perpetuating way. (Stepanova 2013; 2014.) Let us now examine this local kind more closely. Is it really just a local kind?

Let us assume that in addition to properties *a*, *b*, and *c* (such as *alliteration*, *parallelism*, and *poetic synonyms for most nouns*) which are known to be found in many laments, we also find property *d* (say, a *consistent conception of death and the otherworld*) in many of them (Stepanova 2011). Perhaps property *d* is not a result of or otherwise related to *a*, *b*, or *c*. If we know that the genre is “out there” in the world, that is, that it is not just a projection made by the researcher, we have good reasons to presume that property *d* can be found not only in many of the laments we have studied, but in many other laments as well.

Two central features of the clustering need to be noted here. First, none of the properties that cluster need to be present in all cases in order for them to be generalizable properties of the “population” of individuals that constitute the kind (e.g. individual laments). This means that our initial ideas on what properties are central to the kind may be wrong. Even if we originally define a genre with a group of properties, further study may lead us to conclude that some of them are not important after all. The main point is that if we want to discover real kinds, then the properties that cluster together in these kinds are *independent of our classification*. This is because the clustering is caused or constituted by underlying mechanisms.

The second important observation is that the property clusters are not “building blocks”. Firstly, they may have fuzzy borders with each other. Secondly, kinds may form hierarchies in which some properties cluster across a wide range of instances (that constitute the kind) and a group of additional properties cluster within a subgroup of instances of the kind, making up another kind. Thus, for example, we see higher-order taxa above the species level in biology, as well as sub-species. In the humanities, too, it is useful to group whole kinds together in respect of shared properties

or divide them into sub-categories, such as subgenres. Caution is needed here, however. Even if a genre, let us say legends in central Europe, is a real kind and further divisions can be made within this kind in respect of some properties, it does not mean that these sub-divisions are automatically real kinds, too. If a division is based on a difference of a single property (e.g. whether the legend is migratory or local), this further division may be a projection within a real kind. If, however, there are several properties that cluster and these clusters are alternatives to other clusters of properties, we have found new real kinds within broader real kinds. The main point here is, again, that some properties go together in significantly higher frequency than by chance, and more crucially, that there are underlying mechanisms that account for this clustering.

Our inductive inferences are more justified the better we understand what kind of a mechanism produces and sustains the clustering not only of properties *a*, *b*, and *c*, but also of *d*. It might sometimes be illuminating to read theories about a specific genre as descriptions of the mechanism that produces the genre as a homeostatic property cluster. Furthermore, in comparative literature, the various genre theories that focus on genre in general as social action (e.g. Fowler 1982; Jaus 1982; Miller 1984; Barton 1994; Frow 2006) can be seen as theories of the general mechanism for genre in literature. Similarly, Richard Bauman's view of genres as important elements of social practice (Bauman 1992; Shuman & Hasan-Rokem 2012), for example, can be understood as a theory about the general mechanism that produces genres in folklore. For most practical purposes, however, it is not necessary to know the details of the mechanisms. For example, some recurring properties of laments – such as the “grieving questions” and “tender address” mentioned by Honko (1974: 10) – may be due to some cognitive or other psychological tendencies, capacities or limitations that fall outside the scope of folkloristics. These can be left as black boxes to be opened by researchers from other disciplines in the division of cognitive labor in academia. However, it is important to recognize that, in assuming a real kind, one assumes the existence of a mechanism or a set of mechanisms maintaining the kind. Any knowledge on the mechanistic basis of that kind gives knowledge on its scope and the validity, accuracy and generality of inferences made about it.

This brings us to the question about universal genres – genres that seem to exist independently of any such particular, historically bounded mechanisms that we have been discussing so far. In folkloristics, the nature of universal, supra-local genres has been the subject of an intense debate (see Ben-Amos 1976a; Honko 1989): are only local genres real, as Dan Ben-Amos claims, or could there be grounds for claiming that some genres are universal? Should such very general, “universal” genres as myth, fairytale, and legend be understood just as more or less useful projections? A philosophical distinction between homeostatic property clusters and projections will not solve the question, as it is an empirical one – as Honko (1989: 16) rightly notes. Nevertheless, the distinction can be used to clarify the question.

Ben-Amos (1976a: xxvi–xxvii) rejects the idea of universal, permanent genres that share some underlying structural features. In other words, he

justly resists the idea that kinds in humanities resemble essentialist natural kinds, such as chemical elements. However, even in many natural sciences real kinds do not have an essence: they do not share an underlying structure. Even though there are no essentialist natural kinds in biology, there are homeostatic property clusters. Species are real kinds – as are the higher-order taxa above the species level. Though the comparison must not be stretched too far, something similar might be true in folklore.

A few pages earlier we set aside for a while the question of whether laments in general can be treated as analogous to natural kinds. Now we can rephrase the question: does the existence of Finnic laments as a homeostatic property cluster indeed depend solely on a local mechanism? Or is there a larger-scale mechanism that produces and sustains a larger-scale kind – namely laments – and also governs the Finnic laments? A universal mechanism that produces similarities around the world could rest on something as simple as what Honko (1974) describes as the “sorrow of all peoples”. It could also be that there are universal mechanisms that produce not universal genres, but comparable boundaries between local genres: for example the difference between narratives people believe to be true and the ones recognized as fiction may be something people all around the world find important because of some universal, psychological mechanism. If this is the case, it can influence genre formation universally. To defend the idea of real, not just projected universal genres, we do not need to believe in universally uniform, underlying structural features – all that is needed are universal mechanisms.

If the mechanism that holds a social or cultural kind together rests partly on characteristics that all humans share, it may in some cases be justifiable to talk about universal social or cultural kinds. Some of the recurrent structures of stories in different cultures may be a result of our cognitive capacities and limitations in understanding and recalling stories (see Sperber 1996). If it is possible to find a mechanism that works independently all around the world and produces homeostatic property clusters similar to each other – for example laments – then the existence of these property clusters does not depend solely on local mechanisms. Of course, if a mechanism that produces similarities around the world rests on something like our cognitive capacities as human beings, the number of inductive inferences that could be made from a resulting universal genre would most likely be very limited. In addition, just observing genres that can by some criteria be classified as laments in different parts of the world is not enough for settling the question. For that, one would need to find evidence of the mechanism that works in all of the observed cases.

Mechanisms always work in an environment, be it large or small, and when the environment changes, the mechanism may stop working. A change in the local climate can lead to the extinction of a biological species. A species may also evolve into two distinct species if the population for some reason divides into two groups that are no longer in contact with each other. Similarly, changes in the social and cultural environment may lead to the disappearance or disintegration even of long-lived genres. Relatively small changes can deactivate a delicate mechanism, but significant changes

are needed for disturbing the functioning of the most robust mechanisms. If there are universal mechanisms that rest on universal features of the human kind and influence the formation of genres, the mechanisms and the resulting genres might disappear only when the whole species either perishes or goes through substantial changes. Genres that stay homeostatic solely due to local mechanisms are more fragile.

### *People, Their Genres, and the Historicity of Genres*

Genres as projections are constructed by researchers, but genres as kinds are constructed by other people. Some genre-producing mechanisms may include explicit awareness of a genre and self-classification of what is being done. People's own classificatory practices may sometimes merely reflect (rightly or wrongly) the categories existing in their cultural practices, but sometimes the act of classifying is a part of the mechanism constituting the very genre. As a consequence, even the researchers' conceptualizations and theories can sometimes shape genres. The researchers' understanding and ways of conceptualizing a genre can affect or even become a part of the mechanisms that sustain the genre if people using the genre become aware of researchers ideas and start to use them. Thus researchers may strengthen genres. Or, in some cases, the external classification may generate a resistance that changes the genre. Then again, researchers may also continue using a genre as a classification even after the genre as a homeostatic property cluster has dissolved. The historicity of genres has several consequences that researchers need to take into account.

First, we must discuss the distinction between emic and etic genres in relation to homeostatic property clusters. Emic genres are not always homeostatic property clusters, and not all genres that can be counted as homeostatic property clusters are emic genres. Emic genres can of course be homeostatic property clusters, and they may often be, but not always: the differentiation between two emic genres can be based, for example, on just one or two features. For example, an emic genre classification may make a clear distinction between religious songs and other songs, and not hold their significant similarities as a reason to count them as forming just one genre. A researcher may, however, have good reasons to claim that these songs form a homeostatic property cluster, since they share properties and the reason they share them is that they come from the same musical tradition, are sung by the same people, and influences flow from one singer to another. In other words, the classifications people use can be projections created for a specific purpose, and do not necessarily correspond to any natural-like kind that a researcher might find. Genres that are homeostatic property clusters may often be emic, but for the reasons just mentioned, that too is not always the case. In addition, such situations are possible in which people belonging to a community do not perceive a genre as a genre at all, since they do not know enough about other peoples' genres to make comparisons and to perceive their own genre as a genre amongst other genres.



Nevertheless, people are often very well aware of genres, and lots of meaning is loaded into some of them, and this may become a new basis for sustaining the homeostasis of the cluster, for example for the sake of maintaining tradition. For this reason it is possible that even though the mechanism that originally sustained a genre as a homeostatic property cluster breaks up, the genre nevertheless survives – or it is revived – as a fairly stable property cluster. For example Seto *leelos* used to be disappearing, but the tradition has been revived, and today even young Setos sing *leelos* and form *leelo* choirs (Kuutma 2006). The properties of traditional *leelos* are well known, as they have been studied. The revivers of the old tradition aim both to know the old genre well, and to develop the tradition, for example by mixing *leelo* with contemporary popular music. It may be possible to make fairly reliable inductive inferences about contemporary *leelos* – and this is possible partly as a result of the work of folklorists, who have studied the old *leelos* and thus made the revival of the genre possible. So the *leelo* genre lives on as an adaptation of its earlier homeostatic property cluster, even though the meanings attached to *leelos* and the cultural mechanism that sustains the genre are very different from what they were in the nineteenth century. This kind of conscious retention or revival of a kind so that the mechanism that sustains the kind goes through significant changes, is possible – and happens – only with cultural and social kinds.

Ian Hacking (1995; 1999) has introduced the notion of the “looping effect of human kinds”. When people are classified in a certain way, they sometimes change their behavior as a response to the classification, and as a result, the description of the kind has to be changed: when people belonging to a certain human kind no longer behave as they did before, the distinct properties of the kind in question have changed. This makes human kinds unstable. As Mallon (2003) notes, people’s reactions to the ways in which they are classified can also stabilize human kinds, not only destabilize them. Especially institutional social roles – Mallon mentions U.S. Senators and licensed bass fishermen (2003: 322) – can be very stable precisely because people hold on to them and do not wish them to change. Similar stabilization seems to happen in the case of Seto *leelos*, even though it is not a kind used directly for classifying people. *Leelos* are important to the Setos, and they are an important element in the process of reviving Seto cultural identity, so it is not surprising that the kind goes through processes similar to human kinds that people use when making sense of their identities. Similarly, the criticism that much science fiction has received from literary critics, along with a perceived lack of understanding of what science fiction is all about in the first place, has made many science-fiction writers and readers stick to “their ghetto” even more strictly (see Gunn & Candelaria 2005).

Sometimes it happens that a single genre is first a homeostatic property cluster, and thus a quasi-natural kind about which a researcher can make inductive inferences – but then something happens, and the genre turns into a projection. Elsewhere in this volume, Kaarina Koski discusses the legend genre, especially in Finland. It seems that the legends told in Finland at some point most likely formed a homeostatic property cluster, but in the present day, there are good reasons to count the genre as a justified projection.



It can be argued that the legends collected in Finland in the early twentieth-century form a fairly continuous property cluster. It is also quite clear what kind of a mechanism produced and sustained the relative uniformity of the genre: when repeated, scattered stories and anecdotes started to conform to the legend form people were used to. Sometimes people even told a new story directly in the given, familiar form. In other words, tradition shaped the ways in which people told things, and this influenced both the form and the contents of the legends. Thus tradition was a part of the cultural mechanism that ensured the fairly reliable clustering of certain properties. It was and it still is possible to make inductive inferences about the resulting legend genre.

As Koski (this volume) notes, urbanization changed the situation. The turning point of modernization meant such a drastic change in the environment that the mechanism that used to sustain the legend genre broke down. Obviously, tradition rarely entirely disappears in such ruptures, nor did it in this case. The mechanism that produced a relatively uniform legend genre, however, disintegrated, and as a result, the properties that were formerly typical of legends got detached from each other. Thus properties that were typical of the legend genre can still be found in many kinds of texts, but they no longer cluster in the same predictable way. When a mechanism that sustains a local genre stops working, it is possible that a notable part of the properties do not disappear, but rather that they just no longer cluster.

However, researchers may still have good reasons for using the classification “legend”. Properties typical of legends can still be observed in contemporary tradition, and it may well be fruitful to classify some contemporary text as a legend. In this case, the kind “legend” is not, however, a homeostatic property cluster, since the properties that earlier characterized legends are now found scattered in many different kinds of texts. Instead, it should be seen as a projection, and the criterion used for identification may be family resemblance. A projection of this kind can be perfectly justifiable, if it proves to be fruitful. In another study the same text could be classified as something else, and this is not inconsistent with classifying it as a legend, too.

In other words, there is a historical turning point which can be observed in the archives: material classified as legends prior to this point has certain reliably clustering properties, and material classified after it does not, even though the later legends have strong family resemblances with the earlier legends. It is likely that there are other similar intermittent archival classes. The significant consequences for a researcher are easy to grasp: it is possible to make much stronger inductive inferences about the material collected before the turning point than about the material collected after it, and it is not possible to extend the results of these inferences based on the earlier material to the later material.

### *Genres, Classes, and Theories: Some Consequences*

We started by distinguishing between genres as projections and genres as real kinds. For one thing, a genre concept that is a projection may be useful when organizing the research subject: the genre defines the thing researchers wish to study according to a set of properties that are motivated by intellectual or practical interests. For another thing, in art studies, a rich theoretical framework that is developed around a particular genre concept, even if it is a projection, could serve as a tool for analysis and give a perspective for interpretation. But genre concepts and theories like this are projections. Making projections is not, strictly speaking, a knowledge-producing practice. But if there are cultural and literary phenomena “out there” that are homeostatic property clusters, then researchers can make discoveries. They can make generalizations about genres and even find new genres. However, as we have seen, the distinction is not quite that simple. The mechanisms that produce the clusters can be more or less robust, they can sustain the clustering more or less reliably, and they can change, all by themselves, or sometimes even because the activities of researchers “intervene”. Genres are also prone to mix and hybridize. Mechanisms can also disappear, which does not necessarily mean that the homeostatic clusters disappear at once – they can start to break up slowly, leaving us with sets of properties that cluster less and less reliably. This means that the line between being a real kind and being a projection is a fuzzy one.

There are, however, lessons to be learned. For example, theories that focus on the socio-cultural basis of genres should be mindful of what exactly they are theories about: about genres as a general phenomenon, or about ways in which individual genres are generated. The latter needs greater precision regarding the mechanisms involved. The most important thing is, however, to be precise about what the genre classification *is supposed to do*. Take, for example, the western, which probably has some features of a property cluster but is not perfectly homeostatic. We need to specify what we are doing when we are reading a text or watching a movie as western fiction. Not all genre concepts refer to similar things in the world nor, from a theoretical point of view, do they do the same things. Some genres may be projections and some real kinds even if we discuss them in the same context, and the same genre term, such as “western”, may be used in different ways *even if it seems to refer to the same thing*, that is, more or less the same group of movies or novels. The concept of western may be used for the simple categorization of movies with a certain property: they are set in a certain time and place. But as it happens, there are commonalities in these movies and one can make a theory of western fiction based on that – that is, there is a real kind of westerns “out there”. Now, the question arises: is the *aim* of a particular theory to be a conceptual framework for analyzing western movies (or analyzing a movie *as a western*), or is the aim of the theory to be a description of something that the researcher discovers and that exists within the cultural phenomenon of fiction, independently of the classification? If the former, the criterion for a good theory is how useful it is for an analysis. In this case, the theory does not involve falsifiable, true or

false claims about phenomena independent of how an academic decides to look at them. But if the latter is the case, the theory, first of all, presupposes that there is a homeostatic cluster that it speaks *about*, and the claims it makes about the cluster can be true or false – or partly true, but nevertheless on a scale of veracity.<sup>1</sup>

It also follows that the role in analysis of individual texts, movies, and so on, is different depending on whether a genre concept is used as a projection or as the name of an alleged, quasi-natural kind. Here we need to introduce one more philosophical distinction: that between *data* and *phenomena* (Bogen & Woodward 1988). Data are produced in an interaction with concrete research objects, such as texts. A reading of a particular text from a particular perspective produces data (either about that text or about something else). A phenomenon is the object of interest, a thing independent of the research. The individual text as a work of literature can be a phenomenon of interest in itself: that is, all the properties that the text has that make it possible to have all the interpretations that can be made of it. Individual readings are just data about the text as a phenomenon. Or the phenomenon of interest may be the poetry of a particular culture and the text is data for that. Or the phenomenon may be a genre, such as western fiction as it is in the cultural reality of fiction. In that case, the individual work becomes viewed as an instantiation of the genre as a phenomenon and consideration shifts from the particular text to the homeostatic property cluster through which different instantiations of the genre are recognized and interpreted.

If the concept of the western is used as a projection, it can be used as a tool for analyzing a particular text or a movie *as* a western in order to say something about that text or movie. And as we have said before, there is no need to restrict this perspective to only proper members of the genre. Therefore, movies like Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) or George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) can be analyzed as westerns without any commitments outside that particular analysis. Analyzing them as westerns gives a perspective and conceptual tools for producing data that tells something about that particular movie. On the other hand, if the concept of genre is used to name a kind, the genre is the object of research. Properties of particular movies are data that are used to show that the phenomenon of a homeostatic cluster of western properties exists independently of analysis. The researcher tries to get information about the kind. In this case, movies used for study must be exemplary of the genre, and using *Brokeback Mountain* or *Star Wars* would be plainly bad research. Both of these aspirations clearly exist in, for example, comparative literature and film studies, both in the analysis of particular texts or movies, and in theoretical discussions, and this is all fine. It becomes problematic only if the two notions of genre are not kept apart, or if the notion of genre is treated as one uniform thing.

The distinction is even more difficult to observe – and at the same time, even more crucial to acknowledge – when we shift our focus from interpretation to descriptive research involving generalizations. As mentioned above, projective categorizations can serve as a way to define the research object: if a researcher is interested in, say, a particular type

of legend, he or she may create a category for this purpose to delimit the analysis. It makes perfect sense to make inductive generalizations on the chosen type of legends. But these inferences should, then, follow the rules of statistical inferences, including those pertaining to sample sizes. One cannot assume that what can be observed in a small sample generalizes to the whole category. Furthermore, mere generalizations about the legend as a type do not say anything about, for example, what is distinctive for this particular type of legends in comparison to other types of legends. Mere generalizations are not evidence for a link between the membership of the category and the properties under study. Both of these inferences, if made, make an *assumption* that there is a connection between membership in the group and the properties that have been found. This assumption is the very idea of real kinds we have discussed here. If a researcher (*a*) makes generalizations about certain properties of a category that has been defined in terms of other properties, and (*b*) these additional properties are meant to be properties of the category rather than being arbitrary and *accidentally* shared by many members of the category, there are three possibilities. The first possibility is that the properties are indeed connected and the “discovered” properties reflect those that define the category. In other words, there is no independent category “out there” in the world, waiting to be found, only properties that are derivative of other properties or derivative of particular combinations of other properties. The second possibility is that the researcher is making false, unfounded inferences and the observed phenomenon is simply an accident of convergent probabilities in the data organized in a projected category. The third possibility is that the projected category correlates with a phenomenon in reality and the researcher has discovered a real kind. If we rule out the second possibility in the philosophical analysis of such research practices, we may say that when a researcher makes inductive inferences based on a small sample that is not statistically representative, he or she is *implicitly* making assumptions about kinds, and these assumptions are confirmed or discredited by future research.

In this article, we have shown two things, building on the philosophical discussion of kinds. The first is that there are differences with real consequences between the notions of projected categories and real kinds. Although they are both useful theoretical tools, a clear distinction between a projection and a real kind should be kept in mind when discussing genres. The second and more significant is that there are good reasons to think that there are real kinds, such as genres, among the things studied in the humanities. Real kinds can exist without essences or the sort of universality that is connected to natural kinds in some of the natural sciences. Using the idea of homeostatic property clusters in an analysis of real kinds, we see how local, historical, and even fragile categories can be real kinds. There is consequently an epistemic justification for research practices implicitly assuming such kinds.

## NOTES

- 1 It may also be good to note that both ways may lead to applying the theory to a wider class of cultural entities, e.g. movies. Even if the aim of the theory is to give tools for analyzing typical westerns, the theory may still say something interesting about, say, certain kinds of science-fiction movies, as discussed earlier. And if the theory is about westerns as a real kind of movie, it may still turn out that westerns are just a subclass of some wider genre that forms a homeostatic cluster. But the criteria for such extensions are different, given the different aims of the theories themselves.

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Relations between  
and within Genres

II



### 3. The Legend Genre and Narrative Registers

During the last century, the study of legends has encountered essential changes concerning both the research perspectives and the subject itself. Cultural changes accompanied by industrialization and urbanization brought about new topics and contents for legends as well as new forms of discourse in which legends flourish. In pre-industrial milieus, legends about the interstices of the organized society – such as human vicissitudes, crimes and violence, the restless dead, spirits or the devil, or hidden treasures – could spread as entertaining stories, local news or hearsay. Their urban counterparts about the margins of contemporary social reality – such as diseases, crimes, threatening subcultures, the supernatural, or just extraordinary events – similarly spread in many forms including the social and traditional media. In research, the insights that developed in the new discourses have broadened the theoretical scope on legends. However, a definition of legend is not generally agreed upon.

The scholarly discussion over defining legend retains as its starting point Jacob Grimm's remarks on folk prose in the 1860s. Grimm's division between tales as more poetic and pedagogic and legends as shorter, historic and attached to named people and places has been completed, criticized and reshaped dozens of times during the twentieth century (see e.g. Tangherlini 1990). During recent decades, Finnish folklore students have been taught that legends are short, monoepisodic, stereotypical folk narratives with the function of telling the truth (Jauhiainen 1982: 56–57). In fact, defining legends as stereotyped denies their tendency to ecotypification and historicization, as being portrayed as local events that have occurred to explicitly named people.<sup>1</sup> C. W. von Sydow had borrowed the term *oicotype* from botany to denote the fact that tales of the same type form special local forms, adapted to local traditions and tastes in different districts (von Sydow 1948: 50–52, 58–59, 243). In belief legends, supernatural actors are typically changed to beings that are locally known. Contemporary legends, in turn, are adjusted to refer to currently relevant phenomena, such as commercially dominant companies, as well as to ethnic or social minorities that evoke prejudices in the local environment. Timothy Tangherlini suggests that the process of ecotypification could be extended to the entire legend genre: the narratives are adapted to the needs of the culture and its tradition. Tangherlini likens

the process of *historicizing* to diachronic ecotypification: legends appear historical because they refer to locally verifiable topographic and geographic features, and rely on culturally credible characters. (Tangherlini 1990: 377–379.)

Another debated point concerns the truth value of legends. The historicity and ecotypification of legends to local life were long interpreted as a claim of truth. The alleged belief in legends was later observed to be overestimated. The modified suggestion was that legends involve a claim to be judged as true or false. (Dégh & Vázsonyi 1971: 282, 299–302; Tangherlini 1990: 378–379; Dégh 1996: 39.) Narrators use an array of strategies to convince the audience about their truth. Because legends typically make extraordinary claims, a special rhetoric of truth is applied especially in oral performances of legend. (Oring 2008: 128–129.) The narrator can also choose to frame the legend as a mere story, distancing himself from the narrated content and thus discouraging serious discussion about its truth value (Bennett 1984a; Smith 1981). Legends are concerned with exceptional, potentially true events in the margins of the narrators' and listeners' own, conceivable social reality. They debate and contest the stability of everyday knowledge and also give us an opportunity for pretend play and make-believe, challenging the boundaries of reality (Kinsella 2011: 18–19). A recent definition claims that "legend telling is the communal exploration of social boundaries" (Ellis 2003: 11).

We can detect three major trends affecting the study of legends in the course of the last century. First, in the first half of the twentieth century, there was a quest for a more explicit categorization, which was connected with classificatory ideals. Second, observations of living narration and variation resulted in questioning the classificatory model and introducing instead an interest in the living meaning-making process and performance. Third, profound changes in Western societies during the twentieth century changed both the topics of legends and the forms of transmission and expression. The scholarship of contemporary legends started to focus on new questions, such as the ways legends, as narratives and processes, not only reflect but also shape the social and political reality.

In addition, while legend studies widened the scope outside narrative expression, in narrative studies a strong development towards schematic structures and discourse practices (e.g. Siikala 1984; 1990; 2000) meant redefining the perspective on genres and going past etic labels, such as legend. New scholarly ideas both within and outside legend studies did not, however, lead all researchers to abandon the older conceptions designed to serve studies based on archives. Large archives provide legend collections showing motifs and world views which cannot be recorded or observed as a living tradition any more. Consequently, for several decades now, the study of legends has not followed an unbroken line of inquiry but rather consisted of many lines. Important but not unbridgeable borderlines exist between pre-industrial and contemporary legend material, as well as between the study of archived texts and living processes. Another gap exists between legend studies, focusing on instantiations of recurrent legend motifs, and studies of speech genres, investigating the discursive practices of various

topics and genres in a chosen community. Both these lines of study can analyse partly the same material but approach it from different directions.

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the term legend was used in reference to a variety of meanings, ranging from fabulates with a fixed plot (af Klintberg 2010) to “mind viruses”, ideas that adopt new forms to survive and spread in human communities (Ellis 2003: 83). If the concept is restricted to denote coherent textual items only, essential characteristics of the use, transmission and meanings of legend motifs would be neglected. However, if the concept includes all possible forms, it would refer to a certain folkloristic perspective but become too wide to be an analytic tool. Nevertheless, other analytical tools would be easily available to study the various forms of legends.

In this article, I will evaluate the background and difficulties of defining the legend as a genre and suggest a linguistic genre analysis to study the narrative performances of legends. The relationship between genre in folklore studies and linguistics is approached from the perspective of systemic functional register theory.

### *Classificatory Ideal and Its Critique in Legend Studies*

Genre has been understood in folklore studies in various ways: as permanent or evolving forms, classificatory categories, or forms of discourse. Each notion of genre has served a particular purpose. New research interests and approaches have needed and will again need reshaped conceptions of genre. (Ben-Amos 1976: 31.) In legend studies, the classificatory notion of genre has been perhaps the most influential, albeit it has been criticized and later conceived to have its advantages mainly in archival work (Siikala 2000: 218). At the beginning of the twentieth century, established practices of folklore study essentially relied on large corpora of archived materials, which were assumed to require classification and labelling before study. The model for discovering regularities in the text masses was taken from Carl von Linné’s botanical systematization. (E.g. Haavio 1942; von Sydow 1948; Honko 1962; 1964; 1968; Pentikäinen 1968; Ben-Amos 1976: 30–33.) During the second half of the twentieth century, the classificatory idea developed into theories of genre systems, assuming that genres as distinct entities necessarily form a functional system, which covers all the traditional communication of a given group and in which genres have an inherent functional distribution, “a working arrangement” (Honko 1989: 13, 15).

This classificatory interest also guided the formulation of the genre of legend. As a broad and non-specific characterization, Grimm’s definition was soon found to be inadequate for scholarly purposes. To rectify the situation, C. W. von Sydow proposed a wide range of subgenres in the 1930s. He coined the category of memorates as stories about people’s own experiences, hence pointing out that they are influenced by legends and could, when stylistically shaped and adopted by other narrators, become memorial legends. Fabulates, in turn, were internationally recognized motifs reflecting tradition and inventive fantasy. He noted that fabulates often lack

local places and personal names and that belief in them is only partial. (von Sydow 1948: 73–75, 87.)

Von Sydow's model of classification was adopted and elaborated especially in Nordic folk belief studies (e.g. Granberg 1935; Haavio 1942; Honko 1962). An essential source critical observation, already made by von Sydow, was that fabulates with certain migratory plots and stylistic features kept intact and did not adapt to local environments, while other legends functioned as a part of the local folk belief discourse (von Sydow 1948: 63, 74–76). In his study of the Finnish house-spirit tradition, for example, Martti Haavio characterized fabulates as *fantasy legends*: entertaining stories based on an internationally recognized plot, dramatic enough to spread without adaptation into local milieus and thus not reflections of actual folk belief. They were distinguished from belief legends proper, which, in turn, had local colouring and were essentially in accord with local beliefs. The distinction between fabulates and belief legends has been crucial in Finnish folk-belief studies. (Haavio 1942: 9; Honko 1964: 12–13; Jauhiainen 1982: 57–59; see also Koski 2007: 1–3.)

The subcategory of memorates – narratives about personally experienced events – was developed further for source-critical purposes. The folk-belief-oriented approach in the 1960s focused on literal interpretations of narratives and their value as reports of authentic supernatural experiences. Especially in Lauri Honko's and Juha Pentikäinen's research, the role of first-hand memorates was crucial as accounts of authentic experiences and as expressions of genuine belief. Memorates were recognized by their incoherent structure, detailed style and idiosyncratic motifs. Traditional features, in turn, revealed that the description had already changed from the original to meet collective expectations. A careful comparative genre analysis of fabulates, belief legends and memorates, as well as of functional features of the narratives, was supposed to reveal reliably whether the narrator believed the narrated event to be true or if he had even experienced it himself. (Honko 1964: 10–13, 18–19; Pentikäinen 1968; Honko & Pentikäinen 1970: 57.)

The quest for clear and exclusive distinctions between narrative expressions proved problematic. Lauri Honko suggested that genres are structured as combinations of distinctive features, such as form, content, and function. Migratory legends, for example, are structured as a combination of form, geographical distribution, and content. (Honko 1964). The analytic subcategory of memorates optimistically relied on the assumption that the detailed and incoherent style is a reliable sign of a close relation to experience and truth value. However, this alleged connection proved unsound. First-person narration and authentication with plenty of detail has been found to be a narrative strategy which can be applied for various reasons and to legends as well as to personal experiences. Many performances involve features of them both. Thus, choosing to perform a legend in a fabulate-like or memorate-like manner could be a choice of narrative strategy and not reveal anything about the narrated event's authenticity or traditionality. (Bennett 1984a: 86–87; Bennett 1988: 32–33; Dégh 1991: 26.) All this undermined both the role of classificatory subcategories as analytic tools

and the status of folklore classification as a useful system. Furthermore, observation of living communication inevitably reveals the fact that there is always material which does not fit any clearly defined category, or falls into too many. Irrespective of whether the system is supposed to include all discursive forms or only the material we conceive as folklore, there is no way we could provide wholly systematic, mutually exclusive categories. A classificatory folklore genre system was later characterized as an ideal, into which the researchers tried to fit the reality. (Briggs & Bauman 1992: 132, 143–144, 149, 164; Siikala 2002: 218.)

Acknowledging this problem, Lauri Honko explained the gap between genres and real performances with the concept of ideal types. The ideal genre classification would serve as a scholarly tool, to which the variety of real texts, as well as different genre systems, could be related. However, the ideal system was severely criticized. Alan Dundes remarked that keeping to classifications restricts research and even prevents researchers from noting expressions which do not fall into genre categories (Dundes 1972: 94–95). Dan Ben-Amos opposed the pretension to universals and reminded us that genre systems are in each culture an integral part of the local cultural discourse, in which the diversity of concepts and the overlapping meanings of terms belong to the reality of folklore. The debate over the need for ideal types in interpreting local communication systems lasted for decades. (E.g. Honko 1968: 1989; Ben-Amos 1976: 1992.) This debate, together with an emergent interest in speech genres, practically put an end to the dominant position of the classificatory genre conception in folklore research. Thereafter, the efforts to divide legend into endless subcategories have been judged futile and even a hindrance to focusing on more important questions about the meanings and uses of the tradition (e.g. Dégh 2001: 97; Tangherlini 2007: 8).

The second half of the twentieth century faced crucial developments in the study of narrating and communication. In particular, observations on communication situations both in folklore studies and linguistics vitally shaped our understanding of narrating and opened up new directions within the scholarly interest in legends. This progress was expressed on many frontiers. In Europe, so-called *Märchenbiologie* had its roots at the beginning of the twentieth century, focusing on the context, function, and meanings of narrating and on the significance of the tales to the individual and society (Dégh 1969; Dégh 1995: 47–56). In the United States, the so-called new folkloristics emphasized the unity of text and performance and consequently the insufficient quality of archived materials (e.g. Ben-Amos 1972). New folkloristics turned attention to performing as meaningful action and thus portrayed folklore as a behavioural tradition and as meaning-making processes, not as textual items. This gradual progress also drove traditional legend scholarship into crisis. The question of whether folklore and consequently legends are primarily texts or performances was embodied in the European legend commission in the 1960s in a dispute about indexing legend types. Early folklorists had approached folk prose as folk literature, excluding considerations of context or performance. Following this tradition, researchers in favour of type cataloguing suggested limiting the term legend to narratives which had a fixed plot and which



could thus be indexed without trouble. In contrast, researchers who preferred to study legend-telling as a process involving a great deal of variation did not find it appropriate to reduce this tradition into types and to ignore the personal creativity and intentions of the narrators. With the new, widened perspectives, the opposing parties failed to agree upon a new, mutually satisfactory definition of legend. (Dégh 1996: 41; Tangherlini 1990: 372, 377; cf Klintberg 2010: 11–12.) The scholars are not to be blamed for discord; rather they stumbled on the true and complex nature of their object of research. While the definitions and principles designed for classificatory purposes proved insufficient for further analytical research, they could not be totally abandoned either, because, after all, they formed the basis for the observed variation and fluidity.

The gap between the philological idea of legends as coherent texts and the practical observation of them as variable and conversational is reflected in the use of terminology. While the term legend can refer to a whole corpus of more or less narrative material, the coherent and most typically legend-like versions in the corpus are labelled as legends and divided from other subtypes. Thus a research corpus of legends can be analytically divided into legends proper (fabulates), experience stories (memorates) and belief statements according to the form of expression. Memorates have occasionally been divided into primary and secondary; in that case the latter category corresponds to local belief legends (e.g. Johansson 1991: 9–10; Dégh 2001: 99). With this two-level definition, there has been general agreement that only legends proper, i.e. fabulates or migratory legends, are suitable for cataloguing. (Dégh 2001: 101.)

### *Terminological Problems – What Do We Mean by Fabulate?*

In many contexts, the Sydowian subcategories have been discarded and the difference between fabulates and memorates has been reduced to style: fabulates describe the same event as stereotyped or distanced, while memorates link it to one's own life or social circle. This should have simplified the meaning of the terminology but, in practice, the change also created confusion. Scholarly arguments based on different meanings of the same terminology may cause misunderstanding. I will illuminate this by comparing two examples concerned with the fabulate.

Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi have argued that the narrated event's credibility and relevance decrease when there are many links between the narrator and the person involved in the event. Sometimes the chain of links is shortened by a narrator, who may even claim it all happened to himself. Dégh and Vázsonyi's (1974) examples of well-known contemporary legends show that while the legends spread and there is need to retain credibility, the narrative strategies vary flexibly and the same contents can be performed as memorates or fabulates depending on the choice of narrative voice. When arguing that memorates easily become fabulates and vice versa, Dégh and Vázsonyi based the terms on the distinction between first-person and third-person narration, rejecting the Sydowian division between the content

deriving from one's own experience or a traditional plot. (Dégh & Vázsonyi 1974: 230–236.) While I agree with Dégh and Vázsonyi's point that legends located in one's own social reality easily switch from first to third person and back, it needs to be pointed out that their argument about memorates readily becoming fabulates and vice versa could be misunderstood if it appeared elsewhere, outside its original context (as it does e.g. in Tangherlini 1990: 374). Interpreted through a different understanding of this terminology and applied to pre-industrial folk-belief tradition, the argument about fabulates and memorates would not necessarily hold true.

Even though we acknowledge that narrative style does not reliably correlate with the content's traditionality or authenticity, the Sydowian notion of fabulates as legends not closely connected to local societies and not wholly believed in still describes a relevant distinction in the old legend materials. Compared to contemporary legends, pre-industrial belief tradition included a wider spectrum of ontologically implausible motifs. Some of them were located in the listeners' own milieu but others in the margins of it, in distanced narrative settings. The latter could be expressed as the kind of distanced fabulate narratives that Haavio (1942: 9) called fantasy legends. They were often attached to people who formerly lived in the narrator's own parish. Even so these fabulates depicted situations in which the people entered a margin of the social reality – for example forbidden or sacred times and places. They were very unlikely to be performed as memorates – as accounts describing somebody's experience in detail – unless the plot was essentially altered. For example the international legend of the church service for the dead<sup>2</sup> has been very popular throughout Europe (e.g. Köhler 1987: 934), describing physically repulsive corpses and their interaction with a living person who accidentally entered their church service during a festival night. This plot essentially belonged to a marginal reality: to a sacred time and place, in which ontological expectations could also deviate from normal expectations. In legends located in one's own social reality, ghosts of the dead are, in twentieth-century Finland, seldom described as corporeal. In memorates connected to this legend type, the dead are not seen at all; only light is seen from the church and interpreted as a sign of the ongoing ceremony of the departed. There seems to be a clear difference between one's personally or socially experienced reality, and the marginal realities or narrative worlds described in fabulates. Certain content typical of fabulates – such as the corporeal existence of the dead – just seem not to shift into memorates, because they belong to another, marginal reality. (Koski 2007: 7–9.) While the existence of such marginal realities could be found questionable, the popularity of dramatic migratory legends has been based on the intriguing and terrifying possibility of entering one. The distance between the narrative world and everyday reality has enabled exaggeration for aesthetic purposes (Young 1987: 56), which, at its best, results in an effective combination of entertainment, moral reflection, and fear.

Narrative strategies include adjustment of the distance between everyday reality and the narrated event as a condition for stating something to be true. In this case, contrary to the assumption of Dégh and Vázsonyi, mentioned

above, the credibility of an extraordinary narrative is increased by placing the event in a distanced setting<sup>3</sup> (see Koski 2008a: 342–349). Many legends did of course attach themselves to the nearest neighbourhood, in pre-industrial societies as well as in modern ones, and flexibly switch the narrative voice from first to third person and back in the way suggested by Dégh and Vázsonyi. But the legends which were located in marginal realities formed a distinct category of legends, which could not be attached to everyday reality without trouble. The study of pre-industrial belief tradition, which involved the possibility of ontological flexibility beyond one's own lived experience, benefits from distinguishing these from belief legends. In historical folklore materials this distinction helps in the analysis of the boundaries and margins of the concept of social reality, which was changing over the course of time. The belief in corporeal ghosts, for example, had been prevalent earlier but faded away during the nineteenth century. The partial belief that they might exist in marginal realities reflects a period of change. In 1959, a typical narrator of legend of the church service of the dead already calls it a tale<sup>4</sup> and declares that old people used to believe it before but “now such things are not believed in any more”.<sup>5</sup> Thus, genre-analytic perspectives that may not be relevant to contemporary legends can be important in the study of historical materials.

Another question is whether we should still use the worn-out term *fabulate*, the meaning of which varies so much. To avoid confusion I have elsewhere used the term *plot legends* (Fin. *juonitarinat*) to refer to legend types which seem to have spread and performed because of their dramatic plot, irrespective of their meagre or non-existent relation to the local world view and folk belief. While Dégh has used the term *fabulate* to denote legends and exclude memorates, there has long also been the tendency to restrict the term *legend* to *fabulates* only. Even though both stances practically take *fabulates* as “legends proper”, they can actually denote quite a different set of narratives.

### *Contemporary Legends and the Widening Perspective*

Social and technological transformations of Western societies after the Second World War created new cultural atmospheres, which were soon reflected in the changed topics and contents of legends. Similar new bodies of legends in the USA and Europe were created not only by the mass media but also by the similar fears and anxieties of newly urbanized populations. (Dégh 1996: 35.) The profound cultural change meant that not all genres of pre-industrial popular discourse continued in the same form or bore the same function and significance. The available communication channels influence the forms of popular expression, and also create new forms of folklore (Smith 1986: 31, 37, 42). In contemporary Western societies, ordinary people express their feelings, anxieties, arguments, and comments in their communities not only orally but also through other channels, involving writing, computer graphics and internet-based social media. The character of social groups and networking has changed as well. People can

show their communicative and expressive skills, tell jokes, interact with each other, and feel affinity without traditional face-to-face contact. (Lange 2007.) In this new situation, legends spread in new forms. If the tendency for ecotypification of traditional legends and the attachment to local people and events was an effort towards relevance and urgency, the same effort today requires the use of relevant information channels and written forms, hence storytelling or hearsay are not appreciated as accurate information channels. Similarly, if legends strive to be entertaining, it is likely that they will be transformed into jokes and appear in popular culture. Not surprisingly, contemporary legend has proved to be more fluid in form than other narrative genres, and this variation correlates with a significant functional variation. (Smith 1989: 95–96, 99.) The fluid structure and the freedom of movement as a crucial characteristic of contemporary legend strengthened the view of legends more as processes than products. To catch up with the process, Linda Dégh urges that legends need to be collected and studied in all possible forms: “printed on billboards, abstracted in newspapers, dramatized in tabloids, discussed on talk shows, made into a movie or any other format” (Dégh 1991: 19–23).

In the 1980s, there was discussion of whether “modern urban legends” should be divorced from their rural counterparts and studied as a separate genre. However, a noteworthy continuity was found, expressing the legends’ capacity for ecotypification and their migratory nature. (Tangherlini 1990: 381–383.) The search for a new definition and the exploration of its boundaries was a central issue in the numerous conferences on contemporary legend held in Sheffield in the 1980s. Gillian Bennett declared that many versions of a well-known urban legend, “The Phantom Hitchhiker”, are actually not legends at all; instead, they are personal-experience stories or memorates, dites,<sup>6</sup> mere conversations, comments or illustrations of a longer story, or news. Consequently, she concludes that the set of the phantom hitchhiker stories would be best studied outside the category of modern urban legends and, instead, in the context of a recurring ghostlore theme. (Bennett 1984b: 46–47, 60.) Even though Bennett at this stage still held to the traditional definition of legend as including a specific form, she argued that sticking to the form hinders the research. Later she notes that legend performances vary in respect to style and even genre, instantiating as dites, comments within other stories, or tall tales (Bennett 1987: 24).

As indicated above, narrative form or alleged formlessness has been among the most debated questions in defining the legend. While Dégh wrote that the form of legend is subordinate to the message and context (Dégh 1991: 19), in practice, legend was generally defined by its special narrative form in the 1980s. Commenting on Dégh’s opinion, there were explicit arguments that legends are necessarily narratives (e.g. Nicolaisen 1987; Tangherlini 1990). These arguments were based on the classificatory legacy of defining genres exclusively by distinctive features and establishing clear boundaries between them. Timothy Tangherlini, for example, explicated the difference between a rumour and a legend, writing that rumour is like a legend which only lives for a short but often very intensive transmission period. A crucial distinction is that rumour can also be a short statement

whereas legend is always a narrative. He concludes: "If a narrative rumor persists, it is a legend." (Tangherlini 1990: 375.) Dégh confirmed as her view that it is fertile to treat as legends all materials with a possible legend core, including rumours, even though not all rumours have legendary potential and many of them are too short-lived to mature into narratives (Dégh 2001: 83–85, 97).

In the study of contemporary legends, there has been an obvious need to allow gradient and partial membership of the category: to approach as legends also expressions which are simultaneously something else, like rumours, jokes, or photocopies. Therefore, contemporary legends, or genres by and large, should rather be approached as prototype categories. A prototype category is formed around a prototypical member, which the other members resemble to a varying degree, thus being more or less typical or even marginal members of the category. Scholarly concepts are supposed to be exact, but if the concept attempts to conform to a popular phenomenon, it has to include the variation, fuzzy edges, and partial members integral to it. To apply this to legends, the prototype of legend could be for example a narrative which applies traditional motifs to discuss certain improbabilities or dangers in social reality. Any expression or activity which shares enough similarities with the prototypical legend can thus be approached as a legend, even though it lacks narrative form. (See Koski 2008b: 50–52; on categorization see Wittgenstein 1958: 30–34; Rosch 1977; Lakoff 1987; Neisser 1987: 20–21.)

Another way to discuss these more and less prototypical legends is to apply Frog's four-aspect model of emergent genre. In this frame of reference, genre is defined by form, content/enactment, use, and function. Frog suggests that a performance which lacks the typical formal features only represents the genre metonymically. He writes: "a summary of an epic is [...] not an epic *per se*, it is only *metonymically epic*" (Frog, this volume, p.64). Frog's approach gives another name to the problem faced in legend studies but does not necessarily solve it. On the one hand, legends without a narrative form can be defined as *metonymic legends*. But on the other hand, if elasticity and fluidity are seen an essential part of the legends' form, the formal criteria explicitly allow variation. The question is how much variation can be allowed. A practical solution would be to define the form of legend to include a wide variety of narrative styles (or linguistic narrative genres discussed later) but to keep in mind that certain lines of inquiry are needed to study metonymic legends. This is important when studying legends as processes.

The conception of legend as narrative is epistemologically challenged when folklore is conceived not as text but as process. The new folkloristics introduced the conception of folklore as an interactive process involving the narrator and the audience: the process in which the text gains its meaning. From this perspective, the telling is the tale, and taking only the text as folklore mistakes the part for the whole. (Ben-Amos 1972: 9–10.) Following this line Bill Ellis explicitly states that legends are not folk literature but folk behaviour and that legend-telling is a behavioural tradition. Thus, the important part of the event is not the text but the discussion in which the text is interpreted and relived by all the participants. The interaction preceding,

following, and also interrupting the telling is central to the event's meaning. (Ellis 2003: 10–12.) In their social context, legends fulfil expectations and serve the performer's goals. Gaining control over the situation, good performers may also be able to influence social structures. Legends can manipulate people's attitudes and guide their actions. Therefore Ellis defines legend-telling as a fundamentally political act, which should be observed in process. (Ellis 2003: xiii–xiv, 242–243; see also Tangherlini 2008: 8.)

In addition to the meaning-making process in performance, legends undergo another process as they develop and decline. Ellis has outlined a legend's life span, in which the narrative's status develops and consequently changes the expectation of its appropriate form in social discourse. Assuming that a legend starts from a need to express social strains or anxieties, the first stage of a legend being born is that it names a marginal experience. Second, the experience is verbally shared with others who may comment on it. Third, interpretation and shaping according to traditional models develops the legend into a finished narrative. It can be performed in this form for various purposes. Fourth, when the legend has become familiar to the members of the group, it no longer needs to be narrated but can be realized metonymically. References to the legend's distinctive elements such as parts of dialogue are used and recognized by the inside group. Fifth, the legend decays further and becomes dormant. It can still circulate in parodic or summary form but has lost its original energy. (Ellis 2003: 61–65.) During its life span, a legend would be a "legend proper" only at its third stage. The metonymical realization in Ellis's model denotes short references to the narrative, while in Frog's model, parodies and summaries would also be metonymic legends. The study of these processes necessarily involves both the embryonic and metonymic forms of legend.

One solution is to use the term *legendry* – a term referring to a pool of legends or a legend tradition (see e.g. Tangherlini 1998; Valk 2012) – to denote all the expressive forms that emerge around legends (Oring 2008: 128). This term makes it easy to register the inclusion of all forms and yet enables, if needed, the difference between legendry and legend to be marked. The wide scope in the study of legends – or legendry – also involves behaviour triggered by legends, such as ostensive panic around alleged mass murders and satanic cults. In such cases, the actions of the whole society involved "constitute a collective performance of the legend". (Ellis 2003: 199–206.) Another form of collective legend performances in action is *legend-tripping*. Michael Kinsella writes that a "legend-trip involves a journey to a specific location and/or the performance of certain prescribed actions that, according to local legend, have the potential to elicit a supernatural experience". The trips usually begin with the telling of a few variants of the legend in question. Not all participants are convinced that the legend is true but are at least curious about the possibility. The intensive, even chaotic, atmosphere of the event triggers anomalous experiences, which are later processed and articulated in new variants and interpretations of the local legend. (Kinsella 2011: 27–28.) The phenomenon that people mimic or repeat activities learnt from legends is not a novelty. Narratives which describe legend-inspired actions in graveyards or attempts to enter the



church during the night are well represented in the archived materials, and legend-inspired activities have been reported also in nineteenth-century newspapers (see Valk 2012: 243–244). What is new is to approach not only the accounts but also the activity itself as part of the legend tradition. These widened views on the legend genre call for a more active role of the legend scholar. Studying folklore in its living context, not as texts divorced from it, requires the researchers' constant presence in the field and eagerness to grasp any emerging legend-related phenomena. Pertinently, Bill Ellis characterizes the folklorist's task as chasing a living beast (Ellis 2003: 4).

### *Genre as Practice*

As indicated above, the problem in defining the genre partly stems from the great variety of popular practices that convey and use legend-like material. It also reflects the tension between different conceptions of genre, as well as of folklore. The concept of legend has been largely based on the occurrence of the same motifs in various areas and contexts. The interest in local genres, however, drew scholarly attention away from such comparative perspectives and towards the ethnographic study of discursive practices. This line of inquiry adopted new theoretical conceptualizations of genre.

Mikhail Bakhtin's views have been influential in forming the notion of genres as dynamic and changing as well as overlapping and mutually independent elements of discourse (see also Savolainen, this volume). Seminal to this was Bakhtin's distinction between simple and complex genres, which he also called primary and secondary, respectively. Simple genres represent the unmediated speech communication, while complex genres are part of highly developed and organized, e.g. artistic cultural communication. These genres' relationship can be inclusive: complex genres, such as novels or drama, absorb and digest primary genres, such as letters or everyday dialogue, thus changing their character by removing them out of their immediate relation to reality. Another influential argument was that rather than existing separately, genres are realized in social practices of production and interpretation. (Bakhtin 1986: 61–62, 78; Hanks 1987: 671, 676–677; Briggs & Bauman 1992: 145; Siikala 2000: 218–220.) In a practice-based framework, in William Hanks's words, "the idea of objectivist rules is replaced by schemes and strategies". Thus genres are viewed as "a set of focal or prototypical elements, which actors use variously and which never become fixed in a unitary structure" (Hanks 1987: 681).

Following Bakhtin's idea of the dialogic nature of speech genres (e.g. Bakhtin 1986: 91–94) Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman emphasize the intertextual aspect of genre. They see structure, form, function, and meaning "not as immanent features of discourse but as products of an ongoing process of producing and receiving discourse", reminding us that the process lies in the text's interface with other utterances and in relation to them. The meanings of an utterance are thus shaped within its intertextual relations to prior discourse. Genres provide textual models for producing and interpreting. In addition, they carry historical associations as well as



political, social, and ideological connections: they can be associated with certain social groups, statuses, or roles, thus invoking an expectation of authority. (Briggs & Bauman 1992: 146–148.) Genres and discourse fields have different degrees of institutionalization or cultural significance, or ideological, moral or religious value (Siikala 2000: 216). While emphasizing the fluid nature of genres in practice, Briggs and Bauman nevertheless establish their approach to the existence of genres as culturally recognized, relatively stable models (see also Bakhtin 1986: 60). Moreover, contextual elements necessarily affect the process of producing and receiving discourse in relation to these models. Briggs and Bauman have introduced the term *intertextual gap* to emphasize that actual utterances often differ from the generic models known to the speakers. Authors can attempt to minimize the intertextual gap between their utterance and the generic model by adopting conservative modes of creating textual authority, or they can maximize it through individual creativity. By manipulating the intertextual gap they adjust their relationship with the social or religious authority or other interpretative expectations that the genre invokes. The genre's institutional, political or ritual status increases the significance of these practices. (Briggs & Bauman 1992: 149–151.)

This view is compatible with the above-mentioned idea of legend as a prototype category. The question of legends' authority, however, is twofold. While legends had an authoritative status in traditional societies in teaching and controlling social morals, the situation of contemporary legends is somewhat different. To claim that a story or news delivered by a friend as true is actually an urban legend is to question the speaker's reliability. The term legend carries a label of erroneous conceptions and misunderstandings. Thus, an attempt to transmit a message as true requires maximizing the intertextual gap to the genre. However, performing legends consciously as legends frames them outside ordinary discourse. In such a fabulate-like form they continue the discussion of the topic and spread, possibly providing symbolic devices to discuss social boundaries or possibly being delivered as true in some other form and context. The precise form and function of a legend is not preset but is created in practice in relation to the intentions of the narrator and the social and ideological aspects of the content and context.

The range of forms a legend can take is wide. Legends can work in the Bakhtinian sense as primary genres ingested in complex genres such as novels or movies. In novels, it is common to embed not only legend plots but whole narrative performances. This is not exceptional in filmed form, either.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the concept of legend is wide enough to represent a complex genre itself. As elaborated artistic expressions, traditional legends can include dialogue, proverbs, and also short songs and charms. For example, murdered children typically reveal the place of their hidden remains by performing a short song or rhyme included in the legend (C 961, C 966, C 968 in Jauhiainen 1998). Bakhtin made a distinction between everyday communication and artistic expressions, but folklore includes and mixes both these areas, and the inclusiveness of genres is realized on more than two levels. However, the relationship of legends to other genres is not

primarily one of inclusion but instantiation. Legends are instantiated in a variety of narrative genres as well as in non-narrative forms.

### *Narrative Genres in Linguistics*

The concept of genre clearly differs in linguistics from the folkloristic approach. In the linguistic study of discourse, approach to genre stresses the relationship between language and its social and cultural function. Thus, genres serve different culturally established purposes and have evolved over time to achieve their goals by means of a particular structure, constituted of functional stages. Even though genre has been acknowledged to have thematic features as well, the primary interest has focused on the stylistic and structural features, especially the relationship of the structure and function. Genre has been defined as a linguistically realized staged, goal-oriented, purposeful social activity. (Martin 1992: 505; Eggins & Martin 1997: 236; Eggins & Slade 1997: 56, 231, 233, 270.) Narrative genres have been one of the most investigated genres in linguistics. In sociolinguistics as well as in the systemic functional approach, narrative is defined in Labovian terms, the stages equating to the narrative components introduced by William Labov (1972). A fully formed narrative consists of abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda. The function of a narrative is to discuss and evaluate an unusual or remarkable event and its outcome. For this purpose, abstract and coda are optional, while the other four are obligatory. Labov's model of narrative has later been divided into four related categories, *recount*, *anecdote*, *exemplum*, and *narrative*, each of which has a distinct structure. (Labov 1972: 363–366; Martin 1992: 564; Eggins & Slade 1997: 233–234, 236, 243.) Such groups of related genres have been called *genre families* in pedagogical contexts. (Martin & Rose 2008: 49–51, 97.) While *narratives* follow the essence of the Labovian model, relating a series of events and culminating in the tension between complication and resolution, *recounts* can be mere records of events in which nothing actually went wrong, so there is no resolution. Recounts do not necessarily include evaluation or make a clear point. What are referred to as *anecdotes* are open narratives that give the narrator and listeners the opportunity to share a reaction to a remarkable event – laughter or possibly a terrified gasp. They can describe a crisis but do not offer a resolution to it. *Exempla* are defined as moralizing parables or anecdotes designed to make a moral point. They consist of an orientation and an incident, followed by the moralizing interpretation. (Martin 1992: 565; Eggins & Slade 1997: 243–244, 257–259.) This division, which was produced for pedagogical purposes, may not be exhaustive or accurate, but it shows that narrative performances are subject to functional variation.

Performances of legend are clearly subject to this kind of variation. Researchers have recurrently noted that both the narrators and the situational contexts significantly influence the form that the legend may take (e.g. Hobbs 1989: 57). Gillian Bennett has explored narratives about supernatural encounters and shown that the purpose of narrating determines narrative

structuring. She has compared fully formed narratives with conversational, non-linear performances. She has interpreted the latter as explanatory and evidential (Bennett 1984a) or as serving “expository function” (Bennett 1986) as exemplum-like indications of an opinion. Variation is not only narrator-specific but also depends on other contextual variables. In her seminal study, *Narrative and Narrating*, the Finnish folklorist Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj compared one narrator’s performances and their variation. One of the narratives analysed was a humorous belief legend, which was, on one occasion out of four, instantiated without the resolution, therefore as an anecdote. In an exceptionally merry atmosphere, and owing to the similar nature of the preceding story in the discourse, the audience grasped the point and burst into laughter straight after the complication. (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1996: 143–146, 168–169, 190.) Kaivola-Bregenhøj concluded from a larger corpus of narrative performances that the three most important sources of contextual variation in the narratives were (1) the narrated topic, (2) the participants, and (3) the preceding discourse and the role of the narrative in it. (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1996: 188–192.) These actually parallel *field*, *tenor*, and *mode*, the sources of variation in linguistic register theory, introduced below.

### *Genre and Register*

In linguistics, contextual variation has been analysed using the concept of register, essentially developed by M. A. K. Halliday. In linguistic research, registers represent not genre-specific but contextual variation in language.<sup>8</sup> They cover a community’s or an individual’s linguistic repertoire, which is put into various uses in different situations. (Halliday 1973: 22.) Much like genre as practice, register has been characterized as an open system of beliefs, attitudes, and expectations about what kinds of linguistic expressions are likely or appropriate in certain contexts. What kinds of topics are conceived as meaningful and relevant also depends on the context of the situation. Thus, registers are not only diverse ways of expressing the same thing, but ways of expressing diverse things: *what* is an essential part of predicting *how*. (Halliday 1979: 32–34; de Beaugrande 1993: 17–18; Eggins & Martin 1997: 234.) Halliday conceptualized the sources of contextual variation as field, tenor, and mode. *Field* refers to the social action taking place, including the subject matter and the way reality is presented. It involves, for example, the vocabulary needed and the specificity or familiarity of the topic. *Tenor* denotes the social and hierarchical roles of the participants. It includes both the permanent statuses or relationships they have and the speech roles they are taking on in the situation. *Mode* refers to the communicative channel, as well as to the role of language in the situation. For Halliday this includes the variation between oral and written, as well as the goals of communication. (Halliday 1979: 62; Martin 1992: 499–500; Eggins & Martin 1997: 233, 238.) James Martin stresses the cultural connectedness of genre, but defines genre in linguistic terms as a staged, goal-oriented, linguistically realized activity type. As Martin notes, the field, tenor, and mode variables are not combined

freely in any culture. The system of social processes constitutes the culturally appropriate options available in one or other context of situation. (Martin 1992: 562.)

The context of situation can be understood as consisting of a performance event possibly involving a lengthy discourse before and after the narrative. However, the preceding discourse can also be something which has been going on in the same social group for a longer time. Bill Ellis has pointed out that legends cannot be re-performed to the same audience without radically altering their nature as a speech act. Hearing the same legend the second time, the audience no longer falls under its spell but may listen to it as an aesthetic performance. (Ellis 2003: 60–61.) Becoming known to everybody also changes the legend's status, as indicated in Ellis's life-span model earlier. The variation outlined by Ellis falls into the domain of both field and tenor. When the narrated event (field) is familiar already, the subject matter is not treated in detail. However, this condition holds only when the audience consists of the in-group members (tenor). Legend metonyms need to be reversed to narrative form if a new member enters the group (Ellis 2003: 65).

Halliday's contextual variables – field, tenor, and mode – work together with his model of *semantic metafunctions* as choices for meaning. Here I apply them as choices of the narrator in structuring the meanings of his narrative. In Halliday's model, metafunctions are realizations of the context variables. The context variable field is realized typically in the *ideational metafunction*, which here denotes the narrators' devices for building the content and mapping the reality. Tenor corresponds to the *interpersonal metafunction*, denoting his resources for interacting, addressing the listeners and shaping social roles, as well as his attitudes to his topic. Mode corresponds to the *textual metafunction*, the resources for organizing texts. (Halliday 1978; Eggins & Martin 1997: 233, 238–242.) The metafunctions can be used in analysing the semantic structuring of both oral and written expressions. Pauliina Latvala, for example, has employed Halliday's model of textual metafunctions to study how meanings are transmitted in written narratives of oral family history (Latvala 2005: 39–47, 275–277). In narrative legend performances, the ideational metafunction includes the legend motifs, as well as the orienting framework, which, in turn, involves the time, place, and characters of the narrative. The ideational realization thus brings on stage the traditional core and also determines whether it is attached to the local surroundings or not. To the interpersonal metafunction belong the addressing of the listeners and the taking into account of their comments and expectations, as well as the personal intentions and goals of the narrator and *distancing*, by which the narrator adjusts his personal relation to the narrated content according to the context (Smith 1981). The textual metafunction consist of the models and skills of structuring the narrative to reach the intended goals. Those include knowledge of local generic practices, narrative and stylistic devices such as signifying formulas, changes of tense from past to present, dialogue or quotations, imitation, and many paralinguistic devices such as the pitch and tempo of the speech, pauses, and laughing (see Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1996). Contextual variables and their realizations are interconnected: the appropriate narrative structure is

chosen by the narrator according to his estimation of which register certain contents should be delivered to the present audience in.

In narrative analysis, these ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions can be seen as the relevant meaning-making variables accounting for the variation in *narrative registers*. I have argued above that legends are primarily defined by content and setting, while their structure and functions vary contextually. In narrative discourse, the contextual variation of legends is instantiated as various linguistically defined narrative registers. This view has been vigorously inspired by the works of Gillian Bennett (1984a; 1986; 1999), who has explicitly analysed this variation in empirical narrative material. To conceptualize the variation within legend instantiations, I have suggested applying Hallyday's conception of register to folklore.

### *Narrative Registers as Instantiations of Legend*

Variation is an essential characteristic of folklore. Legends have been a challenging object for classification because of their tendency to elasticity and ecotypification. Attempts to solve the problem have been manifold. Lauri Honko followed von Sydow's line by defining subcategories of legend and noted that legend genre actually involves and overlaps with several other genres. The categorizing endeavour was softened by the notion that generic models are ideal types and most performances fall somewhere between them. (Honko 1980: 23–24; 1989: 25–26.) These types have also been approached as forms of functional variation. Kyrill Čistov suggested in 1967 that von Sydow's categories (Sagenbericht, Memorat, Fabulat) are not genres but basic forms of delivering the same legend motifs. The choice between these communicative variants depends on contextual factors, such as the contact between the narrator and listeners, and the familiarity of the motif in the local belief system. Čistov argued that unlike tale motifs, legend motifs are autonomous and can be used without the original plot, as well as serving as a basis for further narratives. When a legend is based on beliefs which are unknown to the listeners, Čistov suggests that only the belief core of the legend is likely to be conveyed. This usually happens in the form of legend summaries (Sagenbericht) or rumours/conceptions (Gerücht–Meinung). When the belief system underlying the legend is familiar to the listeners, the legend can be performed in a full narrative form, as fabulates. Furthermore, when the narrative is widely known in the community, it will generate new episodes about people's reactions to the legend events happening in their lived experiences. These can be conveyed in all three forms, including memorates. (Čistov 1967: 34–36.) In the last decades of the twentieth century, Čistov's idea of understanding these forms as functional variation could, unfortunately, not compete with the interest in categorization. Lauri Honko, obviously missing Čistov's point, characterized Čistov's view as a step backwards. Honko recommended that a distinction should not be made between genres and non-genres just when the Sydowian terminology had been widely adopted. (Honko 1989:

23.) However, Čistov's functional approach is compatible with twenty-first-century views on legends as processes, as well as with the register model introduced above. The contextual factors mentioned by Čistov – the contact between the narrator and the listeners, and the familiarity of the topic – roughly correspond to tenor and field in Halliday's register theory.

Čistov's remarks on contextual variation can be compared with Ellis's notions on the life span of legends. However, while Ellis is concerned with the plot's familiarity in a small group, Čistov writes about the narrative's relationship to a whole belief system. In both cases the variation falls into the domains of field and tenor, concerning the relations of the topic and the narrator to the listeners. Mode would enter when the legends are removed from the oral discourse of everyday life and for example conveyed in colloquial writing on the internet or published in collections.

The concept of genre has, owing to cross-disciplinary perspectives, become wide and multi-faceted. The genre-as-practice approach (Hanks 1987; Briggs & Bauman 1992; Siikala 2000) understands genres as local models for discourse strategies, which in this case means various models for conveying legends in different forms depending on the context. While the linguistic conception of narrative genres (e.g. Eggins & Martin 1997; Eggins & Slade 1997) offers a precise but narrow definition based on structure and function, the genre-as-practice approach involves more flexibility, taking account of the intertextual statuses of genres in relation to different speakers. If fabulates, memorates, their summaries, anecdotes, legend-trips, and legend-related conversations as discourse strategies are to be defined as genres, then the legend, existing on a higher level of abstraction and involving all those forms, could be characterized as a *metagenre*. Anna-Leena Siikala has used the term in connection with the *korero*, the oral history in the Cook Islands. The *korero* involved the same mythical-historical content and the same functional field even though represented and performed in different forms: legend-like narratives, sung or recited poems, song and dance performances, or in performances by authoritative *tumu koreros* who incorporated the content in local genealogies and political issues. (Siikala 2000: 221.) However, unlike the *korero* tradition with a particular authority, especially when performed by specialists, legend is a more commonplace genre, varying more freely according to narrator, context, and communicative channel. Historically, based on recognition of recurrent content elements, legends are a narrative folklore genre at the same level as fairytales or saints' legends. Compared to them, legends are more conversational and thus have a more fluid structure, instantiating in various forms, approached here as narrative registers.

Narrative register is not the same as linguistic register, which marks different uses of language for different purposes. Instead, narrative register marks *recontextualizations of the legend* in different contexts. The variation includes the range between realistic and fabulated, personal and distanced, conversational and dramatic, summarized and detailed. It also involves the setting, narrative structure, and choice of including or leaving out a particular moral point, as well as the way of addressing the listeners. Even though narrative register also involves linguistic features, most of the



relevant points concern units larger than a clause. More important than syntactic or lexical choices are the decisions to include or exclude certain details and the choice of the setting or the narrative world.

Major changes in legend instantiations have happened, first, when everyday discourse has entered colloquial writing in e-mail and SMS, and second, when popular culture and various internet sites have changed the structure of legend audiences. Instead of debating whether the new forms are legends at all, we will benefit from studying the characteristics of each discourse field as well as the functional forms of legend in different stages of its life span and the forms it is likely to be conveyed in to different audiences with different knowledge about the background of the plot.

### *Conclusion*

The genre of legend involves the human inclination to discuss extraordinary events, to use given models and motifs when interpreting them, and to process one's relationship to phenomena and behaviours alien to one's own experience and outlook. Early folklorists were mostly attracted to the coherent narrative expressions produced by these inclinations and the supernatural imagery representing the other. Contemporary scholars also scrutinize how these processes work and how they affect societies, expressing fears and suspicion and even guiding people's behaviour. In the role of the other, supernatural phenomena have in contemporary legends involved extraterrestrial aliens, ethnic, religious and other minorities, criminals, mental patients, new technology, as well as the faceless power of the state and big commercial companies. Even though legends have gained new forms of expression, the practice of oral narration has persisted and also deserves attention. I am suggesting that narrative expressions of legends be analysed using linguistic genre analysis. Keeping in mind that the intertextual cultural meanings of the expressions are nevertheless processed at the level of the folklore genre, the linguistic narrative genres are conceived as registers, representing the contextual variation in the situational level. In a given social group, contextual variation is subject to certain conditions. For example, narrators develop relatively stable interpretations of repeated narratives and preserve their personal attitude towards topics and genres (Siikala 1984: 96–97). However, approached on the level of the folklore genre of legend and compared to other instantiations of the same set of motifs, the contribution of the narrator can be conceived as an interpersonal variable together with the activities and expectations of the audience.

In traditional legend telling, the personality of the narrator and his view of the narrated content are the major variables, although the role of the audience and the preceding discourse can also have an influence, making the narrator change his conventional interpretation. The variation thus mostly happens in the domains of field and tenor. However, a remarkable change of mode occurs if the same legends are transmitted in the form of photocopies, by e-mail, or in web pages. Such a change of mode also profoundly affects the roles of the narrator and audience, reducing the role of immediate feedback.



Similarly, when the same legend is written down by a folklorist, the new variant is crucially affected by the change of mode: by its transformation from oral to written form. The new audience may not be familiar with the field of the legend and the plot has to be more carefully communicated, without elliptic indications. A handwritten, archived record of a legend clearly represents a linguistic genre different from the oral performance it replicates. We can also say that it is not folklore any more but a document about folklore. However, it remains a legend all the same. The point is that there are different sets of generic categorizations and their relations to each other need not be presumed to be stable.

Legends combine with a variety of genres. *Legend + written archive record* may not be an interesting combination to scholars who would rather be thrilled with *legend + everyday conversation* or *legend + ghost excursion*. Studying different forms of legend separately and together can open up interesting perspectives on their functional variation.

#### NOTES

- 1 Stereotypification was sometimes the result of the process of collecting legends. The informant's decision to conceal the real names of the local characters and replace them with general labels such as "a farmhand" or "a woman" is occasionally recorded with the legend text. (Koski 2011: 35.)
- 2 Legend type number C 31A in af Klintberg 2010; C 1341 and C 1821 in Jauhiainen 1998.
- 3 Dégh and Vázsonyi link credibility to the event's relation to the listeners' immediate reality. Credibility can also be understood as the inner coherence and plausibility of the narrated sequence itself, even though it could not happen in one's own social reality (Koski 2007: 16–17).
- 4 The Finnish word *satu* is often translated "fairytale".
- 5 SKS A 864/ Alatornio. Lauri Simonsuuri 17.7.1959. < Karoliina Nordman, born 1874, Alatornio.
- 6 Dites are imperative or assertive, non-narrative arguments, which crystallize a belief or conception.
- 7 An old but fine example is the popular Finnish TV-series *Tankki täyteen* ("Fill it up") shown in 1978–1980. One character in this gas station comedy was a distinguished narrator whose repertoire included jokes, legends, and anecdotes. The character, Reinikainen, not only embroidered the simple plot with his performances but became so popular that a spin-off comedy with his name was produced and shown in 1982–1983.
- 8 In the study of oral poetry, register has been used to denote a genre-specific linguistic style, referring to the special contexts in which epic poetry is performed (Foley 1995; Honko 1998: 63–65).

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## 4. Genre, Prayers and the Anglo-Saxon Charms

The easiest way for the modern reader to access the Anglo-Saxon charms is through a modern edition, the most well-known of which are Godfrid Storms's *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (1948) and Felix Grendon's long article "The Anglo-Saxon Charms" (1909). Although each editor approaches the texts with a slightly different rationale, both define the genre of charms by the inclusion of content and formal/stylistic features that they regard as "pagan"/"magical". The genre of prayers is placed in opposition, defined by the inclusion of content and formal/stylistic features regarded as "Christian".<sup>1</sup> A demand for assistance from an unnamed supernatural force, which is written in the vernacular and in verse is placed firmly in the "charm" category, thanks to each of its elements being associated with pagan or magical ideologies. On the other hand, a prose text in Latin that appeals to God for relief counts as a prayer, due to the assumption that each of its elements are inherently Christian. Unfortunately, though, not all of the charm texts fall so neatly into one category or another; one must decide what to make of a text that is in verse but appeals to God, or that invokes a curse in Latin. Storms's and Grendon's response to such a text is that it has been somehow doctored, altered to satisfy an audience needing to erase pagan beliefs or prove to an unconvinced congregation that Christianity is not all that different to native religious beliefs (for example, see Storms 1948: 115–117).

This method of dealing with charms, however, is problematised by several unavoidable facts. First, the method does not refer to the texts' manuscript context: texts that are categorised by Grendon and Storms as "charms" and "prayers" live side by side with each other in their manuscripts, which suggests that for the Anglo-Saxon scribe, reader, and/or user of these texts, the division between these two genres might not be as clear-cut as Grendon and Storms suggest. Secondly, the method assumes that social, cultural, and religious values can be ascribed to formal/structural elements of a text without recourse to any comparative contemporary material which would provide useful contextual information. Thirdly, the method assumes that these social, cultural, and religious values and their resulting genres can be placed in opposition to one another without any chance of organic intermingling; the only admixture of "charms" and "prayers" occurs when a text is altered after its initial creation.

This article will explore how methodologies such as these have affected how the genre of Anglo-Saxon charms has been understood. This exploration will show that Storms's and Grendon's seminal works of charm scholarship are predicated on the basis that charms are pagan and magical, and are regarded as separate, and in opposition to, religious and Christian texts such as prayers. At the root of the problem with defining the genre of Anglo-Saxon charms in this way lies the fact that a charm (or indeed any historical text) cannot be defined by terms which are bound up with modern values and culture. A modern reader will naturally think of a charm in terms of his/her relationship to the world and the semantic meanings that s/he assigns to terms as a result. Doing so, however, means that the modern reader does not read the charm as an Anglo-Saxon might, as part of a cultural environment which did not always draw the line between magic and religion in the same place, or even at all.<sup>2</sup> For example, both Grendon and Storms rely on terminology that, for the modern reader, is loaded with meanings that are not necessarily congruent with the texts' manuscript, social, cultural and religious context. Terms such as "magic", "charm", "spell" and "prayer" carry connotations that are located in the scholars' contemporary worldview, resulting in interpretations of the charms that are founded on anachronistic ideologies. Emerging from these analyses is the problem of generic hierarchies. Both Grendon and Storms talk about the charms in terms of flat binaries: a text is either magical, or religious; it is pagan, or it is Christian. This article will suggest that a hierarchical understanding of genre, which allows for the blending and shifting of boundaries, is more appropriate for texts that arise from a culture with a similarly fluid attitude to the differences between magic and religion. This new methodology is underpinned by readings of the texts within their original context, thus – insofar as is possible – removing unhelpful associations of values with typological markers and allowing interpretations to arise from an understanding of the environment in which the text was produced and used.

Whilst it is true that there are exceptions to every rule, it is tenable that Anglo-Saxon texts were recorded in and used as part of collections within manuscripts, and so they should be read as such. By paying attention to the arrangement of texts within manuscripts, as this article will show, it is possible to see that the Anglo-Saxons thought of "charms" and "prayers" in a very different way to that presented by Grendon and Storms. It is true that Grendon's and Storms's readings are valuable in and of themselves as records of contemporary academic and cultural mores, but, unlike the twentieth-century scholarly practice of examining texts as individual artefacts in order to divide these texts into two opposing genres, the Anglo-Saxon scribes recorded these texts alongside one another without any apparent difficulty.<sup>3</sup> By placing these texts back into their original context and reading them as part of organic wholes, we can reveal that, far from being disparate, they share many common features with texts that Grendon and Storms would be inclined to distinguish as separate from the charms. Indeed, all the texts that are represented by Grendon and Storms as "charms" share three typical characteristics: they are intended to heal; they effect this healing through a performance; and they engage with the supernatural.<sup>4</sup> However, the texts



that Storms represents in his appendix (Storms 1948: 312–318) as “prayers” also share these characteristics: what is more, several of these “prayers” appear alongside “charms” in their manuscripts, suggesting that, in their original contexts, these texts were perceived to be similar enough to be comfortable bedfellows.<sup>5</sup>

Just as the Old English poem *Soul and Body* describes the relationship between the soul and the body as kinsmen, inseparable, fated to experience this life and the next as one, the methodology proposed here is founded on the fact that, as this article will show, “charms” and “prayers” are bound together by their concern for both the bodily and spiritual health of the performer. This article will argue that most “charms” and “prayers” – certainly those that are collected together in one manuscript – share a similar relationship, bound together by their concern for both the bodily and spiritual health of the performer. Thus, Grendon and Storms’s flat, binary model is not appropriate; rather, the “charms” and “prayers” discussed here are part of one taxonomic structure which could be referred to as “curative supernatural texts”. Within this overarching structure is the possibility to slide between physical or worldly ills and spiritual health, and to take account of those texts which seem to make use of God and as well as other unnamed supernatural forces.<sup>6</sup>

### “Charms” and “Prayers”

The Anglo-Saxon texts that we know as “charms” constitute a diverse body of texts, ranging in length from one line to over fifty lines in a variety of iterations of verse and prose. Some contain instructions to the performer, whereas as others deliver instructions implicitly; some are to be said or sung, while others are to be written, and yet others are to be performed silently; most are for healing physical medical problems, but some relate to everyday problems (such as theft); some invoke God or call upon saints, while others contain no religious material at all. This diversity in form and content makes it difficult to delineate the boundaries of “charm”, a task which has been complicated by approaches inherited from previous scholars that do not necessarily recognise the multiplicity of types of texts within the wider genre. Furthermore, the seminal editions rely on values associated with formal characteristics of texts to assign them to categories of “charm” or “prayer”, a methodology which is anachronistic, obscuring rather than clarifying the nature of the texts discussed.

To begin at the beginning, then, the first problem to tackle is the range that is exhibited by the body of texts that is now known as the Anglo-Saxon charms. The members of this corpus have traditionally been identified by two seminal editions of the charms (Grendon 1909 and Storms 1948). Both authors state that they aim to present all of the extant charms but in fact their collections differ greatly, with Storms’s collection being the larger. Part of the reason for this might be that neither editor elucidates the criteria by which they diagnose a text as a charm. Erring on the side of caution, Grendon lists the “general characteristics of spells” (Grendon 1909: 110–123) as:

(1) Narrative introduction; (2) Appeal to a superior spirit; (3) The writing or pronouncing of potent names or letters; (4) Methods of dealing with disease-demons; (5) The exorcist's boast of power; (6) Ceremonial directions to patient and exorcist; (7) The singing of incantations on parts of the body and on other objects; (8) Statement of time for performance of rites; (9) Sympathy and the association of ideas; (10) Minor superstitious practices.

Despite this extensive list of types of chunks of text that can be slotted in to charms, Grendon does not explicitly define what he perceives to be the essential nature of a charm. It is not clear whether the appearance of one of these characteristics within a text means that it is a charm, or whether a certain number of these characteristics creates a critical mass, thus making a text a charm. What is clear, however, is that throughout his edition, Grendon uses the term "spell" interchangeably with "charm". "Spell" carries strong connotations of magical and arreligious practices;<sup>7</sup> this association between the charms and magic is made explicit by Grendon's assertion that some of the "remedies [collected depend] for efficacy on the *superstitious beliefs* of the sufferers" (Grendon 1909: 110, emphasis added). Furthermore, he expresses his incredulity that even the Greeks would use such irrational practices, exclaiming that "such jingles were in great favour even among later Greek physicians of a superstitious bent" (Grendon 1909: 114). Grendon could have selected a less loaded term than "jingle" (such as "formula" or "section") to refer to the parts of charms that he cannot decipher, but instead he opts to leave the reader with the sense that the charms are part of a genre which is located within the supernatural realm, and furthermore, are divorced from a rational understanding of the world.

Similarly, Storms does not provide a list of criteria by which one might identify a charm, jumping straight in with a definition of magic (Storms 1948: 1):

By magic primitive man attempted to obtain results by means that seem to be abnormal and supernatural, at any rate by the methods that strike us as distinct from those that we like to call normal and natural. Magic assumes the existence of an invisible, intangible and impersonal power. It is primarily a practical concern and success is the only thing that matters.

By greeting the reader with a definition of magic, Storms situates his discussion of the charms firmly within this realm. Furthermore, he selects key items of terminology that slot neatly into the semantic field of magic, and so reinforce the "magical" nature of charms: "primitive", "abnormal", "supernatural", "invisible" and "intangible" are provided as connotations of "magic" and therefore of "charm".

These definitions are problematic because they are vague, and because they are grounded in the editors' cultural environment and academic agenda. The editors assume that charms fall into the sphere of magic. Storms makes this assumption because he is keen to identify the relationship between charms and the process of Christianisation, tracing "the gradual change that came over Anglo-Saxon magic on account of the new religion embraced

by the Anglo-Saxons” (Storms 1948: 129). By referring to Christianity as “the new religion” Storms sets up the charms as evidence of ancient English culture that predates the new-fangled religion of the missionaries to England. While he states that “both practices and formulas [within the charms] show the close connection there was in Anglo-Saxon times between magic and religion”, in this very statement he *separates* “magic” from “religion” (Storms 1948: 6). In a similar way, as a result of his interest in pagan Anglo-Saxon England, Grendon presents the charms as wholly separate from Christian practices, devoting a whole section of his article to “Christian elements in the charms” (Grendon 1909: 140–160). By adopting this approach of identifying the dividing lines between “charms” and Christian material, Grendon emphasises the difference between charms and Christianity.

The question, then, is how and why Grendon and Storms draw their lines between charms and prayers, and between magic and religion. A closer inspection of their analyses reveals something interesting: not only are they attributing charms as a whole to the sphere of magic, but they are also aligning various components of the charms with the categories of “pagan”, “magic”, “Christian” and “religious”. For instance, Storms’s discussion of a text intended to deal with eye pain (*wip sarum eagum* [‘against eye pain’], Storms 1948: 314) and a text intended to deal with theft (*ne forstolen ne forholen* [‘neither stolen nor hidden’], see Olsan 1999 for transcription and translation of *ne forstolen*) demonstrates how certain elements of the texts are perceived to have more a magical or more Christian feel. Storms categories *wip sarum eagum* as a “prayer”, but refers to *ne forstolen ne forholen* as a “charm”. What differences does Storms perceive between these two texts that cause him to align them into opposite categories?

#### *Wip sarum eagum*

Domine sancte pater omnipotens aeternae deus sana oculos istius N sicut sanasti oculos filii Tobit et multorum cecorum, manu aridorum, pes claudorum, sanitas egrorum, resurrectio mortuorum, felicitas martirum et omnium sanctorum.

Oro domine ut ergias et inlumnias oculos famuli tui N. In quacumque valitudine constitutum medellis celestibus sanare digneris; tribue famulo tuo N., ut armis iustitiae munitus diabolo resistat et regnum consequatur aeternum. Per.

#### *Against Eye Pain*

Holy lord, omnipotent Father, eternal God, heal the eyes of this man, your servant N., just as you healed the eyes of Tobit’s son [sic] and of many other blind persons, [you are] the hands of the poor, the feet of the lame, the health of the sick, the resurrection of the dead, the joy of the martyrs and all saints.

I pray lord that you will raise and illumine the eyes of your servant N. in whatever the condition of his health, you would deign to heal him with heavenly cures, to grant that your servant N., fortified with the arms of justice, may resist the devil and may reach the eternal kingdom. Through.

*Ne forstolen ne forholen*

Ne forstolen ne forholen nanuht  
 ðæs þe Ic age ðe ma þe mihte herod urne drihten  
 Ic geþohte sancte eadelenan  
 and ic geþohte crist on rode ahangen  
 swa ic þence ðis feoh to findanne næs to oðfeorrganne  
 and to witanne næs to oðwryceanne  
 and to lufianne næs to oðlædanne.  
 Garmund godes ðegen  
 find þæt feoh and fere þæt feoh  
 and hafa þæt feoh and heald þæt feoh  
 and fere ham þæt feoh  
 þæt he næfre næbbe landes  
 þæt he hit oðlæde  
 ne foldan þæt hit oðferie  
 ne husa þæt he hit oð hit healed  
 Gyf hyt hwa gedo ne gedige hit him næfre.  
 Binnan ðrym nihtum cunne ic his mihta  
 his mægen and his mihta and his mundcræftas.  
 eal he weornige swa syre wudu weornie  
 swa breðel seo swa þystel  
 se ðe ðis feoh oðfergean ðence  
 oððe ðis orf oðehtian ðence Amen

*Neither Stolen nor Hidden*

Neither stolen nor hidden may be anything I own, any more than Herod could hide our Lord.

As I thought of St. Helen and I thought of Christ, hanged on the cross, so I expect to find these animals, not have them gone far away and to know where they are, not have them harmed and to care for them, not have them led off. Garmund, God's thane, find these cattle and fetch these cattle, and have these cattle and hold these cattle, and bring these cattle home, so that he who took them may never have any land to put them on, nor country to carry them to, nor houses to keep them in. If anyone tries it, he would never accomplish it. Within three nights I would know his might, his main and his might, and his hand-strength. May he thoroughly wither, as dry wood withers, as bramble does, so the thistle, as [and also] he who intends to carry off these goods or drive away these animals.

The first difference that becomes apparent is that these two texts have different purposes. *Wiþ sarum eagum* is intended to remedy a medical difficulty, whereas *ne forstolen ne forholen* ensures the return of stolen livestock. It is perhaps more congruent with Storms's perception of Anglo-Saxon Christianity that one could ask God to heal a sickness of the body in the form of a "prayer", but appealing to "Garmund" – that is, not God – and then threatening the thief with "withering" is a non-Christian action which is more appropriate to a "charm". Secondly, the two texts are different in form: the "prayer" is in prose, whereas the "charm" is in verse. A little bit of detective work shows that all of the texts that Storms includes in the

appendix as “prayers” are prose, whereas less than half of the “charms” he edits include any prose. This argument echoes Grendon’s earlier assumption that verse is somehow un-Christian and more magical, in which he states that “rhythmical formulas”, alliterative pairs and similies are “Heathen in tone” (Grendon 1909: 223). Thirdly, the “prayer” is in Latin, whereas the “charm” is in the vernacular. This is no coincidence: all of the “prayers” in Storms’s appendix are in Latin, whereas over three quarters of the “charms” are in the vernacular. Grendon does not include any Latin texts in his edition at all, which shows rather conclusively that, for Grendon, charms cannot contain Latin. Around a quarter of Storms’s “charms” contain Latin; however, he does not comment at length on any of the texts which only include Latin, and rarely explores the role of the Latin text within the charm.

Therefore, for Storms, it seems that the purpose of a text can have some sort of effect on whether it is perceived to be a “charm” or a “prayer”. Of the sixteen “prayers” in Storms’s appendix, half are for some sort of painful ailment, with the remainder being blessings for herbs or general apotropaic texts. Of the eighty-six “charms”, only four are specifically for painful ailments (such as tooth-ache), but presumably a *færstice* [‘sudden stitch’] would also be painful. There is nothing particularly conclusive to be drawn from this observation, except that perhaps Storms sees pain as being something more appropriate a problem to bring to God. Much more conclusive, however, is the evidence for the fact that Storms perceives verse and the vernacular as central formal characteristics of the “charm” genre, whereas prose and Latin are essential characteristics of “prayer”.

Turning to another example from Storms’s edition, it is possible to see that Storms not only assesses charms by their formal content, but that he also makes distinctions between texts depending on various stylistic factors. In his interpretation of a charm against flying venom, Storms identifies sections which are to be regarded as separate from the “charm” because of their language, images and content (Storms 1948: 254–256):

*Wiþ fleogendan attrē*

Wið fleogendan attrē asleah IIII scearpan on feower healfa mid  
æcenan brande. Geblodga ðone brand, weorþ on weg.

Sing this on III:

+ Matheus me ducað + Marcus me conservæð

+ Lucas me liberat + Iohannes me adiuvat semper.

Amen.

Contrive deus omnem malum et nequitiam per virtutem  
patris et filii et spiritus sancti.

Sanctifica me Emanhuel Iesus Christus, libera me

ab omnibus insidiis inimici.

Benedictio domini super caput meum.

Potens deus in omni tempore. Amen.

*Against Flying Venom*

Against flying venom cut four incisions on the four sides with an oaken stick.

Make the stick bloody, throw it away.

Sing this three times:

+Matthew lead me + Mark save me + Luke free me + John help me always.  
Amen.  
Lord, crush all evil and wickedness by the power of the Father, the Son and  
the Holy Spirit.  
Sanctify me, Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, free me from all insidious enemies.  
The benediction of the Lord (be) over my head; mighty God in every season.  
Amen.

The performance directions state that the charmer should sing all the following lines from “Matthew lead me”; this suggests that the text to be verbally performed is part of the charm, the active ingredient in the remedy. Storms (1948: 257), on the other hand, states that

The Latin prayers that follow in the charm text do not represent psalms or hymns but are complete in themselves [...]. The forms of the verbs in ll. 4–5 (*Matheus me ducat...*) may stand for the indicative or the subjunctive. Perhaps the write or the copyist did not know the difference. They may be religious prayers for help or magical expressions of power. Ll. 8–9 (*Santifica... inimici*) show their magical nature in the use of the imperative and the last line is a threat rather than a mere statement.

This analysis is dense and contains several interesting points that need to be unpicked. First of all, Storms makes clear that he believes that the Latin sections are separate from the preceding instructions. Just as in the previous example, he is associating Latin with prayers and is using this to distinguish the latter section from the instructions. In and of itself, this distinction is not problematic; it is the case that some charms are in Latin whereas other are in the vernacular, and yet more contain a mixture of these two languages. Recognising that there are different types of charms is actually quite helpful; the problem here is that Storms unbendingly associates Latin with prayers and charms with the vernacular, even when the meaning of the text suggests that the Anglo-Saxon user would have read straight through the text in one continuing performance. Storms’s association of Latin texts with “prayers” is so strong that he cannot consider that “charms” and “prayers” might converge with one another, even when the text itself is evidence of the breaking down of his organisational system.

Secondly, Storms suggests that the form of the verb is somehow central to the ascribing of the text to either “charm” or “prayer”. The indicative suggests an assertion of the performer’s power, which is appropriate for charms; the subjunctive suggests a supplication, a request for assistance, which is congruent with the category of prayer; the imperative suggests a demand for assistance, thus demonstrating the performer’s magical power and forming a charm. In this way, Storms’s suggestion that ll. 4–5 and 8–9 might be expressions of power rests on the form of the verb: reading these phrases as subjunctive (i.e. “May Matthew lead me”) implies a supplicatory and therefore “prayer”-like mood, whereas the imperative and indicative (i.e. “Sanctify me”; “Matthew leads me”) suggests that the speaker possesses the power to instruct the four evangelists. Again, in and of itself this sort

of distinction is not problematic. It may well be that charms tend to state or demand, whereas prayers tend to request. The issue is that these two techniques, in Storms's opinion, cannot coexist.

This brings us to the real crux of the problem: the texts examined do not consistently support a binary system of organisation that is based on the principles of magical versus religious texts, which are categorised according to sub-binaries (verse versus prose; vernacular versus Latin; supplications versus demands). It is only when one applies culturally bound ideologies to the texts that a binary system can be perceived; if readings are allowed to arise from the texts and their surroundings, it is clear that these texts are coherent units, composed of other, smaller units that, when combined, make up a whole performance. That is not to say that the Anglo-Saxon reader could not or would not perceive the differences, for example, between the vernacular and Latin sections in the charm above, but that s/he would be unconcerned by their proximity. Whereas Storms arranges texts using an exclusive either/or set of binaries, the Anglo-Saxon reader might have been more likely to see texts as various different units that slot in to one another and are comfortably contained within a genre which can be inhabited by both charms and prayers.

Thus, it is possible to present charm and prayer types within a larger genre of curative supernatural texts. Though there are outliers in each category, both charms and prayers can be used to heal and both extend out to the supernatural world. However, there are certain formal distinctions that can be drawn between the two types, although these do shift and change and some appear to be contradictory. These typological distinctions could be represented thus, with the middle line understood as permeable and moveable:

#### Curative supernatural texts

##### Charms

Reach out to the unknown and unseen  
 In the vernacular  
 In verse  
 Demand assistance/state the situation  
 For physical/worldly problems  
 For all sorts of problems

##### Prayers

Reach out to God  
 In Latin  
 In prose  
 Ask for assistance  
 For spiritual problems  
 For painful ailments

Further evidence for the cohabitation of charms, prayers and their various constituent parts within one larger genre can be found in the manuscript context of charms. Texts which Grendon and Storms keep at separate ends of their binaries in fact live side by side in their manuscripts, and, depending on other factors, can often be read as part of a larger, coherent whole.

#### *Case Study: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41*

A convincing example of charms and prayers being recorded and used side by side by their Anglo-Saxon scribes can be found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41 (CCCC41 hereafter). CCCC41 is dated to 1025; its origin



is unknown, although Leofric's donation notice indicates that it was held in Exeter by 1070, when Leofric died (Gneuss 1997: 31). CCCC41 is a good candidate for this case study because it presents a relatively small corpus of texts recorded at roughly the same time by the same person. This reduces the variables of date and ownership as much as possible, allowing one to formulate an accurate interpretation of how these texts were used. This case study will focus on the marginalia of CCCC41, as the texts relevant to this argument are all present in this context. The marginalia is unrelated to the main text (Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, along with mass sets and office chants), but within the margins there is evidence that the scribe who composed the marginal texts was attempting to create a collection of texts that were useful to him on a daily basis. The marginalia in the manuscript is extraordinarily diverse, containing a "fragmentary Old English martyrology and the beginning of the poetic *Solomon and Saturn*", as well as liturgical material (in Latin) and Old English homilies, charms and medical recipes (Bredehoft 2006: 772n.5). All of these additions were made by one scribe (who was not one of the two scribes who originally worked on the main text). According to Thomas Bredehoft, these additions can be separated into four stages according to the date of their entry into the manuscript (Bredehoft 2006: 729–730).<sup>8</sup>

The ink, spacing and ruling of the marginalia indicate that the additions were an effort to create a collection of useful texts (Bredehoft 2006: 721n.2). The texts were embedded into the daily life of the priests, who used them as part of their ministrations in the lay community (Hollis 2001: 154n.38), and recorded them in CCCC41 as an aid to memory.<sup>9</sup> The marginalia of CCCC41 provides evidence that texts divided by Storms and Grendon into the categories of "religious" and "magical" or "prayers" and "charms" were not held apart by the Anglo-Saxons, but were in fact grouped together as ways of dealing with the unseen influences on a community's spiritual and physical welfare. Although charms and prayers – and indeed the liturgical texts also added by the same scribe into CCCC41 – might be different types of text, this does not prevent them from being used in a religious context. That the marginalia includes liturgical texts alongside texts traditionally known as "prayers" or "charms" suggests that the Anglo-Saxon scribes perceived a commonality among the texts that is obscured by the application of twentieth-century binary definitions to the texts. Indeed, CCCC41 is by nature a religious text, planned, written and used by priests. Therefore, it is both unhelpful and illogical to read the texts – as Grendon and Storms propose – as evidence of practices *separated* from Christian religious life. Several charms require equipment and skills that would not necessarily have been available to the lay community, and required ritual actions that might have been regarded as the province of those members of the community that were perceived as having the most direct line to the supernatural. Take, for example, text XXIX from the *Lacnunga*:

*Pis is se halga drænc*

Pis is se halga drænc wið ælfsidene 7 wið eallum feondes costungum:

Writ on husldisce: 'In principio erat verbum' usque 'no conperherderunt' [...]

*This is the Holy Drink*

This is the holy drink for elfish magic and for all the temptations of the Devil: Write on a paten [communion dish]: 'In the beginning was the Word' as far as 'comprehended it not' [...]<sup>10</sup>

The performer is expected not only to own a *husldisc* ['paten', a communion dish], but also to know the first fifteen verses of John and to be able to write them in Latin. A priest or other member of the clergy would have been the only person with access to this equipment and level of training in Latin, and so would be able to perform the text on behalf of a layperson. Almost all of the Stage 1 and 3 texts added to CCCC41 relate to everyday activities that would characterise both religious and lay life: thieves, runaway bees, and painful eyes could plague a priest or a layperson. Fiends might be a concern more close to the hearts of those concerned with spiritual welfare on a daily basis, and childbirth might appear to be more of a lay concern, but with a direct connection to God, priests might have been the natural choice to be present at the dangerous and often deadly process of giving birth.<sup>11</sup>

The *Sator* childbirth charm in CCCC41 is so interesting that it deserves a slight digression. The existence of this charm in CCCC41 suggests that priests were involved with aspects of lay life, which in itself unsettles Grendon and Storms's certainty that, for the Anglo-Saxons, religious and non-religious/irreligious practices and beliefs were mutually exclusive. The *Sator* childbirth charm in CCCC41 tells us that the woman giving birth is clearly not the performer, but is being assisted by someone who is performing on her behalf. The performer of the charm is to say: *da super terram huic famulam tuam .N., ut prospere et sine dolore parturit* ['Give this to the earth thy servant N., that she may bear happy and without pain']. The named servant is the woman in labour. The passivity of the female performer here is not restricted to the CCCC41 *Sator* childbirth charm: of the four childbirth texts extant from Anglo-Saxon England, three require monastic intervention. Like the *Sator* text, the two texts below require a knowledge of Latin and/or the ability to write, skills possessed almost exclusively by priests; and they specify (explicitly, in the case of the first text) that someone other than the woman is carrying out the action:

*Wiþ wif bearn eacenu*

Maria virgo peperit Christum, Elisabet sterelis peperit Iohannem baptismum. Adiuro te infans, si es masculus an femina, per Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum, ut exeas e recedas, et ultra ei non noceas neque insipientiam illi facias. Amen.

Viden dominus flentes sorores Lazari ad monumentum lacrimatus est coram Iudeis et clamabat:

Lazare veni foras. Et prodiit ligatis minibus et pedibus qui fuerat quatruiduanus mortuus.

Writ ðis on wece ðe næfre ne com to nanen wyrce, and bind under hire swiðran fot.

*For a Woman Big with Child*

Mary, virgin, brought forth Christ: Elizabeth, sterile, brought forth John the Baptist.

I adjure you, infant, whether you be masculine or feminine, by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that you awaken and move, and no longer do any injury or foolishness. Amen.

The Lord, seeing the sister of Lazarus weeping at the tomb, wept in the presence of the Jews and cried out: Lazarus come forth. And he came forth with hands and feet bound who had been four days dead.

Write this on a wax tablet which has never been used and bind under her right foot.<sup>12</sup>

*Gif wif ne mæge bearn beran*

Solve iube deus ter catenis

*If a Woman Cannot Bear Her Child*

Free [her], God, from these three chains.<sup>13</sup>

*Wið wif bearn eacenu* [‘For a Woman Big with Child’] requires that someone write a story of fertility and rebirth – an appropriate narrative – on a wax tablet on behalf of the woman. *Gif wif ne mæge bearn beran* [‘if a woman cannot bear her child’] requires that someone with knowledge of Latin speaks to God on the woman’s behalf. Both texts therefore provide some evidence that priestly practices were connected to the requirements of the secular world, and that, at the very least, for the Anglo-Saxon scribe of CCCC41 there was no simple distinction between religious and secular activities, or between religious lives and “charms”.

Thus, we can see that “charms”, rather than the magical rituals the word itself suggests, can be understood as being integrated into religious life: the charms describe actions that would be undertaken by priests, as evidenced by their appearance in collections of well-used everyday religious texts. Storms directly contravenes – or does not take into account – this evidence from the manuscript in his edition. All of the texts in CCCC41’s marginalia are edited by Storms as “charms”, except for *Wið sarum eagum* [‘against eye-ache’], which is included in the appendix of “prayers”. According to Storms’s organisational system, the text does fit neatly into the genre of “prayer”: it is prose rather than verse; Latin rather than the vernacular; and the performer beseeches rather than demands. However, there are aspects of the text which match closely with the other CCCC41 texts that Storms has classified as “charms”. *Wið sarum eagum* [‘against eye-ache’] uses a narrative – of the healing of Tobit – to set up a “just as this, so that” cause and effect system: “just as Tobit’s son was healed, so may I be”. However, five of the other seven texts in CCCC41 also use narratives to achieve their goals: the three theft texts invoke Helena, who found the Cross after it was stolen; *wið ealra feonda grimnessum* [‘against the wickednesses of all fiends’] relates a psalm and a quotation from Exodus which narrates the defeating of enemies; and the *Sator* charm tells stories of conception and creation. It seems, therefore, that the use of “just as this, so that” narratives is a characteristic

that unites curative supernatural texts rather than dividing them. Storms's analysis would have been more helpful if, instead of stopping at identifying differences between the texts, he went on to examine the ways in which their manuscript context connects them.

### *Conclusions*

Categorisation is a logical reaction to one's everyday experience of the world. At its most basic level, categorisation must occur so that one may assess whether a situation is dangerous. Abstracted out to textual criticism, it is natural that Grendon and Storms would react to the charms with a system that organised a seemingly chaotic mixture of "pagan" and "Christian" elements. However, in order to ensure that a reading of a historical text is as accurate – i.e. as close to the original understanding – as possible, the modern reader must ensure that they locate systems of categorisation within the worldview of the culture concerned (insofar as is possible). One must use the evidence present within the context of a text to inform our interpretations, as well as being conscious of the tendency to apply one's own values to texts that were generated in very different cultural environments. By reading charms in this more sensitive way, it is possible to see that traditional approaches to the charms divided one type of text from another where no functional divide existed for the Anglo-Saxons. The Anglo-Saxons may well have recognised the formal differences between charms and prayers, but were not discomfited by them; modern distinctions between "pagan" and "Christian" did not seem to trouble the scribe who used two types of healing texts – charms and prayers – as part of his/her daily life. This is why reading the charms and prayers as formally distinct but united by purpose and use is preferable to more traditional methodologies.

### NOTES

- 1 Problems with defining verbal charms and prayers are not only limited to those raised by the Anglo-Saxon texts. James A. Kapaló has recently examined charms and prayers in the Hungarian corpus (see Kapaló 2011).
- 2 The ways in which a scholar might employ a more fluid and socially determined understanding of genre is explored in more detail by Frog (this volume).
- 3 Leslie-Jacobsen (this volume) explores modern and medieval genre definitions of sagas which present an interesting parallel to this essay. Leslie-Jacobsen posits that, while modern genre groupings are "useful to modern critics because [...] they prompt us to identify similarities and differences between [sub-groups]" (p. 252), evidence from within the medieval sources themselves "has usually held to be preferable to the modern genre categories that could be seen as being imposed on the medieval material" (p. 269n.3).
- 4 At this point it is necessary to qualify the term "supernatural". I mean the unseen, the aspects of life which are beyond the human realm. In the Anglo-Saxon worldview, the "supernatural" encompassed a much wider spectrum of concepts than in the modern mind; the "supernatural" is the unseen forces of nature, God,

- and fate. Jennifer Neville has written an extremely helpful book on this topic: see Neville 1999.
- 5 For example, London, British Library, Harley 585 (also known as the *Lacnunga*, the largest extant collection of healing texts from the period; Storms edits 29 “charms” from this manuscript) contains several “prayers” (A3, A7 and A12–15 in Storms, for pox, sore eyes and the collection of herbs respectively). London, British Library 2.a.xx contains several blood-staunching “charms” (numbers 55–60 in Storms) and “prayers” against pox and all evils (numbered A8 and A16 in Storms); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41 contains 7 “charms” (1, 12, 14, 15, 16, 43 and 48) and a “prayer” for eye ache (A4); LBL Cotton Caligula A.xv contains 3 “charms” (34, 68, 69) and 2 “prayers”, for pox and swelling (A9 and 10); LBL Cotton Vitellius e.xviii contains 3 “charms” (50, 85, 87) and a “prayer” (A2), for fruitful land; Cambridge Gonville and Caius 379 contains two “charms” (62 and 72) and two “prayers” (A5 and 6) for ear ache and stomach ache.
  - 6 For further discussion on hybrid or mixed genres, see Tarkka (this volume).
  - 7 The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the following definition (earliest citation 1579): “A set of words, a formula or verse, supposed to possess occult or magical powers; a charm or incantation; a means of accomplishing enchantment or exorcism” (*OED*, s.v. “spell 1”).
  - 8 This article is interested in the first and third stages, in which several charms were recorded. The first stage consists of four items: “Against theft 1”, *Gif feoh* (Storms 1948: 206–207); “Against theft 2”, *ðis man sceal cweda*n (Storms 1948: 206–207); “Against theft 3”, *Ne forstolen* (Storms 1948: 208–211); “Against the atrocities of all the fiends”, *Wiþ ealra feonda grimnessum* (Storms 1948: 285); “Against sore eyes”, *Wiþ sarum eagum* (Storms 1948: 315) *Sator* childbirth charm (Storms 1948: 261); and “Journey charm”,  *Ic me on þisse gyred beluce* (Storms 1948: 216–219). The third stage consists of an Old English martyrology and the charm “Against the swarming of bees”, *Wið ymbe* (Storms 1948: 132–133) Stage 2 consists of Latin liturgical texts that were added at various points in the manuscript, one of which is on the same folio as a charm in recorded in Stage 3. The other texts recorded in Stage 3 are an OE martyrology, *Solomon and Saturn* and some OE homilies. Stage 4 consists of OE homilies.
  - 9 With thanks to an anonymous peer-reviewer, it should be noted that under Leofric, Exeter was not a monastery, but a community of canons following the Rule of Chrodegang. Members of this community, therefore, should be referred to as “priests” rather than “monks”. They were, in other words, not monks, though many were no doubt priests. Furthermore, the work of Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* is a useful resource for the reader, as Thomas discusses how magic is related to a more broad acceptance of spiritual intercession (see Thomas 1971).
  - 10 See Pettit 2001 I: 17.
  - 11 It is worth pointing out that there is a large body of comparative ethnographic evidence which suggests that male presence at or around birth was unlikely. However, I still wish to present these examples to the contrary: the texts state that the woman giving birth does not speak the charm for herself, but has a mediator to speak on her behalf. Evidence of formalised religious life in this period – of monastic and priestly life – suggests that this mediator would have to have been a man in order to possess the necessary skills to perform the charm. It is possible that the mediator could have been an educated noble female, but there is no evidence to support that suggestion.
  - 12 See Storms 1948: 283. This text can be found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 85.
  - 13 See Storms 1948: 295. This text can be found in the *Lacnunga*, f. 183a.

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## 5. Notes on Reflexivity and Genre in Stand-Up Comedy Routines

In this text, I will look at stand-up comedy as an example of complex verbal art exhibiting multiple levels of performative reflexivity.<sup>1</sup> Originating with a background in American and British vaudeville and music hall, stand-up comedy has emerged as a distinctly verbal form of solo performance defined by “an intensely direct relationship with the audience, improvisation and a firm emphasis on the here and now” (Double 2014: 26). As a combination of various conversational and narrative speech genres introduced into a scripted yet also relatively open performance context, stand-up comedy provides a prominent object of folkloristic study with texts retrieved and analyzed in their actual performative, cultural, and historical contexts.

By commencing from the basic insight that genres are best approached via texts (more or less) representative of them, the emphasis in this article will be on the discursive and textual constitution of “stand-up routines”, the bounded pieces of which complete stand-up performances are sequentially built. Relatedly, the discussion will build from the idea of stand-up discourse as a complex genre system synthesizing multiple speech genres and text types into a unique whole. The interest in issues of genre lies not in pursuing classificatory aims nor in unearthing prototypical attributes of genres, but in the use-value of various speech genres in oral performances, in their pragmatics, interrelations, and social implications (Frow 2006).<sup>2</sup> However, while it is fairly easy to recognize stand-up discourse as combining various types of speech, it is another thing to analytically grasp the interplay between these shifting and interrelated types in social interaction.

To approach the pragmatics of genres as tools of stand-up discourse, then, I will root for the adoption of the mutually constitutive sociolinguistic concepts of framing and footing, both of which participate in and point towards the reflexive management of the narrative performance by the performer herself. In particular, alternating footings assumed by the speaker will be analyzed as indicating alignments of the speaker in relation to the events and ideas recounted, as well as her present interlocutors, the audience. Not only is it principally by such structures of address that stand-ups can be seen to manage the reception of their textual products in a manner that essentially characterizes the genre as a form of (unilateral) interaction, shifts between generic segments can also often be localized by shifts of footings.



In the latter half of the article, I will examine a routine by a societally inclined Finnish comic Jukka Lindström, dealing with a dubious Youtube video transmitted via social media. At the time of writing this article I have seen the routine three times in different performances and have three audio/video documentations of it.<sup>3</sup> From the perspective of narrative performance adopted in the article, it is worth asking what kinds of textual and generic qualities render this routine especially memorable or effective, and how are the relations between the performer and his audience discursively and reflexively managed in interaction. Particular stress is laid on the interplay between the narrative strategies and the comic techniques utilized in the routine, which I argue to be co-productive in serving the above ends.

As a cultural phenomenon stand-up has been primarily approached from the relatively distanced perspectives of media, literary, and cultural studies (e.g. Limon 2000), even if some of the most penetrating methods could be found in more ethnographically inclined traditions that would concentrate on the performance event as social interaction.<sup>4</sup> Earlier and the most well-known research has also been focused on Anglo-American and British contexts;<sup>5</sup> in Finland, as in Estonia for example, academic interest towards the genre is only beginning to emerge, even though as an art form, stand-up has been practiced since the early 1990s.<sup>6</sup> The more general aim of the present article will be in beginning to fix these shortcomings.

### *Stand-Up Routines as Generic Texts*

As a genre of comedy, stand-up is distinctly verbal. This is not to neglect the physical or visual side of stand-up (kinesics, proxemics, gestural language), which closely accompanies and can certainly overshadow the linguistic and paralinguistic aspects of a performance, but merely to focus my present approach towards the subject as humorous verbal art. As such, the concept of the text will be essential for any analysis of stand-up comedy. This concept will be elaborated here in close relation to the popular notion of a “stand-up routine”.

Texts, considered here as principal devices in the meaningful presentation of culture (e.g. Silverstein & Urban 1996), are analytically understood as being actively shaped out of discourse in processes succinctly conceptualized as entextualization. In short, entextualization refers to the generically informed, gradual process whereby discourse is patterned into more or less detachable, formally cohesive and semantically coherent texts (Hanks 1989; Bauman 2004). The parameters, idiosyncrasies, and sociocultural functions of the said patterning and potential detachment are, however, essentially genre-specific, highly variable issues to be identified and validated empirically. In this regard, entextualization is primarily a heuristic tool for highlighting and making sense of the discursive processes under scrutiny (Kuipers 1990), and as such, susceptible to be operationalized as a valid vantage point as well on issues of genre.

As discourse production stand-up performances are partitioned into “gags”, “bits”, or segments popularly known as “stand-up routines”.<sup>7</sup> Routines

have been variously metaphorized as the “songs” or “numbers” of the comic, and on commercial stand-up records, routines often constitute the table of contents or the chapters of the published product.<sup>8</sup> Markku Toikka and Maritta Vento (2000: 26–27) elaborate on the same metaphor and characterize routines – referring to them as headlines or topics – as blocks or structures of material that can be used in a performance, in variable form and order. Consequently, routines are conceived as more or less malleable: depending on the performer and the context, a single routine can be performed in multiple guises and forms, in which the contextual variation can be formal, thematic, or pragmatic in nature and either intentional or unintentional (see also Kallio 2013: 86–87). Stand-up routine as a “real kind” (see Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume) is a metadiscursive, synoptic construct, lacking in substantial or essential criteria. A routine is merely thought of as a situationally bounded stretch of discourse with a fairly conventionalized meaning, recognizable in diverse contexts and available for reanimation through potential, prospective performances.

Corroborating the notion of texts being predisposed to reiteration, a stand-up routine – as the term itself certainly implies by its connotations of convention and habit – is an intensely reiterated form of textuality. Forgoing the ostensible appearance of spontaneity, a single routine is designed, performed, reproduced, and re-tested for its performative effects in successive performances for various audiences, rendering suspicious or futile all attempts to document a routine in its supposedly original or definitive form. Then again, it is possible to argue that some routines by some performers do achieve certain “finality”, a certain “crystalized” form (Siikala 1990; see also Bakhtin 1986: 76–78), which might get reproduced as such in several successive performances. In addition, comics themselves sometimes talk about “burning”, i.e. performing for one last time, the routine for commercial audio/video documentation (see, for example, the bonus interview on Vesterinen 2010), implying the comic’s satisfaction, saturation, or both, with the routine. In this regard, Ian Bernard Brodie (2009: 72–73) makes a problematic generalization in claiming how stand-up performances would be teleological “in that they aim towards a final, definitive version” and by labeling performances prior to the recorded one as “rough drafts”. Rather, many comics underline the singularity and the variability of stand-up performances, defining stand-up as a genre by drawing on these aspects: for better or worse, a stand-up performance “happens” each time as a unique actualization and interaction between the performer, the material, and the audience.

Significantly, the reiterated nature of stand-up routines as texts is typically effaced in actual performances, receiving no explicit attribution, which as a strategic practice can be compared to traditional folklore performances. Folklore as a discursive practice is legitimately managed by intertextual self-positioning against anterior performances: it is marked, maintained, and recognized by such intertextual links. Conversely, stand-up performances are managed by a “romantic” rhetoric implying no apparent predecessors. Both patterns are, however, interactional accomplishments that are part of the management of narrative performances and the politics of presentation,

and should be analyzed as such. (Haring 1988; on romantic versus classicist inclinations of textual production, see Bauman 2004.)

### *Politics of Presentation*

As a recognizable form of performance and comedy, cross-culturally referred to by the English modifier *stand-up*,<sup>9</sup> the question of genre is particularly cogent if complex (see e.g. Brodie 2009: 57–60 for a review of various definitions) regarding stand-up comedy. Philip Auslander has noted (1992: 125–127) how the distinction between a “stand-up comic” (associated with popular entertainment), a “performance artist” (associated with “high cultural vanguard”), or simply an “entertainer” is frequently more a difference of the performer’s professional identification, the venue, and the audience than of the style of the performance itself. Michael Peterson (1997) concurs that it is not possible to find any criteria based on form, content, or audience reception that would distinguish stand-up comedy from, say, other forms of monologue performances or live poem recitation. He concludes by referring to stand-up as a discursive and material formation: stand-up comedy performances are recognized as such because they are advertised and referred to in specific ways. The term or keyword (Brodie 2009) “stand-up” is connected to the practices of use of performances or a set of expectations concerning humorously intentioned communication in first-person monologue form, also implicated in a folk categorization such as referring to any public speech as verging on stand-up: “That presentation was more like stand-up comedy.”<sup>10</sup>

Aesthetically, stand-up comedy is defined by “unmarkedness” (Seizer 2011) or primitiveness, accomplished by both scenic/visual and linguistic features of which the latter is the main concern here.<sup>11</sup> The impression aimed at is that of an everyman climbing on the stage and starting to recount entertaining, “true” stories (e.g. Toikka & Vento 2000: 19; Wickström 2005: 43). This generic truth-effect (Double 2014: 159–186) is produced by a nonexistent prop paradigmatically consisting of the microphone, a chair, and everyday attire of the performer, complemented by the colloquial speech style that involves addressing audience members directly in the second person. As informally conversational speech enabled in part by electric amplification (Brodie 2008; 2009), the register<sup>12</sup> of stand-up speech is a distinguishing metacommunicative signal marking the genre and orienting the reception of a single performance by implicating a linguistic kinship and proximity between the audience and the performer.

Stand-up, as other related disciplines often labeled under the general heading of “performance art”, then, privileges “reality” over “fiction” and builds strongly on an illusion of directness and “presence” (on this unquestionably tricky concept, Peterson 1997: 16–17), simultaneously challenging some persistent Western notions of theater (see Schieffelin 1998). Not only is the “fourth wall” between the performer and the audience permeable or wholly absent, stand-up speech itself falls on the explicitly opinionated and expressive side of narration with a strong link between

the performer and the text performed.<sup>13</sup> Crucially, a stand-up comic is not interpreted as uttering words scripted by an absent author, but as embodying that author-function himself. (Peterson 1997.) Echoing Lauri Honko's (2002) observation on how the persona of the folktale performer is often part of the "truth" of the tale so that a narrative is deemed authentic only as told by its rightful narrator, a stand-up routine is socially apprehended via an organic relation with its author and animator.<sup>14</sup> It is thus a generic convention of stand-up speech that it is actively stylized and framed as *unmediated*, preferably topical personal narrative, offered as indexical of the performer's authentic personality: "He does not interpret. He speaks." (Toikka & Vento 2000: 19, translation by the present author).<sup>15</sup>

It is also perfectly appropriate, if not always considered performatively effective, for a comic to reflect and comment on her performance, on herself, on her surroundings, etc. in strategic points of the show. Comments on the surroundings and individual audience members might in general be preferred to those referring to the performance, and even deemed mandatory in some accounts: "Failure to respond to a heckler, a dropped glass or the ringing of a mobile phone is a sign of weakness which will result in the audience losing faith in the performer's ability." (Double 2014: 19–20). In a word, the comic is expected to display her reflexive awareness and control of the performance event and herself, for which various metadiscursive and metanarrative comments provide a potent device. Finally, and as will also be seen with the material below, insofar as such reflexive signals often offer potential sites for additional humorous incongruities, the relations between the functional and the interactional aspects of metadiscourse and humor form another prominent object of study.

### *Genres as Tools of Stand-Up Routines*

"Complexity" (Bakhtin 1986) of a genre such as stand-up alludes to its tendency to incorporate, creatively combine, and embed within one another different kinds of text types (narrative, argumentative, descriptive, etc.) and genres (personal experience narratives, anecdotes, legends, gossip, etc.).<sup>16</sup> In the case focused on below, for example, allusions are found to as many genres as expository personal narratives, argumentative preaching, the conventions of telephone conversation, gossiping, and anecdotes. In addition, the case will illustrate how the genres engaged by complex genres gather much of their meanings only in relation to each other and to the complete communicative event, which on the whole encourages us to look at how the speaker reflexively manages his own alignment with respect to his speech as well as his present interlocutors.

In his pioneering folkloristic overview of stand-up, endowing much thought as well on aspects of genre, Brodie (2009) draws attention to the alternations of belief stances in stand-up speech by resorting to the classic folkloristic triad of myths, *Märchen*, and legends.<sup>17</sup> After providing examples of each arch-genre and their first-person variants (testimonials, tall tales, and personal anecdotes, respectively), he eventually proposes "non-

consequential” small talk as the most coincident form of talk with stand-up speech: both represent “talk which is understood by the participants as primarily concerned with the establishment or re-establishment of interpersonal relationships and less with instrumental communication for the facilitation of a specific concrete goal” (*ibid.*: 107). Building on Brodie’s work with the aim in analyzing how exactly is stand-up speech structured and interactively managed by relying on generic models, it will be argued here that attention with regard to genres as constitutive elements of stand-up speech should be given specifically to the interrelations, combinations, and pragmatics of genres in the interactional events under study.

What have come to be termed “open” or dynamic conceptualizations of genre as conventionalized frames of reference (see Koski 2011: 51) not only underline the situational and pragmatic nature of genres but also take the intergeneric transactions and deviations from generic models as natural and fundamental features of genres, and hence as points of departure for the analyst as well (e.g. Dorst 1983). This “rhetorical turn” in the study of genre has in effect amounted to a de-centering of genres as autonomous phenomena: “The meanings conveyed through genres do not arise from substantial ‘centers’ of fixed meaning, but through the margins, the systemic interaction of meaning” (Tarkka 1993: 176). The management of such generic relations should be understood as being closer to a skill or an art than actual, well-articulated knowledge. That is, generic knowledge is intuitive, diffuse, and unanalyzed, characterized in large part by pragmatic, situated interests and motivations (Nieminen 2010: 55; Koski 2011: 51).

Such theoretical approaches will be particularly apt for the analysis of humorous communication, in which “[t]he high degree of creativity, emergent construction and artistry [...] call for a concept of genre which makes sense of modifications and transgressions in communicative processes” (Kotthoff 2007: 263). Humorous deployments and manipulations of genres can especially highlight how shifts in the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects of genres can become visible by embedding them within one another and merging them together. Particular attention in the case of humorous texts should thus be laid on the strategic indeterminacy of genre, which can function as a critical method, a source of aesthetic pleasure, but equally a disclaimer of social and political responsibility. I suggest a fruitful avenue for approaching these issues will be to turn to the ways that speakers frame, contextualize, and align themselves vis-à-vis their discursive products as well as their audiences.

### *Managing the Performance: Framing and Footing*

The observation that texts are regularly encountered as precipitated of discourse has proven especially productive in analyses of texts in use, that is, in their social and narrative contexts (see also Hanks 1989: 119). The central concern in various methodical conceptualizations of the distinction between texts and discourse can be seen to turn on the reflexive, indexical signals and patterns by which speakers link their speech to their immediate

circumstances, typifying them in ways that make them recognizable as communications of a certain type or appropriate to a certain context (e.g. Gumperz 1982; Bauman 1986; Briggs 1988). These sites of reflexive self-regulation are also the points where the speaker/performer orients and manipulates his or her reception – manages the performance – and as such some of the main foci of interest in analyzing stand-up speech as narrative interaction. In order to attain a firmer grip on them, the concepts of framing and footing will be adopted, the differentiation between which will be subtle yet decisive.

Frames are seen as socially shared definitions of interactive situations and, as such, significant in signaling shifts and transitions amidst discourse, e.g. between generic segments, textually constructed voices, perspectives etc. (for a historical overview of the concept covering several disciplines, see Tannen 1993b). In an influential, rhetorically oriented definition of framing, the process is associated with the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient “*in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described*” (Entman 1993: 52, emphasis original). This sort of selective contextualization (Karvonen 2000) naturally figures prominently in humorous performances, in which unexpected redefinitions of perspective, frame shifts and blends, figure-ground reversals etc. form the stock-in-trade comic techniques (e.g. Coulson 2001). An important aspect of the notion of shifting frames immanent in the text has been that it also renders the concept of “context” towards an emergent, actor-oriented, and interpretive direction as opposed to an idea of a static ground in a disjunctive relation to the text (Briggs 1988; Duranti & Goodwin 1992).

In contrast to framing, footing has been adopted as a term referring to the shifting positioning immanent in discourse production, to the alignments “we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production and reception of an utterance” (Goffman 1981: 128). After all, very different interactional settings are constituted (1) in addressing one’s recipients in direct conversation; (2) in embedding a narrated story amidst this conversation; (3) in commenting on the same story; or (4) in gesturally enacting certain actions of a character in the story. Such positioning and alignments can be indexed by various textual, prosodic, or paralinguistic cues, and are seen as playing a strategic role in stand-up speech by providing the primary means for the organization of contrasting viewpoints, voices, reflexive textual distances etc. Highly potent has also proven to be Erving Goffman’s deconstruction of “the speaker” into analytically separated, potentially though not necessarily overlapping functions of author, animator, principal, and figure. In short, author refers to the originator of the words, animator to the person uttering the words, principal to the party socially responsible for what is being said, and figure to the persona performed through the act of utterance (Goffman 1981: 144–146; for a critical look at these functions, see Irvine 1996). Footing, then, accounts for the shifts in such statuses that the speaker may assume – in speaking for herself, in quoting, in addressing a collective, etc. – and



is constitutive in large measure of the perspectival dynamics that stand-up draws its efficiency and allure from. Ultimately, as far as footing refers to the way in which framing is accomplished in verbal interaction (Hoyle 1993: 115; Ribeiro 2006), the relationship between frames and footing is seen as hierarchical: frames are invoked and signaled by shifts in footing.

Very elementarily, framing and footing regulate what kinds of subject positions different texts and speech genres lay out for participants of the speech event.<sup>18</sup> For instance, insofar as stand-up comics often pursue a collective sentiment, specific attention should be given to the strategies by which their speech is explicitly or implicitly stylized as involving the audience in the position of the universal “we” (both Koziski 1984 and Mintz 1985, the earliest analysts of stand-up, seem to have taken this stylization at face value and present the comic as a cultural mediator or a “scapegoat” of sorts). This position, naturally, can be legitimized (by laughter, yells, etc.) or not. Another frequent narrative strategy will be seen to be the deployment of various forms of reported speech, enabling the performer to increase stylistic and ideological heterogeneity by drawing on multiple speech events, voices, and points of view (Hanks 1989: 70).

### *Lindström’s Elephant Routine*

In order to assess the approaches and tools developed in the article, I will now take a closer look at a routine by Jukka Lindström, a Finnish comic since 2005. His subjects range from the alienation induced by smartphones and social media to criticizing modern Western complacency, typically mediated by his own experiences according to the conventions of the genre. Since 2013, he has been a founding member of a group of comics called *Paukutusjengi*, with an explicit aim of diversifying the field of Finnish stand-up comedy. In a turn of generic dissociation and self-identification, the group has profiled itself with attributes such as “honesty”, as comedy “digging deeper” and addressing the “pains of the individual and of the nation” (see Korhonen 2013).

The routine under scrutiny is from a performance for an audience of around 80–100 people that was documented in a club in Helsinki (1st September 2013). Exemplifying a sequence of stand-up that fluently combines and embeds a multiplicity of speech genres and text types in a relatively brief time span, it also illuminates the simultaneously shifting positioning and alignments of the parties of the speech event that I regard as a defining characteristic of the genre as interaction. In the routine, Lindström dramatizes his statement about the “decline of Western civilization” by recounting a personal incident on Facebook and illustrating its absurdity with an imaginary temporal analogy. Thematically, the routine expands directly from prior segments of the same performance, in which the speaker mourns the shortening of attention span as a result of Youtube and the like. The text-artifact presented here has been translated from Finnish into English as well as practically divided into four segments, as indicated by roman letters:



## I

- 1a but it is like this  
1b Internet makes you dumber  
1c slowly but surely<sup>19</sup>
- 2a I'm certain: the decline of the Western civilization has begun goddammit  
2b I understood this...  
2c the decline of the Western civilization has begun  
2d I understood it last week  
2e my *best friend* Joni  
2f sent me a video on Facebook  
2g where there was a normal elephant  
2h just a regular elephant  
2i African elephant  
2j that takes its trunk [visualizing the movements of the trunk by hand]  
2k puts it in his fellow elephant's rectum  
2l feels it a little bit, takes a turd  
2m *and eats* it [L]  
2n [slows down to a rhythmical pace, emphasizing every word towards the end] that's when I realized the downhill had fucking begun [L] [pauses for 2 seconds]
- 3a well not exactly at that specific moment  
3b but after I had pressed the "Like" button [L]  
3c but anyway, anyway... [L]

## II

- 4a it has come to this!  
4b it has come...  
4c in the 90s we still recommended each other CDs and  
4d like, some novels  
4e now we send each other some elephant videos, goddammit

After contextualizing his prophetic conclusion about the Western world by referring to a widespread anti-modern discourse of how technology – in this case, the Internet and social media – deteriorates human capacities and potentials, the speaker starts off by stylizing his message in the form of a conversion narrative culminating in an epiphany-like revelation (lines 2b, 2d). This is exemplified with a short personal narrative segment about a purportedly revealing incident in the recent past, which, offered as a metonymical index of the surrounding cultural milieu, thus serves an expository function (Bennett 1986). In what could be construed as a more fundamental ideological anxiety underlying the overt proposition of the “decline”, the argument is seen to build on an implicit analogy between “us”, (Western, civilized) humans and (non-Western) animals: insofar as “we” draw pleasure from representations of such supposedly non-human, scatological behavior, “we” are juxtaposed with animals. Even if animality would indeed constitute “a domain that includes humans”, humanity, as the

routine thus brings to mind, is “a moral condition that excludes animals” (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 479).

In lamenting what appears to be a serious social and cultural predicament not to be taken lightly, Lindström relies on careful narrative framing in strategically directing his comic gaze: the state of the affairs represented by the narrated event is not to be laughed at, but an idiosyncratic experience of it, recounted via a personal narrative in the form of a sudden realization, is rendered susceptible to humorous treatment. It is also worth noting how the narrative itself has a noticeably elliptical structure, and how it is the opinionated frame established in the beginning against which the narrative renders itself coherent and humorous. This framing is summoned again and further solidified in line 2n by a repetition underlining the specific moment of the epiphany – if only to be soon retroactively corrected.<sup>20</sup>

The actual narrative storyline is situated in the speaker’s intimate social circles, in the context of a private (though not as private as hoped for, as it turns out) interaction with his “best friend”, also identified by first name, and consists of a negligible yet simultaneously recognizable episode of sharing a disgusting video on social media. Part of the effectiveness of the narrative is obviously connected to the fact that Lindström has chosen to portray his best friend in an undesirable light, as partaking in the decline of the whole civilization, suggesting raw honesty on part of the speaker himself. A narrative functioning as expository discourse characteristically implies metonymic universality in contrast to the exceptionality of the portrayed event itself, which further accentuates the implications of the segment (see Bennett 1986). If relaying such a video takes place between *best* friends – and the affective attribute is repeated a bit further on – it must be an indication of something far more general.<sup>21</sup>

The routine begins in a grandiloquent tone, generically close to mock-preaching, indexed in part by lexical choices (“Western civilization”) and completed with straightforward declarations (2a) as well as indirect appeals to include the audience in a collective sentiment of cultural kinship (4c–4e). The tactic of increasing the relevance of the text by situating the narrated event at a temporal and social proximity is in itself a performative strategy, very common in stand-up, which aims at creating an impression of topicality and authenticity: the same temporal reference (the deictic “last week”) is repeated in a subsequent performance about a month after the one where this transliteration is taken from. As known, a message that is framed as true and as recent is more persuasive, more effective than one framed as temporally remote or, better yet, as overt fiction.<sup>22</sup>

A twist of confessional self-irony is introduced as a brief coda of the narrative, deflating the grand tone of the routine and simultaneously decreasing the social distance between the performer and the audience (3a–3c). First of all, it could be said that Lindström’s confession of sharing the guilty pleasure of enjoying such inane video clips and partaking in the “decline” mitigates the process of identification and offers simultaneous relief for members of the audience. After all, the latter might have recognized themselves in the familiar narrative, which, it should be remembered, started out in a more critical register. In addition, the stark overview and

outlook of the societal predicament (“the decline of the West”) is cushioned and rendered more palatable as a result of the humorous concession. What might be seen as a generic idiosyncrasy solidifying the connotations of the relativism of perspectives associated with stand-up, it is perfectly reasonable for a performer to slightly pervert his argument in this way.

Secondly, the two lines (3a–3c) represent a prominent case of humorously staged metanarration (see chapter two above). In a simultaneous shift of footing and frame break, here masquerading as a faux-corrective specifying the previous sentence (2n), Lindström accomplishes an ascent to a logically higher plane, whereby his previous, judgmental diatribe is suddenly turned into an object language. This object language, furthermore, is now rendered itself incongruent with the revelation of Lindström’s own not-so-faultless behavior. This appears to bring about a break in the narrative flow, thwarting the smooth unfolding of the speaker’s argument. However, it instead does the opposite, tightening the link between the narrated story and the narrative event. By the brief narrative discontinuity, Lindström thus achieves several ends: he increases the social kinship between himself and the audience by undermining his own apparent moral preeminence, solidifies the impression of spontaneous speech in the present tense (Double 2014: 325–338), in addition to milking out a few extra laughs.

Advancing on to the second segment of the presently textualized routine, the lines (4c–4e) segueing the routine from the first narrative episode to the next form a significant parallelism,<sup>23</sup> in which the temporal juxtaposition of “then” (4c, 4d) and “now” (4e) hints at the underlying rhetorical argument of the entire routine. This is indexed by a forceful change in footing to a direct address with the vocally emphasized phrase “It has come to this!” The direct address underlines the communicative and interpretative weight of the juxtaposition while simultaneously drawing on the presumably shared experiences of both the modern social media culture and the sharing culture of the 1990s. The aforementioned phrase (4a) can be seen to bridge the gap between the previously narrated event and the ongoing storytelling event by phatically reaching out to the audience (Bauman 1986), thus increasing the situated nature of the speech.

Linguistic anthropologist Douglas Glick (2007) has called attention to poetic parallelisms in stand-up comedy and argued that these structures can often function as instructions and guidelines for audiences in interpreting texts in a desired fashion. An instruction inciting a temporal comparison figures strongly in the present case, as the routine continues in a subjunctive mood keyed by a change in footing, evoking a counterpart for the preceding narrative episode:

### III

- 5a [raises voice] if in the 90s my best friend Joni had sent me  
 5b in a brown envelope...  
 5c [emphasizes the words] a VHS tape [L] [pauses for 4 seconds with an allusive, questioning look]

- 5d I would've thought that Joni has something *very meaningful* to show me personally [L]  
 5e and when I would've put the tape in the VCR... [prolonged laughter]  
 5f pressed "Play"... [physically visualizing the movements associated with using a VCR]  
 5g and there would've been the fucking elephant... [draws a rectangular TV screen in the air by hand]  
 5h I would *not* have sent him back a letter with a hand-drawn "thumbs up" [L]  
 6a no, I would've called him by phone:  
 6b [in a worried tone of voice, as if speaking to a telephone, pacing to and fro, shouting at the end]: "Joni is everything alright for fuck's sake!?" [L]

In a fashion typical of extended or literary comedy, the humor of the routine is constructed out of a "comic sequence" (Zupancic 2008). In this case, the deliberately failed analogy that connects the two narrative episodes builds up comic associations as the sequence advances.<sup>24</sup> Lindström adds further layers to his original analogy by imaginatively reconstructing and anachronistically resituating the practice of casual video sharing in the context of the (nostalgically more meaningful) sharing culture of the 1990s as a historically counterfactual yet potentially viable event.<sup>25</sup> Noticeably, and in contrast to the beginning of the routine, all implications of seemingly hesitant repetitions are omitted in the segment, as Lindström now assumes the position of a speaker in full command of his performance.

The procedure is seen to expand the structure of poetic parallelism, at this point familiar to the audience, by juxtaposing the two strictly narrative episodes of the complete routine. The first, factual episode of receiving the Youtube video is rendered meaningful by the second, imaginary one – which, in turn, is rendered humorous – and vice versa, thus increasing the internal coherence of the routine (see also Knuuttila 1992: 209). Rhetorically, the motivating premise of the routine ("the decline") has at this point already been established by factual *example* in the guise of a personal narrative (2e–2m). The second parallel narrative is thus seen as an imaginary *illustration*, which is conventionally deployed to give further presence to the original premise in consciousness. Chaïm Perelman (1982: 108) has convincingly outlined the dynamics of such a combination of an example and further illustration as a rhetorical strategy: "[W]hile the reality of the example must be incontestable, the illustration must above all strike the imagination."

The outcome of this gradually unfolding juxtaposition is an instance of a conceptual blend, a combination of elements from two temporal and cultural frames, past and present, by which both the similarities and the differences of the frames are made visible (Hofstadter & Gabora 1989; Coulson 2001; Fauconnier & Turner 2002). In the respective blend, consisting of the frames of the 1990s social and technological sharing culture and the present day Facebook communication, the former frame is seen predominating over the latter in the sense that it provides the principal surroundings of the narrated event onto which the salient features of the latter are introduced – i.e. the content of the shared video clip and the approving response of "thumbs up".

Following the theoretical import of conceptual blends, it could be said that the humor derives not from a single narrative image but in fact from the emergent superimposition, the simultaneous alternation of both frames.<sup>26</sup>

The interplay between the textual parallelism accomplished narratively and the comic technique of a failed analogy, here conceptualized as a frame blend, increases the cohesion and the coherence of the complete entextualized routine to the extent that it is rendered not only funny but more memorable. In terms of cultural memory and vernacular argumentation, the sequence is an illustration of how cultural products construct and unveil the past “in light of present-day knowledge” and how the present in turn “is assessed via the changing and changeable past” (Knuuttila 1992: 339), in this case as humorously (and tragically) irrational. And to stretch the argument a bit further, it could be said that the interconnectedness of the different levels of the worldview – here, the historical stretch from past to present – is also maintained and revitalized by such analogical and metaphorical bindings (see Tarkka 1993).

Pivotal in structuring the narrative performance, yet easily downplayed or wholly dismissed in exclusively verbally oriented analyses, are the paralinguistic devices that add to the effectiveness of the performance by setting its rhythm and accentuating it at the desired sites. In this case, particularly the pause following the beginning of the second episode complemented by a facial expression, as well as the rich gestural language, are of crucial importance. After eliciting the incomplete overture for the crux of his analogy (lines 5a–5b), Lindström adopts a facial expression that could be described as a suspicious interrogation which is understood as foregrounding his distance from the unfolding narrative by a switch of footing. As a parenthetical aside, as it were, his facial expression functions at the level of metacommunication to frame the narrative as a playful imaginary scene. Drawing on another channel of communication, he aligns himself with the audience in the position of observing the imaginary situation from the perspective of an outsider. Furthermore, by simultaneously verbalizing the imaginary event and enacting the activities of receiving the videotape and the moments that follow through elaborate gestures, a visible and highly evocative link is formed between the narrated episode and the ongoing performance event.

Of interest is how the audience starts to laugh immediately after hearing the beginning of the second narrative episode, without knowing exactly how the analogy will unfold. Together with Lindström’s allowance and encouragement of this through his pause, this highlights the interactive import of the paralinguistic techniques. It is well known how as listeners we posit what the speaker wishes to say, oftentimes well in advance of the completion of the utterance, and how meeting or deviating from these expectations can circumstantially serve several functions (Holquist 2002: 64). The folklorist and humor scholar Seppo Knuuttila (1992: 210) has proposed how in jests with parallel structures the contexts of jest narration and traditional joking relations can be seen as explanatory for this sort of precognition. In the interpretation of stand-up speech, however, such sociocultural conventions are not necessarily available, which is why the

instructions in interpretation are left to narrative techniques, in this case represented specifically by the parallelistic textual instructions.<sup>27</sup>

The performative thrust of the routine is located in the shift from the narrative to mimetic mode of presentation. This is found in Lindström's imaginary response to the VHS tape with overt anxiety and anger, which underlines the implications of the absurdity of interpersonal communication and entertainment today. By finishing with a quotation of direct speech, the culmination of the second highly expository narrative chunk is reminiscent of the genre of anecdotes, which omit the resolution to a crisis situation (see Eggins & Slade 1997: 243–257). Here, however, the expressive sequence is better defined as a performed or constructed dialogue, which is situated in the spatiotemporal frame of the imaginary narrative, which Lindström himself “enters”. In the short interrogative outburst, Lindström transposes the imaginary event into a brief “telephone conversation” and performs his response directly to his friend in imaginary historical “real-time”. (See also Glick 2007.) By adopting the point of view of himself in the fictional situation and by play-acting the line in front of the audience, this mimetic move is comparable to direct quotation as a mode of reported speech and carries similar aesthetic effects of vividness and authoritativeness by drawing on and instantiating the expressive character of language directly (whereas an indirect quotation represents communication without expression, on which see Lucy 1993b: 19–20).

In a subsequent performance taking place in Turku on 25 October 2013, the main body of the routine analyzed above is further augmented (Haring 1988: 370) by a few closing lines worth taking into account. Given that on this occasion Lindström was compèring for the other performers of the evening, his performance was of a decidedly looser structure, interspersed with conversational segments engaging members of the audience and presumably also enabling him to add additional layers to the routine under study. In effect, Lindström finishes the routine by resuming the earlier footing of addressing the audience directly (“you”), with an expansion reflecting on the social sanctions of the original event. Typical of narrative codas in general, recourse is made from the narrated events closer to the ongoing performance situation:

IV

- 7a and it's not *enough* that you receive it in your private inbox but it can be seen on your damn Facebook wall...
- 7b like “Yeah, these are the types of friends that I have”..
- 7c [with a different voice] “Why don't you comment on this somehow Jukka?”  
[L]
- 7d “Well...”

Textually, this coda of the complete routine is even more multifaceted than earlier segments. No apparent contextual cues are offered to facilitate the interpretation of the closing lines, in which the frame is yet again shifted from the previous imaginary sequence to the present day real-time and



the context of Facebook communication, associating the ending with the original event of receiving the infamous video clip (see also Hoyle 1993: 124–125).<sup>28</sup> The basic premise of the cultural decline, functioning as the backdrop for the routine and Lindström's whole performance, is still seen as providing a discursive frame in which the final digression is embedded, even if the immediate, embedded frame is now focused on the interpersonal relations of social media and the public person of Lindström himself.

After a brief descriptive segment (line 7a) orienting the audience for the new narrative frame, Lindström mimetically acts out the reactions provoked by the public video on a personal Facebook profile page, multiplying the layers of the performance by animating voices both of “himself” and of an amused friend in what appears to have been a factual situation. The operation is textually and prosodically accomplished by shifts of pronouns as well as shifts in tonal inflection. This can be described as a strategy in “voicing”, here understood as the linguistic construction of figures of personhood or a disjuncture between the relations between the author/principal and the animator (Agha 2005; 2007: 390n.20). The first instance of voicing is especially interesting as we decode it as representing the point of view of Lindström himself, even if animated from a distanced position.<sup>29</sup> In a fundamentally ironic move, offered as a representation of his private thought processes, Lindström assumes the voice of a projected self in the now-familiar spatiotemporal frame of Facebook communication, obliging the audience to perceive the distance between the voice and his “real” person and to reconstruct and align with the intentions of the latter.<sup>30</sup>

By contrast, the line 7c is an explicit demonstration of the evaluative perspective of an outsider, in effect objectifying G. H. Mead's (1962) classic social psychological notion of the “me”, the attitudes of others that the individual assumes. This is presented as an essentially “unnamed voice”, not clearly identifiable as the speech of named biographic person (Agha 2005: 40–41). Consolidating Asif Agha's (*ibid.*) observation on how the recognition and typifiability of voices always presupposes “voicing contrasts”, the voices emerge and come to the fore only in relation to an unfolding text structure: by being played against each other and against Lindström's seemingly “natural”, narrative voice.<sup>31</sup>

By ironically aligning himself and subsequently the audience in the position of an outsider with respect to the event evoked by the two fabricated lines, “looking” at himself in the awkward situation, Lindström manages (for the second time) a mild form of self-deprecation so useful in solo performances, which are easily susceptible to criticism of narcissistic self-exposure. Indeed, part of performative tension increasing the appeal of the complete routine is emergent from the conflict between the light representational self-criticism, downplaying of the ego, and the presentational virtuosity of Lindström as a self-assured comic (see also Bauman 2004: 82–108; on assurance as a rhetorical quality, see Greenbaum 1999). Notably, the text closes in the form of a question, foregrounding the propensities of humorous narrative genres towards narrative presentation, not resolution.



### *And Then What?*

In this article, the analytic perspectives laid on stand-up comedy routines have been outlined by focusing on the management of performances as social interaction, with particular stress on the various reflexive devices utilized by the speaker. The examined routine has been analyzed as exhibiting multiple strategic shifts and combinations of genres, frames, and footings in a relatively short time span: the complete text with the additional, augmented ending spans less than two minutes in real-time performance. This illustrates the complexities of stand-up speech but also the fact that, as language speakers and listeners, we are fluently competent at, and apparently take pleasure in, making sense of such “laminations of experience” (Goffman 1981).

The backbone of the routine has been identified as an aggregation of two expository narrative chunks introduced into an embedding discursive frame putting forward the argumentative notion of “the decline of the West”. These chunks are rendered meaningful, emotionally appealing, and furthermore humorous, only in relation to each other and to their embedding frame. The latter argumentative frame, in turn, is seen as supplying the dominating moral stance of the routine, itself fairly extreme although not too controversial. The formal cohesion and the semantic coherence of the routine is solidified by a poetic parallelism that stages the narratives in a relation of juxtaposition, by providing instructions on how to interpret the juxtaposition, and finally by reinforcing the parallel formulations with the comic technique of a deliberately failed analogy, conceptualized above as a frame blend.

In the course of the complete text, the speaker is seen to draw on the formal, thematic, and pragmatic features of several speech genres associated with various speech events. Continuing from an antecedent routine in a grandiose, argumentative tone that might be best described as mock-preaching, this embedding frame is first given weight with a reference to a personal revelation. The central thesis regarding the cultural decline and the specific instance of the revelation is exemplified by the first factual expository narrative – itself suggestive of the conventions of gossiping – carefully framed as an idiosyncratic subjective experience. Functioning as a transition between the principal narrative segments, a temporal comparison to a recent past is then constructed in the form of persuasively addressing the audience. The comparison is fortified with the second fictional parallel narrative culminating in two play-acted lines, a strategy often associated with anecdotes. Moreover, generic conventions imported from telephone conversations as well as reflective projections of private thought processes, in both fictively and factually offered spatiotemporal frames, have been uncovered as functional elements of the complete text. All of the speech genres are seen as being either embedded inside other generic frames or combined with each other, underlining the general significance of intergeneric relations (see Tarkka 1993: 176, quoted above) but also the analytic import of focusing attention on speaker positioning and role alignment. Instead of encouraging mere identification of operative

speech genres, the proposition of the article has been in specifically directing attention to the latter, the reflexive management of the performance as social interaction.

The alternating footings assumed by the speaker have been analyzed as indicating these alignments of the speaker in relation to his speech, the events recounted, as well as his interlocutors, regulating their respective distances. Accomplished by both linguistic and paralinguistic (facial expression, tone of voice, gestures) signals, the footings are seen as aligning the speaker in various positions: as a self-assured orator preaching the end of times, as a hesitant confessor taking back his own words, or at times in the position of an outsider in league with the audience, ironically reflecting on the narrated events or his own sentiments as if from a distance. Oftentimes the shifts between generic segments can also be localized by the shifts of footings, as when the second parallel narrative is signaled by turning from directly addressing the audience to the subjunctive mood of the imaginary narrative. The alternations between the narrative mode of presentation and the mimetic mode of play-acting have been seen as providing the performer with further means of increasing the perspectival heterogeneity and vividness of the text. Exhibiting high levels of finalization – as is also to be deduced from the fact that the routine is performed with only minor variations on successive performances – the performance of the text has been finished by carefully punctuated timing, rhythm, and pronounced pauses offering the audience members room for interpretative leaps of their own.

A number of narrative operations have been addressed, including allusions to generic and stylistic conventions, reflexive shifts of frames and role alignments. These have been interpreted as potent performative strategies providing the comic with the means for managing such genre-defining features as impressions of honesty, spontaneity, topical relevance, and self-irony. Furthermore, manipulations of the distance between the solo performer and his audience, approached in the article as implications of social and cultural kinship and convincingly identified by Brodie (2009) as characteristic of the genre as a whole, can be seen to turn on precisely such tactics.

Echoing the classical notion of oratory as contrasting practical action with more poetic, entertaining discourse (Kuipers 1999: 173), stand-up is a genre of indirect pleas, functioning in a suggestive, fragmentary, and fundamentally reflexive fashion. Insofar as the focus in this article has been on three documentations (two of which have provided the present transliterations) of a single, highly finalized routine, essential in subsequent studies would be to turn to the potentials to be found in the variation between successive performances of routines. In another fairly obvious move, the scope of research should be expanded to the interrelations and continuities between the routines, gags, and bits constituting a complete performance, examining how these connect and refer to one another intertextually, building upon or contesting each other. It is the folklorist's predisposition to the sensitivities and creative interplay between "expressive form and social function", "personal action and communicative interaction" (Bauman 1982: 16), which will be of specific import in advancing on these avenues.

NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank Jukka Lindström and Teemu Vesterinen for helping me document their performances as part of the material used in this article.
- 2 Koski (2011: 52) characterizes the relationship between (traditional) folkloristic and linguistic genre theories in how the former have mainly aimed at classifying the material recognized as folklore (disregarding much potentially interesting material), whereas the latter try to cover all discourse but are not as interested in the social and cultural meanings of texts. In this regard, my approach would fall somewhere between the two approaches.
- 3 The material used in the article is in possession of the author.
- 4 For a history and an inside look at the genre, see Double 1997; 2014; Lee 2010; for the Finnish context see Toikka & Vento 2000; Wickström 2005.
- 5 See Brodie 2009 for a review of literature.
- 6 For Estonia, see the historically informed text by Laineste 2012.
- 7 “Routine” is here adopted as a general term encompassing variously bounded segments of performance, even though some reserve the term for the longer, more developed wholes, and refer to the other segments as “gags” or “bits” (see also Double 2014: 87). For instance Ian Brodie (2008: 163) seems to equate routine with a complete stand-up performance revolving around a coherent theme, and refers to the smaller units of routines as bits. It should be noted that a “routine” is also in use in various other theatrical and variety arts, in acrobatics, magic acts etc., and its significance will vary according to these contexts.
- 8 Naturally, routines and the chapters of a stand-up recording are not necessarily co-referential, a chapter can consist of multiple routines, and so on.
- 9 I would like to credit Marianna Keisalo for this observation.
- 10 “Stand-up” as a keyword thus refers to a phenomenon comparable to the notion of an experientially constituted “performance arena” as described by John Miles Foley (1995).
- 11 Idealizations of stand-up comedy as “the most demanding type of performance” (e.g. Misje 2002: 88) – firmly entrenched by the popular discourses encompassing the genre – often turn on these aspects of the genre. A stand-up comic is said to be simultaneously his or her own author, scriptwriter, actor, and director.
- 12 Register refers to the situational and stylistic variation of language typically indexing social attributes, statuses, value systems etc., regulated by language ideologies functioning in given linguistic communities (see e.g. Agha 2007). For instance, the use of obscenities is seen as forming a distinguishing feature of the register of stand-up speech, conceivable as keying intimacy and accessibility (see Seizer 2011).
- 13 On the scarcity of traditional jokes in stand-up, see Brodie 2008; 2009.
- 14 Routines (or shorter “bits”, more likely) have certainly not always been understood as comic’s personal property, but have in some cases been sold from one comic to another (see e.g. Lee 2010).
- 15 Needless to say, ancillary mnemonic tools such as crib sheets are considered wholly inappropriate in stand-up. Anne Rajavuori (2012: 190) has noted how the Finnish socialist agitators of early 1900s abstained from reading their speeches off the paper, because the paper was considered not only an aesthetic hindrance but a moral one, as the words did not flow “straight from the heart”. The coincidence of the author and animator in the same person is thus significant considering the responsibility and competence (Bauman 1984) accorded to both the performer and the audience. The stakes of this responsibility are accentuated further in performances that have autobiographical reference, naturally including stand-up comedy, marking the genre with both heroism – “a single performer shouldering the burden of audience’s expectations” (Peterson 1997: 4) – and risk (McKearney 2012).

- 16 Cf. Lotte Tarkka's (1994: 250–251) definition of the “epic universe” as a synthetic level of the genre system, constituting a symbolic network and intertextual space of oral poetry. Tarkka similarly draws on Bakhtin, who characterizes “primary genres” with the notion of an immediate relation with actual reality, whereas complex genres would seem to lose this immediacy and become enhanced “literary events”. An important qualification, however, would be that primary speech genres, including several folklore genres (which Bakhtin had excluded from the category), should not be thought of as some “base level” of genres, but as already formed of various substances and existing generic conventions (Hyvärinen 2012).
- 17 See also Brodie 2008, in which stand-up speech is contrasted with the genre of legends and particularly their telling, which is characterized as collaborative and dialogic. In addition, useful comparisons between jokes, legend reports (transliterated legend texts), and stand-up “bits” are provided.
- 18 Michael Silverstein (1993: 35) underlines the purport of such an analysis in events of language use, because “[s]uccess in reporting, evoking, presupposing such structures of participation in making text [...] determine a work's evidentiary value along lines of verisimilitude and fantasy, its appeals to/for identification with characters denoted and implied, and hence its overall evocation of a fictive universe locatable with respect to its audience's.”
- 19 [L]: laughter of the audience; *italics*: speaker emphasizing the words; ” ”: characterizations, variations of the tone of voice; [ ]: gestures or movements of the performer; line shifts: ending of a sentence/rhythms of speech.
- 20 Repetition of key phrases is fairly noticeable in the beginning of the routine, conveying the appearance of spontaneity or hesitancy in addition to functioning as a plain cohesive device. Barbara Johnstone (1987) has noticed how repetition is most typical in communicative situations in which the interlocutors aim at clarifying the underlying paradigmatic structures (“the code”) of their language, at creating or establishing categories.
- 21 In its focus on the behavior of a single, identified person and its overall evaluative tone, the narrative is also seen to construct an intergeneric reference to the conventions of gossiping (Eggs & Slade 1997: 273–311). However, as the emphasis of Lindström's routine is not on evaluating the actions of his friend *per se*, but on commenting on the modern predicament of interpersonal relations and cultural practices, such linguistic features of gossiping are merely alluded to for their conventionalized features, not realized in their full pragmatic and social potential. The questionable portrayal of the friend is presented as merely an unpleasant yet necessary side effect, as a means to an end so to speak, while at the same time allowing Lindström himself as the narrator to escape the negative connotations associated with the practice of gossiping.
- 22 Suzan Seizer (2011) unveils the crux of the matter poignantly by drawing on Richard Schechner (1985): in the context of performance, technical mastery (“to perform well”) is what counts, even if that includes telling outright lies.
- 23 Parallelism refers to textual repetition with patterned variation, for example a repeating structure setting up formal equivalences, which can be interpreted as encouraging comparisons (Brown 1999).
- 24 As is more than familiar for scholars of humor, analogy is also one of the logical mechanisms that Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo (1991) have recognized as constitutive of jokes. Logical oppositions are understood as (partially) resolving or defusing the “script oppositions” of a joke.
- 25 Douglas Hofstadter & Liane Gabora (1989: 2) have designated such counterfactuals, of which stand-up provides ample evidence, as “hypothetical variants of an actual event that involve slippages from the true way it happened to ways it might otherwise have happened”.
- 26 Indeed, the humorously inclined frame blends have been suggested as being

- imperfect, failed analogies. Productive in further analyses would be to speculate on just why certain salient elements of the respective frames were chosen for the blend (Hofstadter & Gabora 1989), for example by analyzing successive, evolving versions of the same routine. On some accounts, it is exactly the visibility of borders between such frames that has also been proposed to distinguish humor from metaphor (Krikmann 2009; Kyratzis 2012).
- 27 In temporal terms, the segment (III) is characterized by a narrative “distention of time”, noted by Simon Critchley (2002: 6–7) in the context of joking as typically involving “cumulative repetition and wonderfully needless circumlocution”. The distention of time is an effective narrative technique, which amounts to a tension between the gradually expanding duration and the forthcoming, sudden instant.
  - 28 Goffman (1981: 155) notes how the originally established footing often remains labile during brief lapses into foreign footings, “whether to speak of another aspect of ourselves or for someone else, or to lighten our discourse with a darted enactment of some alien interaction arrangement”.
  - 29 The types of voices frequently animated or invoked can be considered a defining feature of a genre: in this regard, stand-up has a predisposition to imaginary, imitated, and stereotypical voices (cf. Keane 1999 characterizing the typical voices of religious genres).
  - 30 The structure is reminiscent of a combination of two main forms of irony, typically operative in dramatic monologue poetry: “‘verbal’ irony, ‘in which one meaning is stated and a different, usually antithetical, meaning is intended;’ and ‘dramatic’ irony, in which [...] the spectators know more than the protagonist” (Peterson 1997: 27). See also the distinctions of three potentially but not necessarily overlapping subject categories as defined by Kaja Silverman (1983: 46–48).
  - 31 Voicing in general is particularly complex in stand-up because the performer is seen as taking on a double nature: standing on the stage she is simultaneously a performer and a role, a version of herself (Glick 2007; Double 2014: 121–139).

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## 6. The Poetics of Quotation

### Proverbial Speech, Entextualization and the Emergence of Oral Poems

Oral tradition evolves by quoting the speech of others and returning to their texts. Performance by performance, we construct or imagine a continuity from the speech and song of previous generations when we name and value the words voiced by them as traditional. The topics and texts of a culture take shape and gain meaning in a dialogue that I will call the poetics of quotation: the explicit use of expressions traceable to and authorized by previous uses of the same expressions in the community. These processes of using, interpreting and evaluating texts are orchestrated by the vernacular notions of genre and textual practices associated with it.

The proverb – a genre of minor folklore – manifests this poetics in the extreme (Hasan-Rokem 1982: 54–55; Finnegan 2011: 159–160). The very gesture of quoting is the rhetorical function of proverbs. Their crystallized form and content draw attention to the fact that a proverb performance entails extracting an already entextualized item from one context and placing it in another (see Barber 2007: 22–23). Such repeatedness of all discourse is captured in the idea of intertextuality (e.g. Bauman 2004; Finnegan 2011: 199–200). Roland Barthes (1982 [1971]: 160) has described intertextual references as “quotations without inverted commas”: their interpretation overlooks the origin or source of the quotation. As proverb performances highlight the act of quotation and build their authority upon conceived genealogical links between utterances, the term intertextuality fails to catch the logic of proverbs (cf. Barber 2007: 77). While uttering a proverb, the speaker relies on the words uttered by an ancient third party that link the interlocutors by referring to a shared heritage, pre-existent, anonymous, but still recognizable (see Penfield 1983: 17–20; Briggs 1988: 133; Lauhakangas 2004: 80–81).

As small textual units, proverbs are usable in many registers: in everyday conversation, in festive oratory, in poetic discourse, and in disputes. They introduce to their context the power of tradition by alluding to a link with a supposedly shared and ancient tradition (e.g. Hasan-Rokem 1982: 54; Lauhakangas 2004: 80–81, 133, 149). Through this genealogy, the utterance gains significance that surpasses any individual opinion. This is, however, only one communicative task of quoting in proverb use; we also quote to mark distance from the message, to mock, to parody, and to contest.

This essay will build on an analysis of Kalevala-meter poetry in the Viena Karelian parish of Vuokkiniemi during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Tarkka 2005; 2013a). This community was characterized by a low impact of administrative institutions, syncretistic vernacular religion, and an extremely low rate of literacy. Kalevala-meter runo-singing served the functions of aesthetic communication of salient knowledge, social control, and formulation of local issues, personal emotions and practical knowhow. Its dominant position was unquestioned during the time of large scale folklore collection in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Kalevala-meter poetry encompassed various genres, including minor folklore genres such as riddles and proverbs. Some genres were sung; some recited; some were muttered, as it was said, “from within the mouth”, so that only the supranormal addressees could hear (Kuusi *et al.* 1977: 72–74; Siikala 2002: 264–269; Tarkka 2013a: 104).

The poetic meter, the so-called Kalevala-meter, is based on a trochaic tetrameter regulating the word stress, the syllable length, and the word’s position in the line. The main stylistic features of the poems are alliteration and parallelism, and the poems are stichich or non-stanzaic. (E.g. Kuusi *et al.* 1977: 62–68; Leino 1994.) The diverse genres comply with these tenets and stylistic ideals to varying degrees. The same applies to the degree of variability in the composition of Viena Karelian Kalevala-meter poems. The compositions of epic poems were relatively stable, but still characterized by variation produced by the flexible use of standard sequences, formulae and formula-families (Harvilahti 1992: 90–91; 2004: 196–199; see also Lord 1987: 307–311; Tarkka 2013a: 90–93). The structure and variation of incantations reflected the ritual procedure which they orchestrated (Siikala 2002: 97–112). The genres treated in this essay, lyric poems and aphorisms, rely on the use of variable elements of poetry, ranging from crystalized idioms, lines, and couplets to larger textual units, repeated and quoted across the permeable boundaries of genres.

Elias Lönnrot, the compiler of the epic *Kalevala*, recognized the meaning of quotation in Kalevala-meter poetry. In his foreword to an edition of lyric poems, the *Kanteletar*, he described redundancy in folk poetry as follows:

The same phrases appear now and then in two, or even in many more, different songs. Readers should not censure us for this, or think that we could have tossed these and those words out of the song because they have already appeared in a previous song. We had no right to do so. If, in one song, we find the words: *on these wretched borderlands, the poor Northern country*, or, *in these bad times, the waning age*, or, *woe is me, the poor boy, woe the boy of poor fate*, it does not mean that they cannot reappear in other places. Such phrases, like other old saws, must have lived among the people from times immemorial and, as such, they were mixed unaltered into songs. Such things are nothing out of the ordinary in folksongs; indeed, even in educated circles people may use words once uttered by others as if they were their own. (Lönnrot 1985 [1840]: xlix.)

The phrases singled out by Lönnrot are not proverbs proper but formulaic phrases that characterize protagonists and spatial or temporal entities typical

of the poems. Such parallelistic couplets in the Kalevala-meter were essential to both the poetic tradition and everyday speech – they “lived among the people”. The phrases expressed individual subjectivities: they were used “as if they were one’s own”. Yet, they were traditional, already uttered and repeated “by others”.

In what follows, I discuss the interplay of Kalevala-meter poetry and proverbs (or proverbial phrases and expressions) in the corpus of Vuokkiniemi. This discussion considers how proverbs enter speech or emerge as poetry and how the shift from speech to poetic performance relates to the dynamics of genre. The notion of genre employed here stresses the expressive and communicative aspects of folklore: genres are frameworks that guide the production and interpretation of historically specific conventions and ideals (see Hanks 1987: 670; Briggs & Bauman 1992: 142–143; Bauman 2004: 3–5 *et passim*). For the researcher of archived materials these frameworks are operative both in folklore competences and performances. They manifest themselves as groups of texts that display a variety of differences and similarities in style, content, structure, function, and mode of performance. These differences and similarities point to the profound intertextuality of folklore genres. Here, I will concentrate on two forms of generic dialogue or intertextuality, namely the creation of hybrid genres and texts (proverbial poems or aphorisms) and the sequential combination of genres by embedding proverbs into longer narrative texts (see Tarkka 2010: 15–22; forthcoming).

### *From Proverb to Proverbial Speech*

In 1778, the founding figure of Finnish folklore research and collection, Henric Gabriel Porthan (1983 [1766–1788]: 78) noted that, for the sake of mnemonics, most Finnish and Karelian proverbs were cast in the Kalevala-meter. In the Vuokkiniemi corpus, this applies to 60 per cent of proverbs (Kuusi 1978: 55–57). The basic structural unit of the proverb is a line in the Kalevala-meter, and the proverb typically consists of two lines connected through semantic parallelism – for example: “Take the learning onto your forehead, the advice onto the bridge of your nose” (*Ota oppi otsahas, neuvo nenävartehes*) (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)4713. 1912–1913).

A minimal, loose definition of the proverb offers some basic criteria for an expression to fit into the genre of proverbs. Proverbs are widely known in the community, they have a fixed form, they communicate an independent idea, and they stand out from the flow of speech as figurative or otherwise deviating from the interpretative frame of the surrounding discourse (Kuusi 1954: 7; Taylor 1962: 6–7; Krikmann 1974: 16–17; Lauhakangas 2004: 18). Proverbs of this variety will be designated *proverbs proper* here. When analysing the movement of the proverb within the system of genres, even these rough criteria have to be moderated. Instead of proverbs as such, it is therefore more useful to talk about proverbial speech and the proverbial quality of expressions and phrases.

In an oft-quoted and criticized statement (see e.g. Dundes 1981 [1975]: 44–45; Briggs 1988: 102–103), Archer Taylor (1962: 3) pointed at proverbiality as a quality that is decisive in the identification of proverbs and still undefinable, even “incommunicable”. This defeatist argument reflects the problems in defining universal analytical genres. Yet even without access to vernacular articulations of the proverbial quality or an emic understanding of the genre of proverbs, the proverb collections in folklore archives communicate distinct qualities of form, style, and content, the combination of which approximates the idea of proverbiality. These qualities were recognized by the speech community in Viena Karelia: they characterized a particular register dedicated not just to the use of proverbs proper in conversation, but to the use of proverbial expressions more broadly. This register is here designated *proverbial speech*.

According to Outi Lauhakangas (2004: 14), *proverbial expressions* and *proverbial phrases* fall short of some of the linguistic criteria of proverbs proper, such as propositional form and finite form.<sup>1</sup> This deficiency is not a mistake. Variation upon the ideal generic form makes it easier to fit the expression into the preceding and following discourse and indeed into many genres. Such variation may be a conscious strategy of calibrating the so called intertextual gap.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the interpretation of proverbial expression rests on an understanding concerning the genre of proverbs based on experiences of its uses. The communicative functions of proverbs can be fulfilled in communication with performances that do not fully meet the linguistic and performative criteria of proverbs proper.

A key difference between proverbs proper and proverbial expressions is the degree and nature of *finalization* of the utterances in question. According to M. M. Bakhtin (1986: 76–78), finalized utterances treat the referential and semantic theme exhaustively and match the speaker’s (or the performer’s) intentions (i.e. what he or she wishes to express). Most importantly, these expressive intentions govern the performer’s choice of “speech genre”. For Bakhtin, finalization enables communication: it is only possible to respond to or “responsively understand” finalized utterances. Building on Bakhtin, Peter Seitel (1999: 35–41) has defined three levels of proverb finalization: (a) finalization of a proverb text itself, as a complete and discrete unit of utterance; (b) finalization of the discursive context, i.e. of the utterance in which the proverb text is embedded; and lastly (c) finalization of the social setting in which this utterance is performed. In proverbial phrases and expressions, the criteria of finalization are eased on the level of the proverb text itself. In contrast, the proverb proper is ideally finalized as a textual unit.

Proverbial speech is a register that stands apart from colloquial conversation by frequent use of proverbs or proverbial expressions. The proverb is performed and interpreted as an integral part of conversation but it stands out in communication as an entextualized element:<sup>3</sup> it is clearly recognizable as an entity that could retain at least some of its meaning even outside the context of communication, namely, the basic semantic content of the proverb text. (See Lauhakangas 2004: 14, 18.) Proverbial expressions and phrases can, in general, be more tightly fitted into the surrounding discourse through morphological variation (i.e. adapted to the particular

context of grammar and syntax) but their entextualization falls short of that of proverbs proper precisely because of this amorphous quality, which is contrary to the finalization of a proverb text.

Proverbial speech is essentially poetic: its form and its content are complex, and it surpasses the typicalities of ordinary speech; it reflexively draws attention to itself by deviating from the syntax of ordinary speech and by relying on special prosodic traits such as intonation, tone of voice, and word stress (Domínguez Barajas 2010: 71). One of the communicative functions of the proverbs, the didactic tendency, sets the register of proverbial speech apart from colloquial language also in its stress on the conative function of language (Shuman & Hasan-Rokem 2012: 59). Thus the register of proverbial speech was clearly marked and heightened, but it could easily be activated within the unmarked register of ordinary speech. This interface of conversation and performance fuels the emergence on proverbs and aphoristic poems in the Kalevala-meter.

In Viena Karelia, proverbs were called *poverkka* – a word that also meant indirect, evasive, and allusive speech. The alternative generic terms *sananpolvi* [lit. ‘bend of word’] and *sananmutka* [lit. ‘twist of word’] also referred to a skilful and emphatic way of speech (cf. English “turn of phrase”). It thus refers to a twisting, turning and bending quality of a word, which in the vernacular vocabulary could refer to a larger unit of utterance than a single lexical item. Rather than determining the proverb as a clear-cut genre, the vernacular system of genres thus signalled the register of proverbial speech and the proverbial quality of expressions or utterances applicable in many texts and generic contexts. In 1836, the folklore collector Juhana Cajan testified that instead of classifying poems, the local terminology for genres served purposes of interpretation and evaluation. Terms such as *sanan polvi* were reserved for texts that had “a poetic shape and therefore a special spiritual meaning” (SKS KRA. Cajan 1. 1836; see Tarkka 2013a: 157–158). They describe and evaluate aesthetic qualities defining both content and form. The meaning in a “bend of word” relied on indirect expression, paraphrase, and metaphor, and its structure differed from that of ordinary expressions. The term itself is metaphorical: it presents an image of a spatial entity with a direction, and movement along it. According to the local metapoetic symbolism, songs were thought of in terms of travelling: they were roads or ski tracks in an imaginary landscape (Tarkka 2013a: 158–160).

According to local observers, all vernacular language used alliteration and parallelism and strived towards figurative, aesthetically pleasing yet precise expression. Proverbial speech employed this strategy to the full. It was not neutral, but a heightened and semantically complex “way of speech” (*pakinanluatu*). Consequently, decoding it required some effort: it was said that “[w]hen everybody always spoke in proverbs, understanding it all was hard work” (Perttu 1978: 187). The intellectual challenge in producing and interpreting proverbial speech turned it into a recognized test of wit. The more one used “comparisons, derogatory affixes, proverbs and so forth” in one’s parlance, the wiser one was considered (SKS KIA. Marttinen A 1935: iii–iv. 1919). The poetics of quotation relied on the performers’ and the audiences’ mastery of the special register dedicated to aesthetically pleasing



expression. This includes more than just the linguistic competencies required for producing proverbial speech and for framing proverbs in discourse (narrative or otherwise); it also includes command over the lexicon of crystallized, stereotypical proverbs and their constituent parts.

Lönnrot portrayed the emergence of proverbs in the early nineteenth century in the following way:

Proverbs make up half the speech of many a commoner. They just have to add the words *it is said*, or something like that, to introduce a proverb. When two such masters of proverbs meet, they may start to argue, albeit very politely, with proverbs, or they may adjust their speech into an otherwise proverbial form. [...] Such transient proverbs are forgotten as quickly as they are composed; only if they contain an exemplary piece of wisdom or truth will others repeat them, and they gradually join the common stock of proverbs. (Lönnrot 1902: 170.)

In conversation, a breakthrough into proverbial speech was indicated by framing the utterance, for example, with the expressions like “it is said” or “well, this is the way it is” (Perttu 1978: 216). The frame pointed out that the utterance to come was traditional and represented unquestioned common sense. It also served to foreground the proverb (Hasan-Rokem 1982: 55; Briggs 1988: 105–106; Lauhakangas 2004: 78) and to fit it into the semantic and narrative context. Framing displays the tension in the proverb: it is simultaneously firmly contextualized within the flow of speech and singled out as an independent semantic unit.

The substrate of the continuous production and testing of proverb-like expressions allows for the birth of proverbs proper: entextualized, singled out of the flux of conversation, tested by the audience and gradually gaining the status of proverbial wisdom. Despite this emergent quality, the wisdom of proverbs was considered ancient. In the late nineteenth century, old people claimed that their ancestors used to converse exclusively in proverbs (SKS KRA. Marttinen c)1–904, accompanying letter. 1893). Indeed, metapoetic discourse associated proverbial speech with the past, even the past of mythical history. The idea is consonant with the nostalgic perception of the past as the heyday of tradition (Tarkka 2013a: 55). More importantly, however, proverbial speech was an enactment of this ancient register. As Charles Briggs has said, the performance of proverbs quoted the speech of the “elders of the bygone days” and guaranteed the presence of the past in the here and now. (Briggs 1988: 101.) Karin Barber (2007: 77) notes that the “the quotedness of proverbs” is made evident with the framing formulae that attribute the words uttered to others, to “the elders”.

Phrases and couplets typically found in epic poetry were used as proverbs in colloquial speech. The formulaic couplet describing the maiden of the mythic North, “Well, she is the fame of the land, the choice of the water” (*Sehän se nyt on moan kuulu, vejen valivo*), was used in conversation to express envy after hearing others being praised. A couplet picturing the catch of the mythic giant pike, “A bigger catch has been caught, a bulkier bunch has been brought” (*Soatu on soalis suurempikin, tuotu on tukutkin turpiemmat*) could be used to comment on any plentiful catch of fish – it



replaced the colloquial exclamation “Now, you’ve caught a lot!” Proverbial use of these familiar expressions enabled acknowledgement while avoiding explicit praise, which, in a competitive mood, could easily have triggered notions of envy and magical harm associated with it. Similarly, a formulaic couplet typical of *The Wooing Trial*, an old “legal proverb” (Kuusi 1963: 371), had a function of consolidating an agreement: “The gift promised has been given, the maiden vowed has been sold” (*Annettu on luvattu lahja, myöty neiti toivotettu*) was used as a guarantee that both parties would hold to the agreement – an indirect reply neutralized potential conflict. (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)6145. 1913, c)10278. 1915, c)7709. 1915.) In proverbial use of all three of these epic lines, recourse to indirect expressive strategies served one of the functions of proverbial speech, avoiding or resolving conflicts (see Lauhakangas 2004: 167–169). The use of proverbs as arguments in conversation or while arguing pointed to the effect of indirect strategies: arguing with proverbs was “polite” (Lönnrot 1902: 170).

### *Proverbial Couplets as Formulae*

Matti Kuusi (1954: 48–49, 148–149) has described the couplet-based proverb in Kalevala-meter as a formulaic expression or cliché usable in the creation of poems. Couplets or longer chains of poetic lines bound together with semantic parallelism are the elementary structural unit in Kalevala-meter poetry (see also Anttonen 1994: 116–117, 119; 2004: 378). Although narrative poems in particular display a complex hierarchical structure (see Saarinen 1991: 196), many, especially short non-narrative poems, seem to be constructed additively, as a succession of seemingly independent and equal couplets.

In his application of ethnopoetics to the study of Kalevala-meter poetry, Pertti Anttonen has foregrounded the role of communal aesthetic evaluations regarding the structure and completeness of the poem. The completeness of a text requires a recognizable structure and cohesion of both form and content. According to Anttonen, vernacular poetics governed the notions of finalized performances: the poem was supposed to express what the performer wanted to express and include those artistic elements by which the performer sought to achieve his rhetorical aims. (Anttonen 1994: 119–120.) Taking the three levels of finalization into account, this claim can be modified: even an incomplete text may, in felicitous circumstances, serve to communicate what the performer wished. As noted above, the communicative functions of the proverb proper may also be fulfilled with proverbial expressions finalized only on the two levels of performance (discursive context and social setting).

The finalization of texts is bound to the structural, thematic, stylistic, and performative ideals linked to vernacular notions of genre – as Bakhtin noted, finalized utterances manifest genre-specific “relatively stable typical *forms of construction of the whole*” (Bakhtin 1986: 78, emphasis original; see also Seitel 2003: 278). Finalization thus implies a close fit between the generic ideal and the text performed. This not only applies to proverbs proper;

the proverbial quality of phrases or utterances was also acknowledged and interpreted in relation to the generic ideal of the proverb. As we have few documents on how the performers assessed their own and others' performances, the finalization of poetic texts (such as proverbs), and thus the degree in which they fit into a genre, has to be assessed individually, by looking at the thematic and formal mechanism of the text's composition and the cohesion of the whole.

According to Matti Kuusi (1978: 43), the couplet "It is odd in an odd village, / strange in a strange land" (*Outo on ouvossa kylässä, / vieras mualla vierahalla*) is an old Finnish and Viena Karelian proverb. This couplet is essentially like the ones mentioned by Lönnrot as "old saws": formulaic phrases that may be used to describe places, times, persons, and mental states. As a separate entity, the proverb proper presents a complete proposition and an independent idea: one feels estrangement on foreign ground. The parallel construction first likens the experience to the environment (each is odd and/or strange) within each line, and then rounds up the image by repeating the content of the main line. Because of its emotive content, the couplet is frequently used in poems to describe the predicament of the speaking subject or the protagonist. The following example comes from an autobiographical poem: the speaker describes his or her exile in Finland, complementing the proverb with one of the redundant formulaic couplets mentioned by Lönnrot:

Outo on ouvossa kylässä,  
vieras on maalla vierahalla,  
näillä raukoilla rajoilla,  
polosillen Pohjan maille.  
(SKSÄ. Gallen-Kallela 509 6b + 510  
1. 1921.)

It is odd in an odd village,  
it is strange in a strange land,  
on these wretched borders,  
the poor Northern country.

Only in the autobiographical context does the proverb as a generalizing propositional form turn into a subjective statement of emotion. The next example presents a typical lyric insertion in a hunting incantation, which is a markedly different genre. Here, the strange lands and alien villages refer to the forest: the hunter feels sad and strange when the catch is poor. The subject position is spelled out – "I" am the one feeling:

Ikävä minun tulee,  
ikävä tulettelee,  
vieras maalla vierahalla,  
outo ouoissa kylässä.  
(SKVR I<sub>4</sub> 1250.)

I get sad,  
sadness comes by,  
strange in a strange land,  
odd in an odd village.

Although the proverb conveys an emotion experienced by the ego, the proverb holds to its generalizing propositional form. Nevertheless, formulaic lines and couplets paralleling the words "odd" and "strange" are often varied and turned into proverbial expressions and phrases (Kuusi 1954: 7) in many genres to give contour to the same experience of alienation. In the next case,

taken from epic narration, the mythic hero Väinämöinen wails over his protracted time drifting on the sea by reciting a lyrical poem. “Odd” here refers to the hero’s feeling of disorientation: he is unable to get his bearings in the otherworld.

<p>“Jouvuin mailla vierahilla,          äkki ouoilla ovilla,          empä tieä tietä käyä,          outo matkoja osata          näillä mailla vierahilla,          äkki ouoilla ovilla.”          (SKVR I<sub>1</sub> 63c.)</p>	<p>“I found myself in strange lands,          at ever-odd doors,          I don’t know the road to walk,          it’s odd to know the ways          in these strange lands,          at ever-odd doors.”</p>
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The lyrical insertion hardly qualifies as proverbial speech: the subtle transformation of the formulaic couplet turns a proverb into a full emotive expression. The same strategy is again found in hunting incantations, as in the following example, which deals with the hunter’s experience of strangeness facing a barren hunting ground:

<p>Olen ouvoilla ovilla,          veräjillä vieröillä!          Omp’ on outo ollakšeini,          katšuoakšeini kamala          näillä ouvoilla ovilla,          veräjillä vierahilla!          (SKVR I<sub>4</sub> 1243.)</p>	<p>I am at odd doors,          on rolling gateways!          I find it odd to be,          dreary to look about          at these odd doors,          strange gateways.</p>
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The context-specific meanings vary, but in the two cases above, instead of formulaic variation, the experience could also have been expressed in the basic form of the proverb proper. This strategy would have affected the meaning by stressing the general, shared, and typical quality of the experience (see also DuBois 1996: 243). The collocation of the words “strange” and “odd” with the spatial entities attached to them activates a common understanding, rooted in the knowledge of all the possible contexts of use known by the singer and the audience – like the meaning of formulae in oral poetry (Lord 1960: 148, 65, 94; Foley 1991: 6–8). The examples illustrate the contextualization of formulaic proverbial phrases to fulfil diverse expressive functions and to fit into diverse syntactic surroundings, stretching from the generalized statement of the basic proverb proper to first-person meditations that rely upon formulaic variations of the proverb. Their contextualization in spoken language was equally flexible, as can be seen in the singer Anni Lehtonen’s nostalgic portrayal of evenings “in strange lands”, revealing the typical contexts of the use of these expressions: “This is what they always say, those who have been in strange lands. And me too, I have said this to those who have asked” (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9594. 1915). The allure and efficacy of the formula is socially grounded. The experience of being far away from home, “at odd doors”, was a typical state of mind in Viena, where the available means of livelihood demanded constant travelling and prolonged periods on literally strange lands (Tarkka 2013a: 405–412).

## *Representing Proverb Performances*

The couplets making up proverbs proper and/or proverbial expressions and phrases were thus used as formulae that could be varied upon. The most striking effect of these couplets on the system of genres was to connect everyday speech with poetic expression and heightened performances of clearly entextualized poems. In epic poetry, the same couplets fulfil different functions and demonstrate the dialogue of genres from a novel angle. Rather than generating poems and contributing to a gradual shift from one genre to another, the embedded proverbs infiltrate and deepen the epic discourse but seldom transform it into something else. As Karin Barber (2007: 79) has noted, the act of embedding or recontextualizing a text that displays clear generic characteristics within a text representing another genre is, essentially, quotation. It foregrounds both the entextualized nature of the embedded text and its recontextualization in a new one.

From the typical paremiological point of view, the relationship between proverbs and epic poetry (or narrative in general) is a historical issue: was the proverb embedded in the epic to mimic proverbial speech to create correspondence between colloquial speech styles and the fictive universe, or was it borrowed from the epic to spice up conversation (e.g. Kuusi 1954: 43–52; Hasan-Rokem 1982: 12; Lauhakangas 2004: 23–24; Mieder 2004: 142)? Instead of the historical processes that shaped the proverb–narrative relationship, I will focus on the expressive function of the proverb in the narrative (see Mieder 2004: 143–144; Lauhakangas 2009). As Galit Hasan-Rokem (1982: 11, 15–16) has argued, the meaning of the proverb within the narrative emerges intertextually, from the interaction of the interpretative frameworks of the diverse textual elements within the narrative.<sup>4</sup> Even if the rhetorical power of the proverb resides in the gesture of quoting ancient wisdom, the actual source of the quotation (epic poetry or colloquial language) is not relevant in this context. Instead, the expressive function is determined by the proverb's position in the structure of the narrative and the creation of thematic cohesion.

In mythic-historical epic poetry, embedded proverbs typically appear in passages that evaluate the poem, and, more importantly, in the dialogues, when the epic protagonists engage in an exchange of words.<sup>5</sup> Such representations of folklore performances are a prominent instance of the dialogue of genres. As an intertextual strategy, an embedded generic quotation involves the insertion of a passage that represents a genre other than the immediate textual surroundings, or the cotext (the host text). These embedded passages broaden the point of view typical of a genre with that of another genre and enliven the monotonous narration by dramatic first-person utterances. (Tarkka 2013a: 97–98 *et passim*; forthcoming.) The protagonists are given the floor, and their speech can be perceived untouched by the narrator's moderation.

Although embedded proverbs also serve to facilitate composition in performance – as formulaic expressions and bridges to link one poem type to another – their first and foremost function is metapoetic: they describe and evaluate traditional speech acts. They comment upon the speech culture

and show that ordinary mortals, the singers and their audiences, shared their practices and ideals of verbal exchange with the god-like epic heroes. Both talked with proverbs.

Like the proverbs interlaced in conversation, those embedded in narrative poems were typically framed with formulae indicating the beginning of a second-order performance and, simultaneously, the transformation of the genre into a complex one. In epic poems, these frames consisted of one or several poetic lines indicating the subject speaking and the speech genre: whether the subject was speaking or uttering, singing, crying, or pondering. (Tarkka 2013a: 181–182.) One of the most common frames, “he uttered with that word”, referred to any kind of speech act, but also to the performance of a proverb, often paraphrased as a “word”:

<p>Tuoko vanha Väinämöini sanovi sanalla tuolla: “Ei ole vanhasta varoa, turvoa tutisovašta.” (SKVR I<sub>1</sub> 365.)</p>	<p>That old Väinämöini uttered with that word: “The old one is of no use, the shaking one gives no shelter.”</p>
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Although the frame primarily served the narrative by articulating the plot and the dialogue it also referred to similar frames, cueing a breakthrough into proverbial speech. Within the fictive or epic universe, framing served to mark the protagonists’ speech as emphatic and traditional, that is, as proverbial speech.

The epic hero Väinämöinen’s voice was recognized by the singers and the audiences as authoritative and proverbial: as the local runo-collector Iivo Marttinen noted, proverbs were “sharp enough to sound as though they had been spoken by Väinämöinen himself” (SKS KRA. Marttinen. c)1–904, accompanying letter. 1893). The proverbial quality of the epic hero’s speech did not end in proverbs proper: his words sounded like proverbs (i.e. they were proverbial expressions) even if they were not established as proverbs proper to start with. The formulaic frames and epithets identified the speaker as “old and steady”, and activated the interpretative frame of proverbial wisdom.

Väinämöinen utters half of the aphorisms and proverbs embedded in epic poetry (Tarkka 2013a: 204). Inserting common proverbs into the epic and attributing them to Väinämöinen as well as extracting Väinämöinen’s proverbial lines from poetry into proverbial speech depend on the communal expertise that covers both the genres of proverbial wisdom (proverbs, aphorisms, proverbial phrases) and the epic universe with its personages. By internalizing Väinämöinen’s repertoire of wisdom and authority and by contributing to it with ever new embedded proverbs, the singers and the listeners gradually gained command of the genre of *poverkas* and learned to formulate their ideas in an aesthetically pleasing and rhetorically effective way (Tarkka 2013a: 75, 181–182).

In his performances of the *Sampo-Poem*, Ontrei Malinen embedded passages of lyric poems, magic charms, and proverbs (Tarkka forthcoming; see also Tarkka 2013a: 179–181, 406–409). Although such density of generic

interventions in one performance is rare, the phenomenon itself is typical of Kalevala-meter epic poetry. The singer used these embedded passages in his composition of dramatic and dense dialogues (Apo 2010: 59) for various communicative purposes. The turns of attributed speech consisted of a couple of lines each, which could be filled with proverbs. The *Sampo-Poem* tells the story of the creation of the world. Väinämöinen is shot and drifts on the water of the primal sea to offer his knee for a pochard to nest on. As the bird is brooding, Väinämöinen shakes his knee, and the eggs fall into the sea. After creating the universe out of the broken eggs, Väinämöinen drifts along, and comments upon his misery with a proverb. He is like a log of wood, sunken in the water and obstructing seafaring:

Siitä kulki Väinämöinen,  
kulki kuusissa hakona,  
petäjässä pään pölkyn.  
Itsche nuin sanoksi virkko:  
"Haittan' on hako vesillä,  
köyhät eellä rikkahalla."  
Jo tunsi tuhon tulevan  
vuotena kaheksantena.  
"Jo jouun poloinen poika,  
jouun puulle pyörivälle,  
varvalle vapisevalle."  
(SKVR I<sub>1</sub> 79.)

And so Väinämöinen was cast adrift,  
drifted as a spruce log,  
as the tip of a pine block.  
He himself thus put into words:  
"Driftwood troubles the waterways,  
the poor hinder the rich."  
Already he felt his doom's arrival  
in the eighth year.  
"Now I will end up, poor boy,  
end up on a spinning log,  
on a shivering spray."

The thematic association joining the plot to the general semantic content of the proverb is vague – Väinämöinen's drifting as or like a log is linked to a notion of the harmfulness of driftwood, which serves as a metaphorical parallel line in the proverb. As Väinämöinen's acts are constantly authorized by displays of a wise and steady mindset, it is tempting to ignore semantics and interpret the whole as a reference to his repertoire of wisdom. This would, however, leave the choice of proverb unexplained. The common proverb "Driftwood troubles the waterways, the poor bother the rich" (Kuusi 1978: 48) comments on social inequality and human worth: for the rich, the poor are an obstacle to the relentless accumulation of wealth. Instead of this general semantic meaning the proverb seems to be motivated by the image of logs and driftwood: Väinämöinen drifts like one, and after the embedded proverb, the singer returns to the image as a lyric metaphor for the experience of an ailing subject, the poor boy "on a spinning log". Already the repetition of a simple core image serves to build thematic cohesion into the whole (see Arant 1981).

There is, however, another proverb embedded in the *Sampo-Poem* that pits the rich against the poor. While drifting in the sea, Väinämöinen creates, with his body movements, islets and skerries that harm the sailors and the merchants:

Kussa pohjoa käveli,  
 kalahauvat kaivaeli,  
 kussa päätänsä kohotti,  
 siihen loi luotosia.  
 Siitä alko tuumoalla:  
 “Köyhän miehen pää mänöö,  
 rikkahan raha kuluu”,  
 kun loi luotosia merehen,  
 kari päitä kasvatteli.  
 (SKVR I<sub>4</sub> 2134.)

Where he walked the bottom,  
 he dug the fish trenches,  
 where he lifted his head,  
 there he created skerries.  
 Thus he started to ponder:  
 “The poor man’s head is lost,  
 the rich man’s money is wasted”,  
 for he created skerries in the sea,  
 made the pointed rocks grow.

Väinämöinen’s reasoning is again a common proverb in the area and its meaning could be summed up as “The rich pay with money, the poor with their lives” (e.g. SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)7616–7617. 1913–1914). Instead of being framed as a proverb proper, the proverb is usually fitted into the narrative discourse by morphologically inflecting it within the grammatical context: Väinämöinen creates the islets “for the rich man to waste his money, for the poor man to lose his head” (e.g. SKVR I<sub>1</sub> 64: *Rikkaan rahan kuluksi, Köyhän miehen pään menöksi*) (see also Kuusi 1954: 46; Tarkka 2013b: 120n.8). Here Väinämöinen’s proverbial assessment of his own acts is spelled out with the conjunctive *kun* [‘for; because’]: Väinämöinen’s deeds have a causal relationship to the predicament described in the proverb. Both of these maritime proverbs that are inserted in the epic relate the time of the creation of the world to social dilemmas that were acute in the here and now of the performance: an economic hazard still affects the rich, but for the poor, it is lethal. The uneven distribution of wealth originated at the beginning of time, and was thus a legitimate aspect of social reality.

Later in the poem the heroes utter more proverbs, all of which are recognizable as folklore performances by the audience of the epic. When the listener acknowledges that a traditional register (proverbial speech) mastered by himself is used by the epic heroes and gods, the fictive and mythic universe is domesticated: it comes close to perception and experience. The talk of the heroes was understandable because the audience talked similarly and used the same proverbs. Väinämöinen lent authority to all the consequent real-life proverb performances, and the performances within the epic testified to Väinämöinen’s wisdom. When the authority of proverbial speech was shown to have its origin in mythic time, in the talk of gods and culture heroes, colloquial language gained a ritual dimension. It had its origin myth, and it was repeatedly legitimized in performance. In this respect, the proverb relates to songs and magic formulae, the two other Kalevala-meter genres grounding their efficacy and authority in Väinämöinen’s mythic performances.

### *From Proverb to Aphoristic Poem*

Proverbs proper and proverbial phrases were not only used in conversation and epic poetry but also in lyric poetry and aphorisms. According to Matti



Kuusi, this tendency is strong especially in Viena Karelia where “[t]he same clichés seem to have fitted in as elements of song and speech alike” (Kuusi 1970: 302; see also Kuusi 1954: 47–49.) The Kalevala-meter aphorism is a hybrid genre, combining the elements of proverbs and proverbial expressions into longer non-narrative poems of approximately four to even twenty lines – a tentative working definition by Kuusi classifies proverbs of four or more lines as aphoristic poems (Kuusi & Timonen 1997: xxvii). In folklore collections and research, the genre has had many names, reflecting its ambiguity: for example, in the authoritative edition of Kalevala-meter poems, the *Old Poems of the Finnish People* (SKVR), the Viena Karelian aphorisms are also called didactic and proverb-like poems (SKVR I<sub>3</sub>). The leading scholar on Finnish-Karelian proverbs, Matti Kuusi (1963: 375–376, 381–386), also used the terms epigram and proverb-poem. In Viena, the aphorisms or proverbial poems were designated with the same generic term as proverbs: they were called *poverkka* or *sananpolvi*.

Samuli Paulaharju recorded the following didactic aphorism in 1915. The singer Anni Lehtonen urges the listener to prepare for foreign lands:

<p>Ota oppi otsahas, neuvo nenävartehes, kun lähet moalla vierahalla, uusilla asuin mailla. (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9232. 1915.)</p>	<p>Take the learning onto your forehead, the advice onto the bridge of your nose, when you leave for a foreign land, new lands to dwell in.</p>
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Anni related that the first two lines, a couplet, were used as a proverb, and simply meant, “Listen when you are being taught” (see also Kuusi 1978: 18). It is a common element in the poem *The Hare’s Advice*, in which a hare instructs her young (SKVR I<sub>2</sub> 1059, 1061–1063). Cohesion is built by completing a proverb proper with a description of its context of use, thus showing one of the proverb’s relevant applications and completing the base meaning with a contextual one. Anni’s corpus includes many proverbs in which a similar specification is given in the colloquial register, simply stating how, when, and where to use the proverb (e.g. SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)2525. 1911–1912). This poem is clearly a whole; the conjunctive *kun* [‘when’] ties the couplets together.

The hybrid quality of aphorisms is twofold, linking them to proverbs and to lyric poetry. Lyric poetry in the Kalevala-meter has been characterized as sung poetry using the first-person singular and centring on collective and subjective emotions (Timonen 2004: 13). As the early recorders of Kalevala-meter poetry did not systematically make notes on performance style, many of the archived texts can be classified as both lyric and aphoristic. Aphorisms and lyric poems share a great many typical lines and stock formulae – some of these couplets are proverbs proper or proverbial phrases. However, the proverbial or aphoristic frame of interpretation and the tone differs sharply from that of lyric poetry. Aphorisms present didactic statements or commonsensical deliberations. They generalize and take distance by using the third-person singular or the passive, sometimes also the imperative. The

typicalities in a culture are presented as factual or normative statements, not as described and evaluated experiences as in lyric poetry.

Thomas DuBois (1996: 243–246) sees the proverbial stance, or “proverbialization”, as a general tendency in Kalevala-meter lyric poetry: even the lyric offers “a collective understanding of a generalized moment rather than a depiction of any one woman’s experiences in particular”. This expressive strategy marks a distance from emotional reactions and expresses them in an approved manner. I would like to tackle proverbiality and the hybridity of the aphorism from a different angle, by stressing the dialogic potential in the use of proverbs proper and aphorisms. Combined and juxtaposed with lyric texts, they do not mute the lyric mode and experience, but converse with it and contextualize it in the values, norms, and presuppositions of the culture (see Tarkka 2013a: 245–254).

In contrast to lyric poetry, proverbs and aphorisms share the frame of interpretation and mode of performance. The distinction between them is one between a minor folklore genre and poetry. Stressing the intertextual quality of the system of Kalevala-meter genres nevertheless lays bare the arbitrariness of this distinction. Length – the number of poetic lines – alone does not serve to draw the line between a proverb and an aphorism. Rather, one should look at the status of the text or utterance in the flow of speech. As mentioned earlier, a proverb does not interrupt the flow of speech but accentuates it and stands out from it as a foregrounded entity separate from its discursive surroundings (Lauhakangas 2004: 18). However, as the number of lines used to express an idea increases, it becomes difficult to keep the flow of conversation intact; the entextualized nature of the utterance becomes all the more obvious. At some point, the excursion into poetic diction becomes a poem that can easily retain its meaning even outside the context of communication. Conversation turns into a performance proper, activating all the components in the performance arena specific to the emergent genre: the breakthrough into performance turns the proverb into an aphorism. The fundamental shift into the performative alters the mode of performance: the performer takes charge of the situation, and the roles of listener and performer are, at least for a moment, culturally defined. Intonation, gestures, pauses, and significant glances would ensure that the breakthrough into performance would not go unnoticed, even if we have no archival data to verify this.

On the other hand, the entextualizing quality of the performance does not unequivocally differentiate between proverb and aphoristic poem. Both had to convey an independent idea and comply with conventions of form and style that were culturally understandable and approved of – or locally conceived of as both beautiful and precise (Perttu 1978: 187). Even a concise proverb was, by definition, a finalized and entextualized chunk of communication, albeit one that relied upon the context in order to be meaningful. In an aphorism, the elements of the poem, the proverbs and/or proverbial couplets used in its composition contextualize each other so that the meaning will be full even outside the immediate context of performance.

The difficulty of classifying poetic utterances according to distinct genres (such as poems and proverbs) originates in the practice of folklore

collecting. As Iivo Marttinen, a native collector from Vuokkiniemi, noted, proverbs were hard to collect because “they appeared almost naturally in conversation”, not when asked for. By recording or collecting solitary textual units instead of larger sequences of communication, the runo-collector reified the poetic quality of spoken language – proverbial or not – and created a gap between art and communicative praxis. This gave birth to texts and contexts, disconnected in the records. It also cut the performance into chunks of communication that were supposed to fit into the collectors’ notions and ideals. These artificial entities are representations that incorporate the tension between oral and literary sensibilities concerning textuality and genre.

If the vernacular terminology of genres does not differentiate between aphorism, proverb proper, proverbial speech, proverbial phrase, and proverbial expression, why insist upon dissecting the vernacular category of the *poverkka* (or *sananpolvi*)? Frustrated by his own efforts, even Lönnrot (1991 [1842]: 389) dismissed the project of “separating the mass of proverbs into proverbial phrases (*sananparsi*), bends of words (*sananpolvi*), twists of words (*sananmutka*), comparisons (*vertaus*) etc.” as a “suitable job for one who has nothing else to do”. I will, however, challenge Lönnrot and argue that consideration of these vague and transient distinctions helps us acknowledge some crucial aspects of oral poetics and the nature of genres. The lack of differentiating emic terms does not automatically mean that the genres were not distinguished in performative praxis and interpretation.

### *Composition in Proverb Performance*

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Finnish ethnographer Samuli Paulaharju collected a mass of folklore material from the above-mentioned Anni Lehtonen, a woman born in Vuokkiniemi in 1866. The collection presents a remarkable case for illustrating the use of proverbs as well as the emergence of poems from serial proverb performances. In the folklore archives, most of Anni’s proverbs were classified as inauthentic, “unreliable”, and “literature-derived seconds” (Kuusi 1970: 293; Leino 1970: 249). Paulaharju had used a printed collection of proverbs (Koskimies 1906) to spur on the informant and to build a systematic overview of proverbial competence. Apart from proverbs proper, the collection contains illustrations of the ways in which poetic and proverbial phrases were used in conversation and explanations of how the performer understood them. Anni performed several variations of almost every proverb that she presented, altering their style, deviating from the poetic meter, and elaborating their contents.<sup>6</sup>

In what follows, I will delve into Anni’s use of formulae, couplets, and proverbs in the composition of longer poetic utterances, assessing whether these serial performances are expositions of proverb wisdom, or whether they constitute poems in their own right.

In 1911, Anni performed the following string of proverbs one after the other:

Ota oppi otsahas, neuvo nenävartehes.	Take the learning onto your forehead, the advice onto the bridge of your nose.
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Elä neuvo neuvottua, elä seppeä opeta.	Don't advise the one advised, don't teach the smith.
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Eihän ennen oppi ojan lykkänt, eikä mahti moalta ajant. (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)2499– 2501. 1911–1912.)	Learning didn't use to push one into a ditch, and might didn't drive one off one's land.
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In terms of form – of how the couplets are stitched together and organized – the string is like any of Anni's poems. She built poems additively out of symmetrical couplets that were used widely in the context of Kalevala-meter poetry and in Anni's repertoire (e.g. Tarkka 2013a: 246–253). The whole is characterized by thematic cohesion that builds from couplet to couplet: it discusses the primary metapoetic theme in Karelian oral poetry, namely knowledge, also paraphrased as “might” (Tarkka 2013a: 104–109, 183–194). The first couplet underlines the obligation to learn. The second tells one not to advise those who are more learned. The third claims that knowledge is both useful and traditional. The thematic movement from taking advice to giving it and lastly to evaluating it is smooth. Together, the couplets tell us more than each tells alone: they relate knowledge and knowhow to power relations and values. The argument in the dialogue between the couplets builds a hierarchical thematic structure where there seemed to be none.

Two years later, Anni elaborated the theme of knowledge further:

Ei mahti moalta kiellä, eikä mahti moalta aja, eikä oppi ojah lykkeä.	Might doesn't deny one's land, and might doesn't drive one off one's land, and learning doesn't push one into a ditch.
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Ei mahitta moata käyvä, tietä käyvä tietoloitta.	One doesn't travel the land without might, walk the road without knowledge.
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Kysy mahtie moan käyneheltä,  tietä tien kulkenehelta.	Ask for might from those who have travelled the land, the road from those who have roamed the road.
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Ken moata kulkoo, se mahtiakin löytää. Ei oppi ojah lykkää, eikä moalta aja.	Who roams the land, will find might, too. Learning doesn't push one into a ditch, nor drive one off one's land.
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Ota oppi otsahas, neuvo nenävartehes.	Take the learning onto your forehead, the advice onto the bridge of your nose.
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Se on oppi ensimmäini, kuin vain siivosti olet, niin joka paikkah kelpoat. (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)6380– 6386. 1913.)	This is the first lesson, if you are just decent, then you will fit in anywhere.
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The series now starts with the theme of the necessity of knowledge. The alliterative association of knowledge (*tieto*) and the road (*tie*) takes the series two couplets further: one must ask for advice from those who have been around. The didactic exhortation that last year opened Anni's serial performance now prepares for the final move. After sketching out the meaning and essence of knowledge and the road to it, the speaker steps into the role of teacher, and performs the first lesson. Thematically, both series complement Anni's experiences as an initiate into the knowledge of a ritual specialist, the *tietäjä*.<sup>7</sup> She cited Hitora Koteroinen, an old sage who was willing to pass on his knowledge and "might" to the keen apprentice:

Kun sie olet niin kielas lapsi, ni pane peähäs, pane muistih [...]. Sie niitä tarvitset elöässäh, kaikki ne tuloo tarvituks [...]. *Ei oppi ojah lykköä, eikä mahti moalta aja*. Ei oppie huhuo pie, vain tietonas. Missä tuloo tarvispaikka, niin siinä on hyvä, ku itse tiijät. Kaikkie elöäs tarvitsoo. (SKS KRA. Paulaharju b)22427 1922; emphasis added.)

Since you are a quick-witted child, put them into your head, into your memory [...]. You will need them throughout your life, all of them [...]. *Learning doesn't push one into a ditch, and might not drive one off one's land*. Learning should not be shouted about, just keep it to yourself. Whenever you're in trouble, then it is good to have the knowledge yourself. You will need all of it in your life.

Unlike most proverb performances, Anni's reminiscence identifies and names the authority behind the proverb. As reported speech, the performance draws upon multiple quotations: Paulaharju quotes Anni quoting Hitora quoting proverbial wisdom and implicitly, the generations behind it. The message is clear and consonant with Anni's two series of proverbs: knowledge is vital equipment for living, and handing it over to the next generation is a binding legacy. This metapoetic statement that legitimizes the whole poetic tradition was treated with an emphasis on the imagery of travelling, moving, and foreign lands: the itinerant way of life left its imprint on vernacular imagination. Knowing how to live a good life was staying on the road rather than going off of it; or, alternatively staying on one's own land instead of being driven away.

In Anni's last cited series of proverbs, the final set of three lines functions as a coda: it intensifies the continuum of the previous lines, sums them up, and carries their idea into effect. Proverb chains such as these give alternative points of view to the ideational whole. The new cotext recontextualizes the elements, and all the couplets as well as the whole change in the process. Again, thematic associations and argumentative development of the theme in the sequence of proverbs displays textual organization, a hierarchical structure. The Bakhtinian finalization on the level of theme creates structure, or, in the words of Peter Seitel, "*compositional finalization articulates principal themes in logically expected places to maximize the effect and efficiency of performance*" (Seitel 2003: 284–286, emphasis original).

The poetic meter in both proverb sequences is startling: only six out of 22 lines are faultless Kalevala-meter. The last element in the second series is an extreme example: it opens with a faultless line that frames the following

two clauses whose classification as poetry is based solely on Paulaharju's typography, i.e. how he chose to divide the expression into "lines of poetry" on the paper. Metrical instability does not, however, disqualify the two serial performances as poems. The inclusion of metrically faulty lines or lines lacking any meter is not uncommon in genres of Kalevala-meter poetry – this is especially true of magical charms, in which passages with different rhetorical functions use the poetic language differently. Anni Lehtonen also performed long, highly cohesive and aesthetically clear poems in which there is no striving towards the Kalevala-meter: the formal structure of these poems is based on rigid repetition and alliteration, omitting the dictates of word stress and syllable length fundamental to the meter (see Tarkka 2013a: 254). Even in these poems the lines could easily be changed into Kalevala-meter verses: they are variations of established formulaic lines of poetry. This is the case here, too. There is a feel of conscious variation of the form, even at the expense of genre-specific ideals of finalization concerning all genres cast in the Kalevala-meter. Lastly it is worth noting the effect of the mode of enunciation on the meter (see Frog 2012: 54; 2015). Jukka Saarinen (2013: 40) has drawn attention to the fact that, as opposed to sung poems, dictated poems "show morphological features closer to the spoken language". This is probably the case in Kalevala-meter proverbs and aphorisms: although entextualized and foregrounded in conversation, they were recited in a manner reminiscent of spoken language and thus more relaxed in terms of meter.

Lastly, the line between a serial performance of proverbs and a coherent textual whole (an aphorism) can be assessed through the metapoetic commentaries collected from Anni herself. According to Anni, there were two kinds of singing and composing of poems, namely "lining up" (*latelominen*) and "ladling out" (*lappaminen*). If a singer wants to "line up" a song, she has "to know what kind of song she is singing, what about, and what is the cause that makes her sing, and with what tune". "Ladling out" was different: it was "what is done when a ball of yarn is rolled up, when it is messed up". The hierarchy of these modes of singing and composing is clear:

Kyllä sitä jokahini soattaa lapella ja sevottoa. Laulussa ei saa sevottoa. Laulu pitää olla selvää, kun rupie laulamah. Älä rupie laulamah, kun et kunnan soata. [...] Laulamisessa pitää olla paljon enämpi materjoo kun lappelomisessa.

Anybody can ladle out [a song] and make a mess. You shouldn't mess about with a song. The song has to be clear when you begin to sing. Don't start singing, if you can't do it properly. [...] A song has to have much more material than when you're just ladling out. (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9605. 1915.)

As a premeditated form of composition and performance, a careful elaboration of form and content, lining up was equal to making proper poems. Lining up a song or poem was "putting a word upon a word", and thereafter joining verbal and musical expression to form a unity. "Putting a word upon a word" refers to both composition in performance and thematic cohesion. The singer had to be familiar with the theme and a fitting tune. The



whole of the song had to be figured out before starting to sing and there had to be enough substance. (Tarkka 2013a: 151–154.) In sum, lining up refers to the form of composition required to produce a finalized composition at the levels of form, content, and performance.

In the Anni Lehtonen corpus, there are undeniably serial proverb performances that fulfil the criteria of lining up. In fact, Paulaharju designated Anni's proverbs as something "lined up" by the singer, hinting at the use of this generic term by the performer herself (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)2458–2877. 1911). The dialogically structured poems treated above are bound together by thematic cohesion. Argumentative combination of proverbs not only enriches their meaning by creating new thematic emphasis and contrastive points of view but also creates a hierarchical structure. (See also Sykäri 2011: 135, 153.) Anni's idea of "lining up" as "putting a word upon a word" thus meant more than putting words, lines, and couplets in a sequence: elaboration on the level of content implied an emergent form.

### *The Poetics of Quotation*

Regardless of the context of performance, quoting the speech of others and talking on behalf of common opinion is a reflexive use of language (Finnegan 2011: 159). If we wish to draw a line between the words of others and those of our own in literate culture, we are socialized into indicating this by drawing quotation marks on paper or in the air with our hands. In oral cultures, the quotation marks were drawn with different but equally apparent measures, some of which have been analysed above. If the proverb itself is considered a quotation, the proverbs embedded in epic (and other) poems are doubly quoted. They activate two frames of interpretation: the frame governing the production and reception of proverbs and the metapoetic one enabling the projection of this frame onto the fictive or mythic universe of the epic. The proverb is set in the speech of mythic-historical personages or in dialogically structured serial proverbs to build up a theme and to challenge its culturally taken-for-granted evaluations. Proverb performances (the real-life performance, the performance of the protagonist in the epic universe and its representation in the performance of the epic) are, despite their traditional authority and collective point of reference, characterized by Bakhtinian dialogism (see Vološinov 1990 [1929]: 138–139; Mukařovský 1983 [1971]: 102).

The poetics of quotation encompasses not only the dynamics of authorizing folklore by referring to the pre-existent quality of traditions and texts. It governs the processes of oral composition and memorization. The collective and shared voice of proverbs does not alienate the expressions from the performers' experiences and intentions; rather it makes them communicable and emphatic, socially resonant and authoritative. One can deny the dominant and typical interpretations of the words and thoughts one has borrowed from others, and create altogether new ones – clashing



and joining them with other borrowings. In this creativity quoting is an art of contextual improvisation (see also Hasan-Rokem 1982: 18–19; Lauhakangas 2004: 76–77; Sykäri 2011: 199).

Proverbs and serial proverbs have an effect on the whole set of communicative resources, both specialized registers and folklore genres. They enhance the coherence and cohesion among various registers by creating a channel from colloquial speech to proverbial speech and further to heightened performances of poetry, sung or spoken. At the same time, by creating semantic networks of ideas, images, and motifs, they intensify the meanings conveyed in all registers and genres involved. In generic interaction, the genre-specific meanings and the base meanings of individual proverbs break and engage in a dialogue. The contextual elasticity of proverbial speech and the variability of proverbs proper as well as the tendency to build chains through parallelism enrich the dialogue of genres. On the interface of conversation and performance, proverbs grow or change into texts of another genre; with the emergence of a new genre, the performance styles change and a hierarchical structure emerges.

## NOTES

- 1 Instead of the adjective “proverbial”, Lauhakangas uses the adjective “proverb-like” to cover both conventional proverbial phrases and other proverbial expressions. Taylor’s (1962: 184) definition of the proverbial phrase stresses its close relation to proverbs proper: “The proverbial phrase exhibits the characteristic rigidity of the proverb in all particulars except grammatical form.”
- 2 On the intertextual gap, see e.g. Bauman 2004: 7–8.
- 3 On entextualization, see Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73–74; Barber 2007: 22–24, 68–77 *et passim*.
- 4 On the shared intertextual framework in the interpretation of proverbs in narrative, see Hasan-Rokem 1982: 54–68; Carnes 1988: 12, 20; Dolby-Stahl 1988: 302.
- 5 72 per cent of proverbs and 88 per cent of aphorisms embedded in epic poems are framed within the protagonists’ dialogues – the rest appear as evaluations or coda (Tarkka 2005: table 7a).
- 6 Matti Kuusi defended the paremiologists’ sceptical attitude towards the Lehtonen-Paulaharju collection, but noted that it is a rare document on “kalevalaic competence, a willingness for tradition-based improvisation developed into its extreme”. A 1 per cent sample of Anni’s 10 000 “proverbs” suggests that 24 per cent of them are “certain Viena Karelian proverbs”, 32 per cent “feel like genuine proverbs but are unknown in Viena”, and 13 per cent are “proverb comments”. The rest include wellerisms, comparisons, situational phrases and witticisms, lyrical poems, incantations, omens, and “tradition-based improvisation”. (Kuusi 1970: 298–299). All of these text types are valid for the purposes of this analysis.
- 7 On the *tietäjä* and the *tietäjäs* secret knowledge, see Siikala 2002: 71–120, 242–319, 335–349; Tarkka 2013a: 104–118, 183–194.

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- SKVR I<sub>1-4</sub> = *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot I<sub>1-4</sub>. Vienan läänin runot 1908–1921*. Ed. A. R. Niemi. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

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Between Folklore  
and Literature

III





## 7. The Genre of Reminiscence Writing

### Applying the Bakhtin Circle's Genre Theories

In the field of contemporary folkloristics genre is regarded as an organizing principle for utterances, texts, or expressions that serves as a communicative and flexible framework guiding the production, reception, and interpretation of discourse (e.g. Hanks 1987; Briggs & Bauman 1992; see also Dorst 1983). From this standpoint, genres are not understood as rigid categories or stable classifications, even though the notion of genre on some level always focuses on the conventional features of expression in addition to the similarities and connections between utterances. This perspective on genre gained significance after the notion of genres as distinct entities became problematic and insufficient for understanding the blurred, mixed, and heterogenic forms and meanings that characterize discourses or performances of tradition (Siikala & Siikala 2005: 87–90). This understanding of genre is among other theories based on the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and the so-called Bakhtin Circle.<sup>1</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin defines speech genres as determined by the areas and events of human interaction in which they are created and used. Each of these language events creates its own relatively stable types of utterances, or speech genres, which also reflect the situation in question. (Bakhtin 1986: 60, 87; Seitel 2003: 278.) In line with Bakhtin, Pavel Medvedev, too, defines genre as a viewpoint on the world at a given time and place (Bakhtin/Medvedev 1979: 130–135). What makes the Bakhtin Circle's genre theories so compelling is the significance that it attaches to the social and communicative nature of genre and the messages and values that the genre conveys.

In this article, I examine the genre of reminiscence writing from the perspective of the Bakhtin Circle's genre theories, by applying them to the analysis of two different kinds of materials: texts about childhood memories, to be precise, collected and archived reminiscence writings about the evacuation journey from Karelia to Finland generated by a collection campaign (SKS KRA LEM 2004)<sup>2</sup> organized by the Finnish Karelian League in collaboration with the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society, and the published memoirs and fiction of Eeva Kilpi (1959; 1964; 1979; 1983; 2001; 2012 [1989]; 2012 [1990]; 2012 [1993]), a Finnish novelist who was also a child evacuee from Karelia. Through this process, I seek to observe the kinds of intertextual, communicative, and social interactions

that reminiscences about the past connect to. In addition, based on the comparison of collected reminiscence writings and related texts, I will outline characteristics of the genre of reminiscence writing as a theoretical category that also occurs outside the thematic collections. Thus, in this article, the term “reminiscence writing” is used to refer firstly to writings produced in thematic collections, and secondly to a genre that is also found outside these collections.

Following this idea, I start my analysis by outlining some of the challenges that are involved in the analysis of reminiscence writings produced through collection campaigns<sup>3</sup> from the standpoint of genre. I see the concept of genre as a powerful tool for understanding poetic and linguistic works, for such expressions are always fundamentally bound up in the world from which they have sprung. With this in mind, I investigate the genre’s external or direct orientation toward the actual context, through which reminiscence writings written by a certain author become existent in a certain situation, in a certain interaction between the author, the recipient, and the historical context. Thereafter, I describe the genre’s typical perspectives on the world, by perceiving how reminiscence writings internally orientate toward the world based on temporal viewpoints characteristic of it. (See Bakhtin/Medvedev 1978: 130–133).

If we choose to follow the Bakhtin Circle’s genre theories, regarding different genres as discrete units with strictly defined boundaries cannot be the final goal of analysis. As Pavel Medvedev puts it, “Poetics should really begin with genre, not end with it” (Bakhtin/Medvedev 1978: 129). Indeed, the Circle’s approach to genre encourages the apprehension of overlaps, relations, and links between genres which may open new windows for understanding dimensions of human expressions<sup>4</sup> absent on the linguistic or thematic level of the utterance but taking place between and across genres. Thus, in this article, the emphasis is not on seeking to set collected reminiscence writings apart as a category distinct from other categories but on creating an analysis of the characteristics that connect it together with other genres. One aspect that prevails throughout my analysis is the comparison and relation between the collected reminiscence writings and other historically oriented or retrospective forms of narration, such as literary memoir, oral history accounts, and autobiographies. This exposes the confluences and differences between the reminiscence writings produced in the context of different collection campaigns and other neighboring genres.<sup>5</sup> As an example of how the borders between genres overlap and are thus ever open to new interpretations, I compare the works of Eeva Kilpi to collected reminiscence writings about childhood evacuation journeys. In connection with these issues, I also offer examples of how the intertextuality of genres can be seen in evacuation journey writings.

Collected reminiscence writings are typically produced or brought to the “public” thanks to various thematic collections and writing competitions; these campaigns are frequently organized by the Finnish Literature Society’s Folklore Archives in co-operation with various associations concerned with the theme in question (Latvala 2005: 24–33; Pöysä 2006: 223–228.) As an example of reminiscence writings produced in the context of a collection

campaign, I analyze the collection called “Children’s Evacuation Journey” (2004). The writings concern the evacuation journey(s) from Karelia to Finland during the Second World War and were written by elderly persons who were children during the evacuations. These writings thematically link together with the chosen works of Eeva Kilpi and they also share a focus on childhood memories. In addition, the children’s evacuation journey writings and the chosen works of Eeva Kilpi both dwell on the following topics: the loss of Karelia, evacuations, and recollections of childhood in Karelia. My interpretation as well as the examples are based on one particular thematic collection about the childhood evacuation journey, but I suggest that the arguments presented here apply also more generally to these kinds of accounts about and around personal experiences and memories of the past.

Before going any further, it is necessary to provide some background information on the “lost Karelia” and the evacuations. Karelia is a region on both sides of the border between eastern Finland and Russia. Between 1939 and 1944, Finland fought two wars against the Soviet Union, both of which led to the cession of parts of the Finnish Karelian region – among other areas of Finland – to the Soviet Union. After the Winter War (1939–1940), the Finnish population living in ceded territories of Karelia was evacuated across the new state border. In this way, Karelian evacuees as a group were born. At the beginning of the second of the wars during this period, the Continuation War (1941–1944), Finland recovered the ceded areas of Karelia and approximately 70 percent of the evacuees moved back to their former home places. In the summer of 1944 Finland lost the war and ceded the areas to the Soviet Union again and Finnish Karelians were evacuated to the Finnish side of the border again. The number of Karelian exiles was 420,000, which was nearly 11 percent of the national population.

The evacuations and the ceding of Karelia also generated the charged concepts of the “lost Karelia” and “Karelian evacuees”. Evacuated Karelians were resettled in their new dwelling places while Finland paid the reparations to the Allied governments. While the resettlement of the Karelian population and the restoration and reparation period has been considered one of the central events in the grand narrative of Finnish history (Armstrong 2004: 2), the evacuation journey has continued to endure as the core of the grand narrative of Karelia for Karelian evacuees (Kuusisto-Arponen 2008: 175).<sup>6</sup>

### *The Bakhtinian Idea of Genre as a Dialogic Framework*

The Bakhtin Circle’s notions about genre are deeply embedded in the idea of the dialogic and social nature of language and the interconnectedness of utterances and their meanings.<sup>7</sup> This means that language or utterances and speech genres are replete with other words and others’ words, and therefore they include a connection to other utterances and discourses (Bakhtin 1981; 1986: 88–89). As a result of this, language is always fundamentally interactive and social, thus unable to exist as a synchronic system apart from its historical and social context (Vološinov 1973: 65–68).<sup>8</sup> Dialogue or dialogism is considered one of the main epithets defining the theories

and thinking of Mikhail Bakhtin as well as the theories of genre. Dialogism means that all meanings are part of a bigger whole, in interaction with each other and also possibly affecting each other. (Bakhtin 1981; Holquist 1981: 426–427; 1990; Vice 1997: 46–49; Lähteenmäki 1998.) According to Sue Vice, dialogism means “double-voicedness” or “double-wordedness” (Vice 1997: 45). In his early works on the novel, Bakhtin discusses the idea of the “internal dialogism of the word”, especially in the context of literature, although on a rather theoretical or ideal level (Bakhtin 1981: 282; Tihanov 1998: 45), but the principle of dialogue, or epistemology of dialogue, is at the basis of all of the works produced by the Bakhtin Circle (Holquist 1990: 14–17). Later on dialogism also emerges as a precondition of the ideas he introduces in his essay “The Problem of Speech Genres” (Bakhtin 1986). As Bakhtin puts it,

The utterance is filled with dialogic overtones [...]. After all, our thought itself – philosophical, scientific, and artistic – is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others’ thought, and this cannot but be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well. (Bakhtin 1986: 92.)

Bakhtin writes that in order to understand what someone says, it is just as necessary to understand speech genres as it is to understand the thematic content and forms of the language (lexical composition and grammatical structure) of the utterance (Bakhtin 1986: 80, 92). He argues that all written and oral utterances or speech genres are extremely heterogenic. Thus he decides to emphasize the significant difference between simple and complex speech genres. Complex speech genres are, for example, novels, dramas, or scientific investigations, which are formed in relatively advanced cultural and (often written) communication which is, for instance, artistic, scientific, or sociopolitical. In the course of their development, complex genres incorporate various simple genres such as rejoinders in dialogue or proverbs. These primary genres retain their original form and gain their special significance only when embedded in complex genres and as part of them or through them. (Bakhtin 1986: 60–62.)

Bakhtin mentions the novel as one example of a complex genre. Also, his perception of speech genres, interrelated and constantly shaping each other, evokes his understanding of the genre of the novel in his earlier works; in the case of speech genres, however, he takes his ideas from the realm of the literary and begins to approach language more generally as communication. Nevertheless, the earlier emphasis on the special nature of the novel continues to shine through in his later essays. According to Bakhtin, the novel as a genre is unique because of its capacity to include other genres while retaining its “novelness”. Bakhtin approaches the novel “as a genre-in-the-making”, which means that it is incomplete and transgressive – an open form premised on mixing genres and breaking and crossing their boundaries. (Bakhtin 1981: 3–40; Holquist 1981: xxxii; Lyytikäinen 2006: 176–179). Owing to their heterogeneity, reminiscence writings represent a complex genre (see Portelli 1998: 23–25; Pöysä 2006: 231–233). The complex genre of reminiscence writing takes shape intertextually in a dialogue with

other genres and other texts. Each of the works constitutes a unique whole made up of varying simple genres. Similar to how Bakhtin sees the genre of novel, reminiscence writings also represent an incomplete and changing genre characterized by genre inclusiveness (see Latvala 2005: 71–72).

In his book *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1978), Pavel Medvedev describes genre as a system of methods for the conscious control and finalization of “reality”, which means, in other words, that a genre reflects a certain kind of viewpoint on the world in a certain situation. According to Medvedev, every genre has a twofold orientation in reality that also defines the genre. External or direct orientation means the actual conditions of production and reception or performance of the discourse, whereas internal or thematic orientation refers to the discourse’s own perspective on reality. Medvedev also points out that these orientations are actually a single two-sided orientation because both sides are inseparable and one determines the other. (Bakhtin/Medvedev 1978: 130–135; Dorst 1983: 414–415). These views on genre are consistent with Bakhtin’s work on speech genres, where he states that “Genres correspond to typical situations of speech communication, typical themes, and consequently, also to particular contacts between the meanings of words and actual concrete reality under certain typical circumstances” (Bakhtin 1986: 87).

What the Bakhtin Circle suggests is that word and discourse genres, including the genre of novel, are not only dependent on formal and thematic elements but also always relational in terms of each other and their contexts. These works emphasize the relevance of the contextual and social aspects to word and genre. (Allen 2000: 14–21.) Consistently with Bakhtin and Medvedev’s conception of the wholly social and contextual nature of genre or sociohistorical poetics, John Dorst points out the importance of dialectics that investigate the relationship between genres and the social and historical forces operating in concrete circumstances (Dorst 1983: 425; for commentary on Dorst, see Abrahams 1985). The dialogic dimension of genre is therefore extralinguistic but at the same time it is an integral property of language and cannot be inspected separately from it (Bakhtin 1981: 425). This, however, raises the question of how we can perceive particular genres if not on the basis of their formal and thematic features. Bakhtin suggests that the best way to conceive genres in literature is on the basis of how they fix time and space (time being the primary category) and these chronotopes define genres and what makes each genre special and distinct from other genres. (Bakhtin 1981: 85, 243, 250–251; see also Savolainen 2009; Ingemark, this volume.) To generalize, the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and the Bakhtin Circle about genre can be divided into three lines of thought (1) theoretical insights about genre as a response and critique of formalist method in literary scholarship (Bakhtin/Medvedev 1978: 129–141); (2) theory and exemplary analyses of various literary examples such as studies on the genre of novel (e.g. Bakhtin 1981); and (3) the concept of speech genres which detaches the concept of genre from the realm of literature and literary scholarship (Bakhtin 1986: 60–102; see also Vološinov 1973). These lines are of course closely connected, but the reader also encounters ambiguity and inconsistent treatments of definitions and terms, especially

in the works of Bakhtin himself, whose views were constantly evolving over the course of his career.

### *The External Orientation of Reminiscence Writings*

As mentioned earlier, the term reminiscence writing here refers to two partly distinct and partly overlapping categories that will be compared and interrelated. The term “reminiscence writing” is used to refer first, to writings produced in thematic collections, and second, to a genre that is also found outside these collections. Reminiscence writings that are sent to collection campaigns or the Folklore Archives in Helsinki are heterogeneous to the extent that one might say that heterogeneity as opposed to certain typical thematic or formal features is a defining quality of the genre. According to Pauliina Latvala, these writings typically mix different literary conventions and narrative genres (Latvala 2005: 48; see also Latvala, this volume). In many ways the heterogeneity of collected reminiscence writings resemble the texts sent to the British *Mass observation* (see Sheridan 1993). Reminiscence writings may consist of various overlapping text types such as narrative, argumentative, expository, and descriptive. Although prose narration is dominant in collected reminiscence writings, they may also include poetry or lyrics that are either quotations or composed by the writer. (Pöysä 2006: 231; Kaarlenkaski 2010: 361; see also Sheridan 1993.) The lengths and structures of the responses also vary. While collected reminiscence writings may be stylistically coherent pieces, they may also be divided into thematic or stylistic sections. The personal motives for participating in these collections and competitions also vary from writer to writer (Latvala 2005: 36; see also Sheridan 1993: 32). In addition to writing, a wide repertoire of media including visual narration with photographs, drawings, or old maps can be deployed in the creation of writing (see Sheridan 1993: 31).

Nonetheless, writing collections organized by archives are not the definitive and sole production context of this kinds of texts. Texts similar to collected reminiscence writings are also produced and published outside these collections. In addition, reminiscence writings that are sent to these thematic collections may also have been previously published. Such contributions may, for example, either be photocopies of articles that have already appeared in newspapers or they may include such materials. There are also self-published books and autobiographies both within and outside these collections that can be regarded as representatives of the genre of reminiscence writing. Reminiscence writings in and outside these collections may also be viewed as mixtures of genres because they include, for example, quotations from old diaries, accompanying letters, clarifying comments, photographs, poems, or lyrics of religious hymns. These kinds of writings also frequently refer to performances or situations of oral communication and their topics can be based on oral narratives that are shared and repeated within a family or a community (see Sheridan 1993: 32–33; Latvala 2005: 65 and this volume). When incorporated into the complex genre of reminiscence writing, these passages or items of text represent



examples of Bakhtinian simple genres, because they gain their meaning as parts of and through the complex genre. The genres of reminiscence writing resemble and overlap with other complex genres such as personal documents, questionnaire responses, oral history narratives, fiction, or historiography. Drawing a distinction between the genre of reminiscence writings and genres of autobiographies and memoirs can be seen as an act of interpretation, for the borders between these various genres are far from clear and absolute.

The external orientation of collected reminiscence writings in Finland is evidenced by the fact that they are often produced in the context of a collection campaign or a writing competition on a given theme. The collector plays an instrumental role in the production of reminiscence writings or at least in their “publication” by giving them to the archives and parts of these collections. (See Sheridan 1993.) The absence of the interview or face-to-face interaction between the interviewer and narrator has been considered the most essential difference between collected reminiscence writings and oral history narratives (Abrams 2010: 26). Collected reminiscence writings are not produced in the context of an interview but in privacy, thus allowing the author to work and re-work and edit the “text” before “publication” – that is, sending it to an archive or as a response to a collection campaign (Pöysä 2006: 228–231). Alessandro Portelli has also underlined the difference between oral autobiographical narratives and autobiographical texts (Portelli 1998: 28). Many oral historians have stated that it is the presence of the interviewer in the oral history interview that not only grants legitimacy to the narration of a life but also creates a shared authority (e.g. Frisch 1990; Abrams 2010: 27).

The relationship between The Folklore Archives and the respondents, including the writers of collected reminiscence writings, has been given critical attention for some time in Finland (e.g. Apo 1995: 175–186; Peltonen 1996; Pöysä 1997; Latvala 2005; Mikkola 2009). The role of the dialogue between the collector and the writer in the formation of the collected reminiscence writings, or to be precise, the formation of the collection of writings and their specific contextual meanings as responses sent to this collection, is actually quite similar to the role of the dialogue between interviewer and narrator in the creation of an oral history narrative (Abrams 2010: 26–27; see also Portelli 1998: 23; Pöysä 2006: 231–232).<sup>9</sup> The archive, sometimes in collaboration with the researcher, initiates this dialogue by inviting people to submit writings on a given topic; the writer then, in one way or another, responds to this request and maybe proposes amplifying questions (Pöysä 1997: 39; Latvala 2005: 56–58, 65). Jyrki Pöysä has pointed out that writers do not by any means automatically obey the collector’s request for a given topic or viewpoint, but instead may either confirm or contradict it (Pöysä 1997: 42).

Not only the concrete dialogue taking place between writer and collector but also the broader sociohistorical referentiality, which Bakhtin calls dialogism, is a basic condition that shapes these writings. Indeed, the process of the definition of which topics and which narrative practices are found suitable for presenting and interpreting the past is dialogic. The

perspective of the genre is in general affected by dialogism that, according to Bakhtin, permeates not only each utterance in a given situation but is also a defining quality of language itself and of how language tends to construct and convey meanings (Bakhtin 1981: 273, 280; Hirschop 1989: 6, 9, 20; Vice 1997: 45–46, 50). Interpretations and narratives about history and the past in general are formulated by the negotiations among and between communities, institutions such as memory organizations, researchers, and writers with their personal experiences (Latvala 2005: 33–36). Various interpretations of history and the past in general link up to form an entirety, molding, supporting, countering, and even contradicting each other. Also the viewpoint that the writers wish to express when they tell a narrative about their past connects to this process. Reminiscence writings as well as organized collections and competitions with their particular themes both mirror and participate in the cultural negotiations about the past and history. They also participate in the negotiations of how the past is put into words. By using certain kinds of discursive conventions, they reflect the elements from the present that should be remembered as history in the future. The often shared interests of the collecting organizations and their collaborating researchers serve to define the topics and events considered important and interesting enough to warrant the theme of a collection campaign (Latvala 2005: 33–36). Some past events and experiences are always deemed more interesting and important than others. Some views nonetheless surface in the culture and serve to generate countering interpretations and lines of history. This dialectic also is predominant in one of the central internal orientations of the genre of reminiscence writings, namely, an alternative viewpoint on the past. Multiple players take part in a culture totally permeated by a dialogism that is constantly shaping and creating the genre.

A writer's class or status also provides distinctive criteria for determining genres. In other words, the reminiscing done by professional writers or the "rich and famous" tends to fall under the category of memoir or autobiography, not of reminiscence writing, personal narrative, or oral history (e.g. Bornat 1994: 17–30; Abrams 2010: 27).<sup>10</sup> This leads to the question of whether the role of the author has an impact on how the text is identified generically. Can the genre of reminiscence writing be defined by the fact that the writers are not professional writers and thus have no other channels for publishing their texts and expressing their views of the past and their life? In my view, characteristics of the author do not suffice for determining whether or not an account is an example of reminiscence writing; instead, we have to consider the author's point of view and the role that he or she assumes. Moreover, the context also plays a role in how the genre of certain text is interpreted. For example, if a so-called "common person" or an amateur writer writes a seemingly objective account of a historical event and offers it to an archival collection campaign, readers will tend to see the piece as an example of reminiscence writing. However, if a professional historian does the same, the genre of the contribution may not be so easily defined. Although this is more of a hypothetical than an actual example, there are actual cases, for example, relating to the reminiscence writings of Karelian evacuees, where the question of writer's role and the

publication context renders the definition of the genre of a text open to various interpretations.

### *The Internal Orientation of the Genre*

Based on my research materials, the evacuation journey writings, selected works of Eeva Kilpi, and studies of similar texts, I suggest that the characteristic internal orientation of the genre of reminiscence writing can be defined in terms of three essential features: (1) retrospectivity, (2) autobiographicality, and (3) an ancillary interpretation of history. All three features define the genre's characteristic orientation toward the world. However, these qualities as such are too general to be the only definitive qualities of a particular genre. Moreover, as viewpoints they apply to several genres of retrospective personal narration. What characterizes these qualities particularly in the case of the genre of reminiscence writing is firstly that the retrospective gaze is restricted to a limited temporal range and secondly that the personal experiences or the life story is narrated from the point of view of a certain theme. The ancillary viewpoint of a genre, however, should be understood in a broad sense and always closely connected with and stemming from the first two.

Retrospectivity and autobiographicality may have a wide range of manifestations in reminiscence writings. The calibration of the personal point of view and the gap between the moment of writing and the moment of the events (the present and the past) is executed by applying the narrative means and expressions of fictionality<sup>11</sup> (Latvala 2005: 77–78; Kaarlenkaski 2010: 376–377; Savolainen 2012: 29–30; 2015: 170–214; see also Salmi–Niklander 2004: 175–179). One example of this calibration is that the author fades out the personal perspective and distances her/himself from the described events. Also this distancing can create different kinds of rhetorical effects. The writer can place her/himself in the position of a historian who narrates events and periods from the past. In this case the emphasis is on the objectivity and truthfulness of the told and the person narrating. (Savolainen 2012: 28; 2015: 106–112.) In addition, the writer can also use third-person narration and insert her/himself as a character in the story. Such an approach highlights the artistic nature of the writing and fosters empathy and sometimes also humor (Kaarlenkaski 2010: 376–377; Savolainen 2012: 29–30). In both cases autobiographicality is not explicit but pervades the writings nonetheless.

Another example of the calibration is that in narration the writer reduces the distance between the moment of writing and the past events to the minimum. This is done by describing the past events, such as the evacuation journey, from a personal point of view in the present tense. This creates the impression that the described event is happening exactly at the same time as the writing. The effect of closing the gap is similar to the use of third-person narration and both of these are fictional and highly performative narrative acts that enable both the writer and the reader to feel closer to the past events and to empathize with the past experiences. (Laitinen 1998:

83–85; Savolainen 2015: 170–177; see also Wolfson 1979; Silverstein 1993.) The tendency to use a rich array of multiple and varying writer positions as a heavily marked and highly conscious poetic tool is also a quality that distinguishes reminiscence writings from oral history narratives produced in an interview context.

Besides autobiographicality and retrospectivity, a third essential feature of the genre reminiscence writing is an ancillary interpretation of the past and history. For example, in the evacuation journey writings, the authors, who are former child evacuees themselves, reminisce about and narrate a historical event significant not only for the community of migrant Karelians but also for the wider Finnish society. Often, when it comes to significant historical events, there are dominant and counter interpretations of what happened and to whom it happened; needless to say, the authors of reminiscence writings, people who were once child evacuees, are also participating and positioning themselves in this conversation. I suggest that the genre of reminiscence writing operates in this dialogue about the past as a complementing, countering, or alternative point of view of the historical yet still topical event, time period, or theme. This perspective also acts as a major impetus for why the writers want to take part in the collection of reminiscence writings.<sup>12</sup> The ancillary perspective means that the writers feel that their own experience and interpretation of the past, one that has yet to be properly expressed or recognised, is worth telling and sharing. This means that the genre of reminiscence writing is characteristically one of testifying and witnessing. The genre and the individual writings intertwine with and engage in discussion with other writings, genres, and interpretations of history.

Another dimension of this quality is that the genre of reminiscence writing allow authors to articulate their personal viewpoints and experiences but they do so as members or advocates of a wider reference group and are thus connected through the subject of reminiscence. This brings us back to the requirement of a certain delimited topic or a theme through which the narration is filtered. Nonetheless, it varies as to how unambiguous or organized or clear these groups and themes can be considered. The groups may be, for example, Karelian evacuees, children, women, nurses, or just “common people” or amateur writers as opposed to professional historians. Although the characteristic themes of reminiscence writings often relate to the grand events of history such as wars, crises, or other exceptional situations, the writings may also describe the everyday life and experiences of people. Still, it is typical that the group in which the author of the reminiscence writing positions her/himself is represented as offering an alternative, parallel, “from below”, or at least ancillary viewpoint to the common and hegemonic conception of the history and story of the past. In these cases, a personal connection to this group not only legitimates the reminiscence writing as a testimony and interpretation of a certain meaningful event of the past, but also shows that autobiographicality and retrospectivity are central to the genre’s potential for offering an ancillary perspective on history.

### Eeva Kilpi's Works

Eeva Kilpi is a Finnish novelist and poet whose works have a particular resonance among Karelian evacuees; the influence of her literary efforts is evident on many different levels in the writings sent in response to the collection campaign for narratives about the children's evacuation journey. Eeva Kilpi has drawn heavily upon personal experience in her writings about leaving Karelia. As a child evacuee, she has written and published four volumes of memoirs<sup>13</sup> about the war, evacuations and her childhood in Karelia. These books are *Talvisodan aika. Lapsuusmuistelmia* (2012 [1989]) ['Time of the Winter War, Childhood Memoir'], *Välirauha, ikävöinnin aika* (2012 [1990]) ['Truce, Time of Longing'], *Jatkosodan aika* (2012 [1993]) ['Time of the Continuation War'] and *Rajattomuuden aika. Kertomus lapsuudesta* (2001) ['Time of Borderlessness. Story about Childhood']. Before the memoirs, Kilpi published several novels such as *Elämän evakkona* (1983) ['Evacuee of Life'] and *Elämä edestakaisin* (1964) ['Life Back and Forth'] and collections of short stories *Noidanlukko* (1959) ['Moonwort'] and *Se mitä ei koskaan sanota* (1979) ['What is Never Said']; these novels deal thematically with the lives of Karelian evacuees and the loss of home. Kilpi's memoirs, novels, and collections of short stories cover similar themes as those in the children's evacuation journey writings; in fact, these writings contain many references and acknowledgements to Kilpi's work. Besides these more overt associations, some of the respondents, as they attempt to capture the evacuation journey in writing, appear to have internalized the narrative style of Kilpi's memoirs.

True to the narrative conventions of the form, Kilpi writes her memoirs in the first person. A typical feature of her narration is the free association between several temporal levels, thus allowing the past of her childhood to intermingle with more recent times in the present. The rememberer, the writer, with her doubts, speculations, and feelings about the memories, is vividly present in the text as a narrator. This technique serves to underline and bring up the main topic of Kilpi's memoirs – namely, the problematic nature of autobiographical memory and the veracity of memory. These qualities make her memoirs comparable to autofiction, a literary genre that combines fiction and autobiography. The genre has two key characteristic features: first, the main character and the writer share the same name; and second, the work declares itself to be a work of fiction, for instance, a novel. Literary historians generally locate autofiction near postmodernism because the genre tends to break and renounce the conventional categories and definitions of literature as well as the basic structures of life in general. By transgressing various borders and questioning their very existence, postmodernist writing aims to elicit responses in the reader, rather than offer her/him reasonable explanations. In autofiction the intermingling of the categories of fiction and autobiographicality can be seen as challenging and breaking existing categories.<sup>14</sup>

Like Kilpi in her memoirs, the respondents to the collection campaign also reflect on the problematic nature of autobiographical memory. Yet Kilpi goes further than the respondents to the collection campaign, for she

endeavors to make the process of memorizing and the process of forming the reminiscences into narratives more visible through meta-reminiscing. For instance, in her memoirs she often ponders why certain memories remain crystal clear and surface in the mind time and time again, whereas others are familiar only from the narratives of others, but not recollected *per se*. One key topic in Kilpi's memoirs is speculation as to whether the things that she remembers are her "original" memories or based on later accounts such as family narratives that have merged with her own memories. She also uses official documents of events in the war and juxtaposes them with her own memories. Meta-reminiscing and the use and integration of various types of sources also feature in the collected reminiscence writings. In the reminiscence writings such approaches generally remain unarticulated, whereas for Kilpi the memoirist the problematic nature of remembering and memories plus the question of their ownership emerge as a main theme. As Kilpi puts it, *Muistot osoittautuvat oikukkaiksi kun niitä lähestyy. Ne tuntuvat ensin kiinteiltä ja selviltä, mutta kun niitä alkaa kosketella, ne ovatkin äkkiä hauraita ja särkyviä.* ['Memories turn out to be fickle when you approach them. They seem firm and clear at first but when you start to touch them they are suddenly fragile and breakable.'] (Kilpi 2012 [1989]: 15.) As the narrative progresses, memory evolves into a character in the memoir, a personality with its own quirks, occasionally even addressed by the narrator.

Matters of referentiality or the truth of autobiographicality characterize both reminiscence writings and works of autofiction. The writers of autofiction, however, treat these questions in a manner strikingly different from both the writers of the collected reminiscence writings and Eeva Kilpi the memoirist. Autofiction distances itself from the requirement of referentiality characteristic of autobiographical writing, whereas Kilpi and the writers who contributed to the collection campaign make a point of finding "truthful" memories, or at least discerning which of their memories are authentically their own and which have been learned from narratives about the event. They are processes of connecting events and creating an autobiographical continuum that is placed also within a wider sociohistorical or family context; hence, memoirs aim primarily to make sense of memories. The memoirs seek to make life and the past understandable, whereas autofiction works in quite the opposite way. Generally speaking, the reader approaching the collected reminiscence writings or Kilpi's memoirs tends to trust the writer and narrator's commitment to truth; but this is not the case with autofiction. Based on the above considerations, Eeva Kilpi's memoirs have less in common with autofiction than with the genre of reminiscence writing or so-called traditional autobiography,<sup>15</sup> a work more closely connected to modernism than postmodernism in literary history. (See Fokkema 1984: 15–18, 43–50; Lejeune 1986: 64; Koivisto 2005: 179–180.)

With their autobiographical and retrospective stance on the world, Kilpi's memoirs offer a complementary interpretation of history. Such a stance can be easily likened to the viewpoint in the writings in the children's evacuation journey collection, and also more generally to the internal orientation of the genre of reminiscence writings. Furthermore, when we compare their thematic and stylistic qualities and temporal dimensions of narration, not



to mention their use of external and complementing sources such as other people's memories or other documents in order to construct a narrative about the past, Eeva Kilpi's memoirs are so similar to the writings produced in the context of the organized collection that they could be considered to represent the same genre. But how do Kilpi's earlier novels and short stories concerning similar topics then relate to these? Do they share similar thematic, stylistic, and temporal features with her memoirs? Do they have a similar internal viewpoint on the world typical of the genre reminiscence writings? Or do her works of fiction more closely resemble the genre of autofiction? In her novels and collections of short stories, Kilpi's personal role as a character of a story or a person who has experienced the described events is not as self-evident as it is in her memoirs.

In her novels Kilpi distances herself from the text by creating a distant narrator, whereas her memoirs are narrated in the first person. This distancing effect makes the works of fiction appear more temporally flat or logical, thus depriving them of the retrospective range created by the intermingling and association of different time levels of the life of the writer's life in the narration of her memoirs. In many ways the style and structure of her fiction is more conventional than in her memoirs. The temporal consistency of her fiction also means that the question of the truthfulness of memory does not assume as crucial a role as in her memoirs. Nonetheless, there are also thematic similarities between the memoirs and the fiction, for Kilpi does subtly address questions of autobiographicality in her fiction even though these works are not overtly autobiographical.

When compared to her memoirs, the autobiographicality of Kilpi's fiction becomes apparent. For example, in her novel *Elämän evakkona* (1983) ['Evacuee of life'], the family, its members, and their life histories recall Kilpi's own family as it is described in her memoirs. Moreover, the home places of the novel's family such as Hiitola, their home parish in Karelia, are the same as Kilpi's home places. The autobiographical nature of Kilpi's collections of short stories is even more evident. The subtitle of Kilpi's first work, *Noidanlukko* (1959) ['Moonwort'], is *Sarja lapsuudesta* ['Series from childhood'], which can easily be read as a clue of autobiographicality. Intertextual connections between Kilpi's works also suggest autobiographicality. For example, the title refers to a rare plant, a flower that never blossoms. In one of the short stories, a girl, who is also the first-person narrator, waits for the moonwort to bloom, but before it does so the war breaks out and girl has to leave her home in addition to the moonwort. In her memoirs, Kilpi reminisces several times about the moonwort in Karelia and her realization that it would never bloom and her fear that the war would destroy the plant. With these kinds of intertextual references, Kilpi retrospectively narrows the distance between herself as a writer, a narrator, and a character. These shared features also make it possible to interpret her works of fiction as closely connected to her memoirs and the genre of reminiscence writings, even though they do not have a similar internal orientation and perspective on the world.

Kilpi's novels and short stories easily qualify as fictional works with autobiographical traces. Therefore, we may want to ask whether her fiction could be defined as autofiction. Nonetheless, despite the obvious



autobiographical sources Kilpi draws on in creating fiction about the life of Karelian evacuees, her stories do not meet the criteria for autofiction, at least if we strive for theoretical correctness. For example, her fiction lacks the most fundamental feature of autofiction: the main character should have the same name as the author. Interestingly, many readers as well as critics have regarded Kilpi's fiction about the lives of Karelian evacuees as inspired by the writer's own life, and undoubtedly this interpretation has strengthened since she published her memoirs (see also Enwald 1989: 661–666; Makkonen 1997: 98–115).

The similarities between Eeva Kilpi's memoirs and the evacuation journey writings by Karelian child evacuees are not merely the result of amateurs imitating professionals. Indeed, the similarities between the discourses arise from the fact that both represent accounts of childhood memories. As a rule, the amount of time that has passed between the actual event and its telling, not to mention the narrator's life situation combined with cultural and social considerations, affect what and how things are told. (Knuuttila 1994: 60–61; Korkiakangas 1996: 11, 53.) Additionally, the likenesses also spring from the cultural memory cherished and created by Karelian evacuees. However, even though a given genre's thematic orientation is determined in a cultural dialogue that reaches beyond the particular situation in which the texts are produced, their publication context has an impact on the reception of the texts and can make two thematically and formally similar texts represent different genres. The reception of the discourse is a process of generic decisions with a substantial impact on the interpretation of the text as well (see Hanks 1987: 670). For example, if we consider Eeva Kilpi's memoirs and novels about Karelia and the life of an evacuee, their themes and topics are in accordance with the reminiscence writings of Karelian evacuees in the theme collections; moreover, they can be seen as similar responses in the cultural dialogue that defines their thematic orientation. Kilpi's works, however, are produced and published in the commercial context of a literary institution, thus ascribing to them a literary status associated with the work of a professional writer, despite their reminiscent quality. By contrast, the reminiscence writings of Karelian evacuees are produced and "published" in the context of collection campaigns requesting writings from ordinary citizens, which means that the texts are interpreted first and foremost as accounts of the personal past – as reminiscence writings.

### *Levels of Intertextuality*

The idea of the dialogicality of language and genres has also led several scholars in literary studies and linguistic anthropology to develop the concepts of intertextuality<sup>16</sup> and generic intertextuality, which this article only discusses briefly. According to Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman, genre is inherently intertextual and generic intertextuality means that an expression, which is recognized as a representative of a genre, also automatically refers to similar prior expressions and acquires certain

generic conventions and expectations from them (1992: 147). When we speak about generic intertextuality, it is not relevant whether intertextual connections and references to different genres are matters of a conscious choice or not. Moreover, if we consider reminiscence writings, generic intertextuality reflects the cultural knowledge of various different genres that people have and which they employ when producing their writings. Generic intertextuality can be seen as evidence of the writer's competence and knowledge of different cultural discourses. In the case of the complex genre of reminiscence writings, generic intertextuality appears twofold on the levels of a complex and simple genre, and hence forms a complex web of references. The genre of reminiscence writings can be understood as a certain kind of compiled genre, which cannot be reduced to merely a collection of several genres, but rather is a collage of genres wherein the combination generates an independent genre with a distinct viewpoint on the world. It also needs to be stated that as with the whole endeavor to separate simple and complex genres, the task of locating generic intertextuality on these levels is not unambiguous, but rather open to various interpretations.

In the case of reminiscence writings, intertextuality at the level of complex genre means that the writing or parts of it recall some other complex genres such as historiography, literary memoir and autobiography, documentary prose, or literary fiction. In the evacuation journey writings, as well as in Kilpi's memoirs, intertextuality of this kind may appear, for example, as the use of a factographic mode, which according to the narratologist Leona Toker is a typical feature of genres of documentary prose. Within the factographic mode Toker distinguishes "testimony", which builds on the principle of courtroom evidence and recounts the author's eyewitness observations, and "historiography", which recounts information obtained from other sources. (1997: 192). Both sides of the factographic mode are present in the reminiscence writings that I have analyzed. Indeed, reminiscence writings may be linked intertextually both to the genre of historiography and to the genre of testimony. The next example is written by a man who was born in 1933. The excerpt concerns the time after the Winter War, the first evacuation, and the first loss of Karelia when the Continuation War had just started:

Paluun teki mahdolliseksi uusi tilanne sotarintamalla. Rauhanteon jälkeen Neuvostoliitto ryhtyi painostamaan Suomea eri tavoin, vaatien yhä uusia oikeuksia itselleen. Toisaalta Saksa valmistautui sotaan Neuvostoliittoa vastaan. Hitler julistikin 22.6.1941 yleishyökkäyksen Idässä alkaneeksi. Jo 25.6. 41 Neuvostoliiton ilmavoimat tekivät massiivisen ilmahyökkäyksen kymmeneen Suomen kaupunkiin, muun muassa Helsinkiin ja Turkuun. Tämän lisäksi ilmahyökkäykset kohdistuivat myös Kaakkois-Suomen lentokentille. Tapahtuneen hyökkäyksen seurauksena Suomen eduskunta joutui toteamaan myöhään illalla 25.6. Suomen olevan sodassa Neuvostoliittoa vastaan. [...] Tilanteen Kannaksen rintamalla vakiinnuttua Hallitus teki päätöksen Kannaksen entisten asukkaiden takaisin muuton mahdollistamisesta. (SKS KRA LEM: 538–546. 2004, man born 1933.)

The new situation on the war front enabled the return. After the peace making, the Soviet Union started to pressure Finland in various ways, trying to claim more and more rights for itself. On the other hand, Germany was preparing for war against the Soviet Union. And so Hitler announced on 22 June 1941 that the general offensive in the East had started. The air force of the Soviet Union committed a massive air offensive on ten Finnish cities, among others Helsinki and Turku. The air offensives were also aimed at the airports of South-East Finland. As a result of this offensive, late on the evening of 25 June 1941, the Finnish Parliament was forced to note that Finland was in a war against the Soviet Union. [...] After the situation stabilized at the front on the Karelian Isthmus, the government decided to provide the former inhabitants a chance to move back.

This example connects the text in question intertextually to the genre of historiography as the writer depicts the past factually and precisely as concrete historical events from the war. This intertextual connection appears also in the precise coordinates of time and place and in the accurate naming. The past is reported from the perspective of a distant or omniscient narrator with a style that strives for objectivity and resembles the one prevailing in historiographies of war. Although the writer's role in the described events is not very obvious in this excerpt, his reason for choosing to write about the events from the war in accordance with historiographical conventions is purely autobiographical. He is recounting general war history in order to preface and explain why his family moved back to Karelia. Drawing on narrative techniques common to historiography, the writer connects his life history to the shared history of Finland. The rhetorical effect of this is firstly to demonstrate the writer's commitment to the truth, to say these things really happened; and secondly to give weight to the personal past, to say I was part of these crucial events of Finnish history. For Karelian evacuees, connecting personal experiences with shared national history legitimates and validates the trauma of the evacuation journey and the loss of home, and also gives the writer the authority to tell about the history. In some cases these links can also highlight the political relevance of the memories (Huttunen 2007: 182).

In addition to intertextual links with the genre of historiography, the factographic mode unfolds in evacuation journey writings, as well as in Kilpi's memoirs, as connections to the genres of literature of testimony. Toker states that the genre of literature of testimony can be defined in two ways. In its narrower sense, it reflects the ethical need of the writer, which often appears as testimonial accounts of devastating events and deeds. In its broader meaning, the term literature of testimony refers to eyewitness accounts. According to Toker, memoirs, autobiographies, diaries, notebooks, and letters are genres of literature of testimony, because they rather create historical documents by recording what writers have witnessed than being based on historical documents (1997: 192). In evacuation journey writings, recounting exact eyewitness observations, as well as stating the lack of detailed memories, serves to create intertextual links with testimony. The next example is written by a man born in 1929:

Ensimmäinen evakkomatkeni alkoi syys-lokakuun vaihteessa 1939 – päivämäärää en muista. [...] En muista vastustaneeni matkaa, sillä siihen aikaan lapset tyytyivät vanhempien tahtoon. [...] Pääsimme palaamaan kotiin kauniiseen syksyiseen Viipuriin – en tietenkään muista päivämäärää. [...] Emme me mukulat ymmärtäneet tilanteen vakavuutta, kun vanhemmat vaikka ehkä olivatkin jännittyneitä eivät meille pelkojaan paljastaneet. kun päiväkirjoja ei täytetty, eikä vanhempien ja muiden sukulaisten kanssa keskusteltu sen ajan tapahtumista, en muista olivatko koulut toiminnassa enää syys-lokakuussa. Arkistoista voisi tietoja saadakin, mutta ne eivät olisi vaikuttaneet reissuihini. (SKS KRA LEM: 334, man born 1929.)

My first evacuation journey began in September–October 1939 – I cannot remember the exact date. [...] I don't recall objecting to the journey, because in those days children had to obey their parents. [...] We were able to return home to a beautiful, autumnal Viborg – of course I don't remember the date. [...] We children didn't understand the severity of the situation because our parents, although they may have been nervous, didn't show us their fears. Because the diaries were not filled and the events of those times were not discussed with parents or relatives, I don't remember if the schools were open in September–October any more. It would be possible to get information from the archives, but it would not have influenced my trips.

In the excerpt, the writer repeatedly mentions his lack of exact information and memories about the details of the first evacuation journey. He is also uncertain about how he reacted to the news of having to leave home. Interestingly, this concern about the deficiency of factual information and emphasis on the limitations of memory serves a similar function to the eyewitness observations: both underline the writer's intention to tell the truth – and thus they function similarly to the intertextual links with the genre of historiography. However, their rhetorical mechanism is somewhat different. Accounts of eyewitness observations gain their substance from a wealth of elaborate details, whereas accounts that include admissions of forgetting are convincing because of their modest sincerity and honest imperfection, typical features of childhood impressions and memories. Still, both are used to give evidence of the child's experience of war and evacuation – topics that were left somewhat unacknowledged in public discussion as well as in historiography for decades after the war.

The genre of reminiscence writing is often also intertextually connected with the genre of literary fiction understood in a broad sense. This means that the writers strive for fictionality by using narrative conventions common in literary works – namely, altering perspectives, written dialogue, and indirect speech. (See Salmi-Niklander 2004: 175–179; Walsh 2007: 6–7, 15; Kaarlenkaski 2010: 366–376). For example in the children's evacuation journey writings intertextual connections with literary idylls and the chronotope of idyll are typical because the childhood memories of Karelia tend to be positive and virtually sublime. According to Bakhtin, idyll is one of the major chronotopes of novel, and it is “the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions”, at least regarding literature (1981: 84–85, 224–236, 250–251). In order to be effective, idylls require a non-idyllic opposition and therefore

they often also include the loss of the idyll (see Bakhtin 1981: 230, 233). The evacuation journey writings create a division between the times before and after the evacuation journey, which also represents the divide between the blissful existence in Karelia and the bleak days of exile outside it.

The writers generally describe the Karelia of their childhood as “Golden Karelia”, an idyllic place evoking nostalgia. Karelia represents childhood, innocence, peace, and harmony. It is a place where timeless time prevails and people live in harmony with nature and animals – in other words, descriptions of life dwell on the natural and the sublime (Bakhtin 1981: 224–236). These writings are intertextually connected with the genre of idyll and more generally with the genres of literary fiction because they are highly finalized texts replete with poetic expressions and descriptions. Another key characteristic is a lyrical tone full of sweetness and longing. Extensive and lyrical accounts of nature typically feature in these texts and intertextually connect them with idyll, as is evident in the next example, written by a woman born in 1930:

Syntymäpaikkaansahan ei voi kukaan valita. Minä kuitenkin synnyin juuri siellä, missä olisin varmaan jo äidin kohdussa ollessani halunnut syntyä. Minä synnyin siellä, missä vihreät metsiköt tuoksuivat männyn pihkalta, kuusen kirpeiltä neulasilta, koivujen mahlaisilta mesiltä, sametin pehmeiltä sammaleilta, hentoisilta metsän tähdiltä ja kaikelta paljolta, mikä lapsuuden muistoja kaunistaa. Sain tosiaankin syntyä maailman kauniimmassa kolkassa. (SKS KRA LEM: 400, woman born 1930.)

Nobody can choose their place of birth. I, however, was born exactly in the place where I probably already in my mother’s womb would have wanted to be born. I was born where the green forests were fragrant with the resin of pines, the crisp needles of spruces, the sappy nectar of birch trees, the moss as soft as velvet, the delicate chickweed wintergreens, and all the abundance that makes childhood memories so beautiful. I truly had the luck to be born in the most beautiful corner of the world.

Describing Karelia and childhood as idyllic also expresses a nostalgia, creating a contrast between the times prior to the evacuation journey and the times after it. The evacuation journey represents an essential dividing line in the narratives. The journey marks the starting point of difficulties and the end point of the “golden times” of childhood located in Karelia. This division also features in an account of the evacuation journey written by a woman born in 1930 as she continues her narrative:

Ei noille lapsuuden muistoille mikään vertoja vedä. Vaikka yrittäisin miten muistella tätä “uudempaa” aikaa, en vain löydä sitä ihanuuden tunnetta joka sisältyi noitten lapsuudenaikain jokaiseen muistorikkaaseen päivään. Miten vain parhaimmin muistuu mieleen ja niitä kaipaa ovat nuo rakkaat lapsuuden maisemat kukkapeltoineen, ja järven hopeaa hohtavine selkineen. Vieläpä pakolaisreissulla oleva “ensirakkauskin” tuntuu paljon mielenkiintoisemmalta kuin nuo jo vähän aikuisemmaksi tultuani kokemani poikasuhteet, nykyisestä avioliitostani puhumattakaan. (SKS KRA LEM: 419, woman born 1930.)

Nothing compares to those childhood memories. Even if I tried to reminisce about this “later time”, I cannot find the wonderful feeling that prevailed in each memory-filled day of childhood times. How it is that what comes to mind best and what one longs for are those dear childhood landscapes with flower fields and open lakes shining silver. Even my “first love” on the refugee trip feels a lot more interesting than those relationships with boys I experienced when I matured a bit, not to mention even my current marriage.

The narrative tone changes as the writer begins to describe the evacuation journey; as the story progresses, the temporal stratification also penetrates the narrative as the writer starts to compare later periods of life with childhood in Karelia. All of these shifts underscore the journey’s role as an essential borderline in the writer’s life as presented in narrative. This division also creates the idyll. (Savolainen 2012: 29; forthcoming.) The idyllic chronotope (see Bakhtin 1981: 224–225) combined with the actual loss of Karelia also has convergences with the concept of a biblical paradise; indeed, the whole complex relates strongly to nostalgia as well. Nostalgia about the lost place of home in the past does not concern only Karelian evacuees but is a typical feature of diasporic discourse in general and takes form in different practices as well as having several functions. (Lehto & Timonen 1993; Boym 2001; Armstrong 2004; Willson 2005; Basu 2006; Huttunen 2007; Fingerroos 2008; Niukko 2009; Savolainen forthcoming; see also Korkiakangas 1996; Cashman 2006; on historical inversion: Bakhtin 1981: 146–151.)

Intertextuality on the level of simple genre (which could also be called embedded intertextuality) means that units of text that represent simple genres, such as poems, jokes, proverbs, written dialogue, or references to passages from a simple genre, such as lines from a letter, a diary, or a song, are included in and embedded in a piece of reminiscence writing. For example, many authors of evacuation journey writings incorporate certain religious hymns or references to them in their texts. Typically these recurrent hymns<sup>17</sup> include the idea complex of a journey and a road as metaphors for human life, and this very same idea complex is also adopted as an essential part of the culture of Karelian evacuees in many different ways and it is repeated continuously. Therefore, the references to hymns in reminiscence writings not only refer to the typical contexts of the hymns that relate to the church and Christianity but also to the wider and shared discourse of Karelian evacuees. In other words, the hymns connect the writings into a general discourse shared by Karelian evacuees and thus link the writers to this community. In addition to this, the references to these hymns may have other functions as well. The hymns may, for instance, highlight the religious and humble nature of the evacuees, a people who resign themselves to the loss of home and for whom God is their only refuge in an otherwise unsafe situation. Despite their apparent humility, the tone of these writings is not submissive. Moreover, these hymns highlight the personal sacrifice that the evacuees made for the whole of Finland. (See Savolainen forthcoming.)



## *Conclusions*

Richard Bauman has said, “there is an operational tendency to restrict the notion [of genre] to those discursive forms and practices for which conventional expectation and textual boundedness, cohesion, and coherence are relatively and recognizably more apparent” (Bauman 1999: 85). In this article I have broadened the notion of genre to include a more complex and heterogenic form of discourse, namely, reminiscence writings. The rationale behind the reluctance to open the discussion on genre to discourses that are more versatile and variable in their features stems from the fact that genre can also be understood as a fixed collection of typical features of a given discourse. This kind of approach has undeniable advantages, especially when it comes to archival practices. But when we follow the Bakhtin Circle’s theories, the essence and benefit of the concept of genre is not to discover or to create typologies or fixed categories, but instead to open new vistas to the world of communication and poetic expression, a world which is thoroughly social.

Understanding the genre of reminiscence writing in a Bakhtinian way, in other words, as a flexible and layered framework of expectations, which is always and inherently dialogical, also has pragmatic benefits. The Bakhtin Circle’s genre theory beckons researchers to interpret texts not only as individual pieces but also as a network of texts in relation to each other. In this network the creation of meanings of linguistic and poetic expression is located in the relations between the texts and genres. Intertextuality is one example of meaning-making interconnectedness that relates to genres and their communication. In the case of the reminiscence writings about the childhood evacuation journey and Eeva Kilpi’s works, reading them as generically interconnected can allow us to see them as parts of certain historical and social continuums that form the contemporary world that these writings connect to. When it comes to memories of Karelia, this situation is attached to many kinds of ideologies, historical traumas, and narrative cultures with many kinds of testimonies and representations. Reminiscence writings are combinations of various linguistic materials, narrative forms and themes that all have a certain kind of communicative significance within the writing and in relation to the genre. Seeing individual writings as representatives of a genre does not necessarily mean that the individual writings bear or adhere to the meanings of their genre but rather that the individual writings shape the genre with their own individual meanings. This means that the genre of reminiscence writings includes the function of the narration as a focal point of interactive, communal, and personal meanings.

Reminiscence writings are not defined by their formal or thematic qualities. Of course it is necessary and useful to perceive typical formal and thematic features in order to classify, describe, and to become acquainted with a given body of materials, but when genre is understood in a Bakhtinian way, it is also a simplification to limit the concept only to these. Instead, relevant and defining dimensions of the genre of reminiscence writing are linked to the genre’s characteristic orientation toward the world. The



three essential features: (1) retrospectivity concentrating on a limited time period; (2) autobiographicality presented through a certain theme; and (3) an ancillary viewpoint on history, define the generic perspective on the world that is typical for reminiscence writings. By using Bakhtinian terms, both the topic (e.g. Karelia and the evacuations), and the viewpoint of the writings (e.g. reminiscences of childhood) are products of dialogism. Reminiscence writings are directed outwards, which means that they are inclined to provide evidence or give testimony and offer an alternative or ancillary perspective on the past, and hence they are always in dialogue with other interpretations and narratives of the past. A common feature in reminiscence writings as well as oral history texts and memoirs in general is the author's chance to write and re-write or process the account and to use literary devices in the creation of her/his narrative. In effect, the author of a piece of reminiscence writing is the person who takes a perspective and role in a certain situation that is in accordance with these principles.

These three qualities are also inextricably bound and thus inseparable. Furthermore, they are also general and not very exceptional, which then raises the question of how the genres of memoir and autobiography differ from the genre of reminiscence writings? Considered from the Bakhtinian understanding of genre, the search for fixed and absolute categories is basically futile, for the boundaries between genres are invariably unclear and open to interpretation, as the example of Eeva Kilpi's memoirs demonstrates. Very often, on the level of text and narration the most obvious difference between these genres may simply be one of name. Obviously, genres are bound to overlap; it is the interpreter and the context that ultimately define the genre of such borderline cases. As I see it, the overlaps and confluences between genres and the kinds of meanings, references, and impressions they may bear are far more interesting to explore than discrete generic qualities.

When we analyze the generic qualities of Kilpi's memoirs and fiction as well as those of the writings submitted to the children's evacuation journey collection and the linkages between them, it is fair to say that the boundaries between the complex genres of reminiscence writing, memoir, autobiography, and autofiction overlap and that the relationships of individual texts to these genres may be far from clear. How adjacent genres and their relationships appear in a certain work could perhaps be best described with a visual metaphor. Genres are transparent and partly overlapping, and the work is located in the area that they share. Hence, the work partakes in several qualities of each relevant genre but not in all of the qualities of any of them. When we follow the Bakhtin Circle's theories of genre, however, we cannot limit ourselves to a discussion of only works and genres: we also have to remember the importance of the context of reception and consider how that affects the interpretation of the genre of a given work. The text or utterance has the potential to represent several complex genres, but the context of both the production and the reception defines its genre at that particular moment. Ultimately, this also means that each reader interprets the genre of the text depending on the situation or context, which is on some level typical, recurrent, and social. As Medvedev puts it, "the poetic work, like every concrete utterance, is an inseparable unity of meaning and

reality based on the unity of the social evaluation which totally permeates it” (Bakhtin/Medvedev 1978: 125; Bakhtin 1986: 60–87). Owing to this social evaluation that mediates between abstract language and a certain historical reality of language, both genre and individual writings can never be seen as complete and fixed, but only partial and transitional (Bakhtin/Medvedev 1978: 125; Hanks 1987: 681).

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### NOTES

- 1 Later known as the Bakhtin Circle, this group of Russian scholars with a shared interest in language, literature, and other related topics collaborated and exchanged ideas in the 1920s that continue to endure in the study of language and culture. The most well-known of these thinkers were Mikhail Bakhtin, Pavel Medvedev, and Valentin Vološinov. In fact, the authorship of some of the works by members of the Bakhtin Circle remains uncertain. Recent research suggests that a number of these writings were jointly created – in keeping with the spirit of their theoretical and philosophical point of view – through dialogue, and then finalized in written form later by each individual according to his personal preferences. The works of the Bakhtin Circle focused on key questions concerning social life in general and artistic creation in particular, and one of the Circle’s central ideas was that linguistic production is dialogic and formed in the process of social interaction. (Brandist 2005.)
- 2 Abbreviations:  
SKS – *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura* [‘Finnish Literature Society’]  
KRA – *Kansanrunousarkisto* [‘Folklore Archives’]  
LEM – *Lasten evakkomatkat -keruu* [‘Children’s Evacuation Journey collection’]
- 3 There is no established English translation for the material produced in the context of collection campaigns. They have been called “folklore produced by the collecting competition” (Pöysä 1997: 435), “oral history texts” (Latvala, this volume) “reminiscence materials”, “oral history in the form of texts” (Latvala 2005: 274), “life stories”, “emotional experience stories” (Laurén 2006: 217), “theme-based writings”, “recollected narration” (Peltonen 1996). In international folkloristics, the established term that is sometimes used to describe these collected materials is “personal experience narrative”. I use the term “reminiscence writing” because it refers to their nature as written texts and written expression.
- 4 Depending on the genres in question, these meanings may be, for instance, political, ideological, or artistic, but on the whole they are rhetorical on some level.
- 5 Research on this kind of material is a prominent thread among contemporary Finnish folkloristics and other related fields. (For more examples, see Peltonen 1996; Pöysä 1997; Latvala 2005; Laurén 2006; Kaarlenkaski 2012; also Taira 2006.) In Finland the connection between the study of reminiscence writings and oral history research has typically been a strong one to the extent that the term oral-history research has generally been translated as *muistitietotutkimus* [‘memory-knowledge research’] or *muistitietohistoria* [‘memory-knowledge history’], terms

- which do not delimit the research material according to its orality or literacy. (Bornat 1994: 17–30; Peltonen 1996: 32–33; Fingerroos & Haanpää 2006: 26–30; Kalela 2006: 67–74; Pöysä 2006: 221–228; Abrams 2010: 27; Heimo 2010: 42–44.)
- 6 The evacuated Karelians and evacuations have been the subject of many investigations, e.g. Waris *et al.* 1952; Heikkinen 1989; Paukkunen 1989; Lehto & Timonen 1993; Sallinen-Gimpl 1994; Raninen-Siiskonen 1999; Armstrong 2004; Willman 2006; Fingerroos & Loipponen 2007; Fingerroos 2007; 2008; 2010; Kuusisto-Arponen 2008; 2009; Niukko 2009; Kananen 2010; Savolainen 2015.
  - 7 Vološinov 1973; Bakhtin/Medvedev 1978; Bakhtin 1981; 1986; on dialogicality, see also Todorov 1984; Lähteenmäki 1998; Allen 2000: 21–30; on the Bakhtin Circle, see Brandist 2005.
  - 8 Vološinov criticizes Saussurean linguistics and Medvedev criticizes formalist method in literary theory because, regardless of their other benefits, these theories disregard the social and historical dimensions of language. (For more on Russian scholarly thought from the late 1800s up to the 1930s, see Tihanov 1998.)
  - 9 The term oral history covers a wider range than the term reminiscence writing, as Alessandro Portelli has pointed out in his article about the genre of oral history. According to Portelli, oral history refers to: (1) the oral materials or the sources; (2) the discourse that the historians produce; and (3) the process wherein researcher and narrator meet in an interview context and jointly produce these materials (Portelli 1998: 23; Pöysä 2006: 231–232). As Portelli suggests, oral history not only refers to the “text” and the process of making the “text” but also to the “text” made by the researcher.
  - 10 According to Lynn Abrams and Joanna Bornat, *inclusivity* and *political instrumentality* can be regarded as the factors that distinguish oral history from autobiography (see Bornat 1994: 17–30; Abrams 2010: 27). However, in Finland the difference between autobiographies and reminiscence writings or oral history is not as striking as it is in the examples of Abrams and Bornat. In Finland autobiographies have not only been written by the “rich and famous”; moreover, their legitimacy does not derive from the social status of the writers; instead, there are numerous autobiographies to be found in archives that are written by “common people” and the majority of them have been collected in a similar fashion to the reminiscence writings.
  - 11 Fictionality does not refer to the referentiality of the account but is understood as a narrative or rhetorical device typical of written narration (see further Walsh 2007).
  - 12 In addition to this dimension and with it, reminiscence writings may also be artistically ambitious texts or seek to process personal experiences and emotions. (Latvala 2005: 34–36; Laurén 2006; Kaarlenkaski 2012; Latvala & Laurén 2012; Savolainen 2012; 2015: 103–138.)
  - 13 On their back covers these works are described with several terms that refer to their genre, such as *puolidokumentti* [‘half-document’], *muisteluteos* [‘reminiscence book’], *kaunokirjallinen dokumentti* [‘literary document’], *muistelmaromaani* [‘reminiscence novel’], and *suuri suomalainen sotamuistelmasarja* [‘major Finnish war memoir series’].
  - 14 Doubrovsky 2001 [1977]: 10; 1993: 34; Fokkema 1984: 37–56; McHale 1987: 9–10, 202–203, 206; Doubrovsky & Ireland 1993: 45–46; Makkonen 1997; Hughes 2002: 567; Koivisto 2005: 178–179, 182–183; Zipfel 2005: 36–37. The roots of the concept of autofiction have been (quite unanimously) located in the foreword of the novel *Fils* (1977) by the French writer and literary scholar Serge Doubrovsky. Later, autofiction becomes associated with fictive autobiographies, such as *Roland Barthes* (1975) by Roland Barthes (Hughes 2002: 566; Koivisto 2005: 178–179; Zipfel 2005: 36; Koivisto 2011: 12). Doubrovsky coined the concept autofiction as a result of his frustration over Philippe Lejeune’s (1989) strict definition of the genre of autobiography as a prose narrative that aims at and requires biographical continuity.

- (Dobrovsky 1993: 33–34; Dobrovsky & Ireland 1993: 44–45; Hughes 2002: 567; Koivisto 2011: 12, 16–17.) The typical example of this kind of autobiography is *The Confessions* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The modern western autobiography was defined as a distinct genre and became established between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, even though the phenomenon itself is not new. (Lejeune 1989; Kosonen 2000: 14–15; 2007: 11–12; Anderson 2001: 1.) The relationship between autobiography, fiction, and referential narration has also intrigued many scholars of literature and autobiography (e.g. Genette 1991: 82–83; Cohn 1999; Smith & Watson 2001: 186).
- 15 Sometimes the genre is also called modern autobiography.
- 16 For example, Kirsteva 1980; Briggs & Bauman 1992; Genette 1992; 1997a; 1997b; on the study of the term intertextuality, see Allen 2000. Bakhtin does not use the concept of intertextuality, only dialogicality. The term intertextuality was coined by Julia Kristeva in the mid 1960s in her essays introducing the works of Bakhtin. Kristeva and other French post-structuralists' understanding of intertextuality as a textual phenomenon differs from Bakhtin's idea of dialogicality as entirely contextual and communicative. Kristeva limits intertextuality to the world of texts and sees it as an infinite allusiveness of texts. Kristeva's ideas are more generally aligned with post-structuralist discussions of texts devoid of human actors, creators, or social contexts (see Kristeva 1980; Hebel 1989: 1; Parry 1998: 82; Saariluoma 1998: 7–10; Allen 2000: 14–15; also Pesonen 1991: 32–34, 45).
- 17 For example, Hymns 631a and 631b, *Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon Virsikirja* (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church Hymnal) 1986.

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## 8. The Chronotope of the Legend in Astrid Lindgren's *Sunnanäng*

### Toward an Intergeneric Level of Bakhtinian Chronotopes

The relationships between folklore and literature are multiple and varied, as are the approaches taken in studying them. Generally, three distinct approaches have been adopted: viewing folklore as some kind of protoliterature, preceding written literature in time (and in early folklore research also having been superseded by it); construing folklore as a cultural resource for authors that is sometimes depicted as virtually impossible to avoid incorporating into literary works (the lore in lit approach); and finally, regarding folklore and literature as parallel art forms (Brown 1998: xxxii–xxxvii; Bacchilega 2012: 448–456). In this article, I primarily draw on the second and third approaches. In the latter case, folklore and literature are seen to share important strategies for shaping the material, whereas in the former, passages in literary texts are compared to items of documented folklore in order to elucidate the impact of folklore on literary meaning-making. As a case study, I use the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren (1907–2002), the world famous writer of many classic children's books, such as *Pippi Longstocking*, *Emil of Lönneberga* and *The Brothers Lionheart*. At present, 150 million copies of her books have sold worldwide, and have been translated into 95 languages (Saltkråkan 2013).

The fact that Astrid Lindgren was intimately acquainted with the oral tradition of the province of Småland where she grew up is well attested. Her father and mother, Samuel August Eriksson and Hanna Jonsson, passed on the more realistic oral genres, such as personal-experience narratives and anecdotes, whereas her paternal grandmother, Ida Ingström, told her grandchildren many belief legends, ghost stories in particular (Lindgren 1984: 10; Ruhnström 1996: 13–15). One of these, the ghastly legend of Skinn Skerping, was Ida Ingström's *pièce de résistance* (Lindgren *et al.* 1992: 45), and Lindgren gave her own variant of the story in the book entitled *Skinn Skerping – det hemskaste spöket i Småland* ['The Ghost of Skinny Jack']. In an article on oral traditions in Lindgren's oeuvre, Bengt af Klintberg has contended that Lindgren stayed close to the oral tradition in this work; she acts like a traditional narrator would (af Klintberg 1996: 28–29, 45). In her other works, the extent of the literary adaptation, or re-situation (de Caro & Jordan 2004: 6), of folkloric material varies. The use of oral genres is quite prominent in the Emil of Lönneberga books (Edström 1992; Nettervik

1996), and snippets and reminiscences of traditional songs appear in many of her works (Gustafsson 1996).

In this article, I examine how the chronotope of the legend has been utilised in two short stories from the collection *Sunnanäng* ['South Meadows']: "Sunnanäng" ['The Red Bird'], and "Spelar min lind, sjunger min näktergal" ['My Nightingale Is Singing']. Owing to the lack of space, I have to postpone the analysis of a third story, "Tu tu tu" (these are nonsense words from a nursery rhyme). The last story of the collection, "Junker Nils av Eka" ['Junker Nils of Eka'], is quite different in character, with references to chivalric romances rather than folklore, and will not be considered here either. This collection has been rather overlooked in Lindgren's literary production among the general public, but the stories in it possess a sense of mystery and suggestive fascination that marks the beginnings of a pervasive trait in her later works: the bittersweet combination of grief and ecstasy (Edström 1997: 110–111). I have primarily chosen these stories for their brevity, as it is my conviction that a sustained analysis of the construction of chronotopes in Lindgren's stories is required. This is because they are usually more complex than they seem at first sight, and a superficial examination of them would not further our understanding of her art, and of the role of folklore in shaping it.

My hypothesis is that it is the chronotope of the legend in particular that endows these stories with their peculiar ambience. To some extent, the formative power of the oral legend on these narratives has been recognised (Edström 1996: 50), but not how pervasive this influence is. I believe this is because the issue has not been framed in terms of chronotopes, only in terms of the folkloric legend motifs and themes employed.

### *Chronotope, Genre and Intertext*

Mikhail Bakhtin defined the chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 1986a: 84). Thus, time and space are not studied in isolation, but as the shared context within which literary characters live and act; the chronotope materially affects the way in which human beings and the world in which they live can be portrayed. Bakhtin was particularly concerned with the possibilities for character development, which he found rather scant in all literary genres except the novel.

Bakhtin regarded the temporal dimension of the chronotope as primary in literary narrative, and although the universal validity of this *a priori* position has been challenged, it remains relevant to the stories considered here. (Bakhtin 1986a: 85; Salvestroni 1997: 361) However, in some instances it is not easy to determine if the spatial or the temporal dimension is dominant, and in these cases it is not my objective to try to resolve this question, as I do not view the issue of primacy as important.

A fully fleshed-out chronotope should incorporate all aspects of time, i.e., provide a genuine sense of the past, present and future (Falconer 1998: 701). Aberrations from this pattern represent significant manipulations of

the structure of the chronotope. In his discussion of historical inversion, for example, Bakhtin points to the effects of “mythological” thinking involving paradisiac or Golden Age images on the apperception of the future: when the ideal life or society has been located in the past, the future becomes “empty and fragmented”, as it is no longer capable of embodying this ideal. (Bakhtin 1986a: 147–148.) The weight attributed to the past, present and future respectively is a crucial facet of the stories studied here, and it is a decisive one for how the characters are represented in terms of their possibilities in life, and of the rules regulating their interaction.

As is well known, Bakhtin also regarded the chronotope as constitutive of genre (Bakhtin 1986a: 84). In this article, I treat the chronotope as an important element in the active construction of genre, a process I analyse in line with Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman’s theory of intertextual gaps (1992). They argue that narrators actively reconstruct and reconfigure genres by selecting and foregrounding particular elements of a generic model while suppressing others. Thus, the fit between a text and the generic model is not complete; there is always a gap, and these intertextual gaps can either be minimised by the narrator, to decrease the distance between text and genre, or maximised, in order to increase the distance. (Briggs & Bauman 1992: 148–149.)

The active constitution of genre was not taken into account by Bakhtin in his essay on the chronotope, but as it is partly implicit in his later work on speech genres (Bakhtin 1986b: 64), I do not consider it far-fetched to apply the notion to the theory of chronotopes. Here Bakhtin’s notion of primary and secondary genres becomes pertinent. Secondary genres tend to be longer artistic forms that absorb and digest other, primary genres, which Bakhtin viewed as rooted in an everyday reality. (Bakhtin 1986b: 61–62.) Although the distinction between “artistic” and “real-life” genres is not always apt, the idea of secondary genres absorbing other genres is a useful one for the study of short stories, which are constructed through such absorption (for further discussion of this pair of concepts, see Savolainen, this volume).

However, I believe that the chronotope of a text belonging to a secondary genre is not only created through the fitting of the text to the generic model, but also by the specific intertexts – the other utterances – that are being absorbed and transformed (Kristeva 1978: 84–85). When Bakhtin made a distinction between the chronotopes of whole genres and of individual motifs, he did not address the delicate question of the balance between these chronotopes. At which point can the chronotopes of individual motifs be said to affect and actually transform the chronotopes of genres? I think that point might lie in the intersection of intertext and generic model, in the active construction of genre, and hence of chronotopes.

In this attempt to sort out the implications of chronotopes for the study of folklore genres, the theory of chronotopes constitutes a complement to the already well-established folkloristic adaptations of intertextual theory (see e.g. Tarkka 1993; 2005; Skjelbred 1998; Ingemark 2004), and Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman’s theory of intertextual gaps. Notions of time and space are fundamental to our perception of the world, and guide us in situating

ourselves in it. If Bakhtin is correct in his assertion that they also influence our view of man, an exploration of chronotopes is necessary to understand popular conceptions of man and the nature and limits of human agency as represented in folklore (see Ingemark 2006: 2). Even though conceptions of time-space were not explicitly discussed by Briggs and Bauman in their presentation of the model of intertextual gaps, it is nevertheless elastic and inclusive enough to easily accommodate an examination of chronotopes as well. This enterprise is facilitated by the fact that all three theories are interconnected: Julia Kristeva based her notion of intertextuality on Bakhtin's conception of the word (Kristeva 1978), and Briggs and Bauman drew on both Kristevan intertextuality and Bakhtin's late work on speech genres to formulate their views on genre. Even one of the guiding metaphors of intertextuality – the idea of the text as an intersection of textual surfaces (Kristeva 1978: 83–84) – is inherently chronotopic, as it refers to a textual space that is riddled with many layers of meaning, some of them being carried over from prior historical and cultural contexts.

### *The Generic Chronotope of Short Stories and Belief Legends*

The generic chronotope of Astrid Lindgren's stories mostly conforms to the patterns of the modernist short story. This includes structuring the story around the revelation of a universal truth which ultimately transcends time, i.e., which is essentially achronotopic. There is also a tendency to privilege the experience of individual temporalities over the passage of "public" time. The formative influence of a sense of imminent closure – which is due to the brevity of the form – that has been emphasised is visible as well. (Falconer 1998: 703–705.) In other respects, Lindgren's stories have affinities with the chronotopes of the contemporary short story. In her analysis of Martin Amis's collection of short stories *Einstein's Monsters*, Rachel Falconer points to the way in which stories clustering around a common theme, the threat of nuclear holocaust, taken together can voice different scenarios of a post-nuclear war future, while remaining unconnected by a temporal sequence: they induce a sense of perceiving the present branching out into numerous possible futures. (Falconer 1998: 709.) By virtue of the shared first words of Lindgren's stories, "För länge sen, i fattigdomens dagar..." ['Long ago, in the days of poverty...'], an analogous effect can be seen. The stories are not connected sequentially, but they all branch out from this shared point *in the past*: thus, the collection grows out from this common chronotopic centre in different directions, forming a four-pointed star.

The initial chronotope of the two stories studied is a dreary one. It is highly realistic, complete with orphaned children, disease and starvation, lice and potatoes dipped in herring pickle – with no herring in it. It is a world in which everything can be ruined: the happy home, one's livelihood, all joy and beauty in life. It is a world in which children are defenceless against the arbitrary authority of adults, who deny them the right to play ("The Red Bird") and refuse to shelter them when they are in need ("My Nightingale Is Singing").

The reason I compare the chronotope of these stories to the oral legend is, apart from the similarities in setting with historical legends of disease and famine, the solution proposed to the children's problems and the context in which it is advanced. In both stories, the children attain happiness through some kind of supernatural experience: entering another paradisiac world ("The Red Bird"), or metamorphosing into a linden tree ("My Nightingale Is Singing"). As Max Lüthi has suggested, the human world and the otherworld are portrayed in divergent ways in the folktale and the legend. In the folktale, humans and supranormal creatures basically share the same world: there is no obvious boundary between them. Thus, when humans experience a supernatural encounter, this is no cause for surprise. In the legend, there is a distance between the worlds that has to be overcome in some way. Not just anyone can find his way to the supranormal sphere, and supranormal experiences inspire fear or wonder. (Lüthi 1962: 27; 1992: 12.) However, when the worlds do meet in the legend, there is often a seamless intertwining of the two: the passage from the ordinary human world to the otherworld can go unnoticed at first, but is then revealed by some unexpected occurrence. This tendency is also visible in Lindgren's texts.

The chronotopes of folklore are still under-researched, and much of the work that has been done has – perhaps not surprisingly, given its derivation from literary studies – tended to focus on the intersection of folklore and literature. In an earlier article, I have studied the motif of enchantment in oral belief legends in terms of chronotopes, suggesting that the utility of the concept lies in the possibility to formulate fundamental cultural conceptions of the nature and destiny of man, which were influenced by religious literature in this case (Ingemark 2006). Patricia Aelbrecht has examined how electronic travelogues on trans-Atlantic sailing articulate the voyage as chronotopic (Aelbrecht 2013), and Madhu Krishnan has investigated the rise of new ways of incorporating orality and oral tradition into Nigerian contemporary literary narrative (Krishnan 2014). Recently, discussions on chronotopic discourses of race have touched on their role in Cuban cultural performances (Wirtz 2011), and in the struggles of black communities in the US to access environmental justice resources (Blanton 2011).

This relative dearth of research implies that the terms used in this article, such as *chronotope of the legend*, *Märchenchronotope*, etc., are of my own invention, and that they have been introduced to cover important chronotopes that have hitherto largely remained unnamed. It is nevertheless vital to do so, as an understanding of the construction of time-space in oral narrative is just as fundamental to our grasp of its character, purpose and meanings as it is in literature (see also Savolainen, this volume).

### *The Red Bird*

"The Red Bird" is about two orphans, Anna and Matthew, who have come to live on a farm when their mother has died. The farmer starves them and forces them to work constantly. He denies them the leisure to play, and is even reluctant to send them to school, but since primary education is



compulsory in Lindgren's taleworld, he cannot actually refuse them the right to attend school.

Being the first story in the collection, this is also the first time we encounter what I have termed the initial chronotope of all four stories in the collection:

För länge sen, i fattigdomens dagar, var det två små syskon som blev ensamma i världen. Men barn kan inte vara ensamma i världen, någon måste de vara hos, och därför kom Mattias och Anna från Sunnanäng till bonden i Myra. [...]

“Jag får visst aldrig mer något roligt i mitt barnaliv”, sa Anna och grät, där hon satt på mjölkpallen.

“Nej, här i Myra är alla dagar grå som sorkarna i lagårn”, sa Mattias.

I fattigdomens dagar var det ont om mat i gårdarna, och bonden i Myra trodde heller inte, att barnmagar behövde något annat än potatis doppad i sillake.

(Lindgren 1959: 5–6.)

Long ago, in the days of poverty, two little siblings were left alone in the world. But children cannot be alone in the world, they have to be with somebody, and therefore Matthew and Anna from South Meadows came to the farmer of Myra. [...]

“I'll surely never get any fun in my child's life”, Anna said and wept as she was sitting on the milking stool.

“No, here at Myra all days are grey as the voles in the cow-house”, Matthew said.

In the days of poverty, food was scarce on the farms, and the farmer of Myra did not think that children's tummies needed more than potatoes dipped in herring pickle either.

Life as an existence of endless toil and drudgery is made quite explicit in this opening. It is so endless that it actually seems to leech the present of all sense of concreteness and presence. For unlike the chronotopes associated with the literary depiction of agricultural labour, which do possess meaning for those who perform the work – it allows them to live and eat – Anna and Matthew's performance of their work has no such intrinsic meaning (cf. Bakhtin 1986a: 207). They are not allowed to drink the milk they extract with their own hands, and they have no share in the other produce of the farm, except the potatoes.

When Anna and Matthew are to start school in the winter, they hope to find some relief from their perpetual sorrow and labour. This proves to be an illusion, as the farmer of Myra still expects them to do all their work, and they are ashamed of their meagre packed lunch, consisting of cold potatoes when the other children get sandwiches with ham and cheese, or even pancakes. (Lindgren 1959: 12–13.) One day, when Anna has lost all hope, a miracle occurs:

Men en dag stannade Anna mitt på vägen och tog Mattias hårt i armen.

“Mattias,” sa hon, “det hjälpte inte med skolan. Jag har inget roligt i mitt barnaliv, och jag önskar jag inte levde till våren.”

Just som hon hade sagt det, såg de den röda fågeln. Han satt på marken, han var så röd mot den vita snön, så illande, illande röd mot det vita. Och han sjöng så klart, att snön på granarna brast sönder i tusen snöstjärnor, och de föll till marken helt tyst och stilla.

Anna sträckte sina händer mot fågeln och grät.

“Han är röd,” sa hon, “å, han är röd.”

Mattias grät också och sa:

“Han vet nog inte ens, att det finns grå sorkar i världen.”

Då lyfte fågeln sina röda vingar och flög. Anna tog Mattias hårt i armen och sa:

“Om den fågeln flyger ifrån mig, då lägger jag mig ner här i snön och dör.”

(Lindgren 1959: 14.)

But one day Anna stopped in the middle of the road and gripped Matthew’s arm strongly.

“Matthew,” she said, “school didn’t help. I have no fun in my child’s life, and I wish I didn’t live until spring.”

Just as she’d said this, they saw the red bird. He was sitting on the ground, he was so red against the white snow, so bright, bright red against the white. And he sang so clearly that the snow on the firs exploded in a thousand stars of snow, and they fell quite silently and serenely to the ground.

Anna stretched out her hands toward the bird and wept.

“He’s red,” she said, “oh, he’s red.”

Matthew wept as well and said:

“He probably doesn’t even know there are grey voles in the world.”

Then the bird lifted its red wings and flew away. Anna gripped Matthew’s arm firmly and said:

“If that bird flies away from me, I’ll lay myself down in the snow to die.”

Right there on the road, on the way home from school – and a long and cold way it is – two worlds meet: the human world and the supernatural one. The chronotope of the road is, as Bakhtin noted, a fertile one, and highly appropriate for depicting random encounters, such as is the case here. This chronotope is charged with emotions and values, and it is also “a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement”, both in the most concrete and in a more metaphorical sense. (Bakhtin 1986a: 243–244.) The chance encounter with the red bird serves as an emotional catalyst: it prompts Anna and Matthew to find renewed hope, and the appearance of the bird itself evokes an intense emotional response. Both children weep when they see it, and the red colour assumes a strong symbolic significance in relation to the greyness of Anna and Matthew. Red represents the fullness of life, play and happiness (see Edström 1997). At this very point, their existence begins to change. The chronotope of the belief legend enters their world, and it transforms everything:

Där var framför dem en hög mur och i muren en port. Porten stod på glänt som om någon nyss hade gått igenom och glömt att stänga efter sig. Snön låg i drivor på marken och vinter dagen var frostig och kall, men över muren sträckte ett körsbärsträd sina blommande vita grenar. [...] Och då såg de den röda fågeln, det var det första som de såg. Han satt i en björk, och björken hade små gröna, krusiga blad, och det var vår. All vårens ljuvlighet var över dem i ett klingande

huj [...]. Ja, det var många barn där som lekte [...]. Och de hade röda och blå och vita kläder och lyste som vårblommor i det gröna gräset.

“De vet nog inte ens att det finns grå sorkar i världen,” sa Anna sorgset. Men i samma ögonblick såg hon, att Mattias också hade röda kläder, hon hade själv röda kläder, de var inte längre grå som sorkarna i lagårn.

(Lindgren 1959: 17–18.)

In front of them there was a high wall and in the wall a gate. The gate was ajar as if someone had just passed through and forgotten to close it again. The snow was lying in drifts on the ground and the day was frosty and cold, but over the wall a cherry tree stretched its blooming white branches. [...] And then they saw the red bird, it was the first thing they saw. He was sitting in a birch, and the birch had tiny green, curled leaves, and it was spring. All the sweetness of spring was over them in a resounding second [...]. Yes, many children were there to play [...]. And they had red and blue and white clothes and shone like spring flowers in the green grass.

“I don't think they know that there are grey voles in this world,” Anna said sadly. But at that moment she saw that Matthew also had red clothes, she herself had red clothes, they were no longer grey as the voles in the cow-house.

The otherworld is clearly separated from the human sphere in this passage: the children are only able to find the supranormal sphere by following the red bird. According to Max Lüthi, this is typical for the oral legend, in contradistinction to the folktale in which the two spheres essentially belong to the same world (see Lüthi 1962: 27; 1992: 12). In describing the passage between the worlds, the contrast Lindgren introduces between the winter landscape of the human world – constructed as a reflection of



*Figure 1. The cherry tree stands at the boundary of the paradisiac otherworld of South Meadows and the squalid social world of Anna and Matthew at the farm of Myra. (Reproduced with permission courtesy of Ilon Wikland AB.)*

the barrenness and coldness of the social world in which the children live – and the blossoming spring of the otherworld is stark. The cherry tree itself stands on the very boundary of the worlds: it is liminal, being rooted in the soil of the paradisiac otherworld, but spreading its lovely branches into this world. (Cf. Gaare & Sjaastad 2004: 138.)

The chronotope of the otherworld is one of plenitude, contentment and emotional attachment. The children are allowed to play freely, and the figure of Mother provides both food and gentle care. She welcomes Anna and Matthew into their midst, and encourages them to come back when they leave. They realise they will soon be late for their chores at Myra, and return to the cold and hunger of the human world:

Då följde Mattias och Anna de andra barnen över ängen bort till en liten stuga, och där var Mor. Man kunde se, att det var Mor, hon hade en mors ögon och en mors händer, och hennes ögon och händer räckte till för alla barnen som trängdes omkring henne. Hon hade gräddat pannkakor åt dem och hon hade bakat bröd, hon hade kärnat smör och hon hade ystat ost, allt fick barnen äta av så mycket de ville, och de satt i gräset, medan de åt.

“Detta var det godaste som jag har ätit i mitt barnaliv,” sa Anna.

Men Mattias blev blek med ens och sa:

“Gu’t röste oss om vi inte är hemma vid mjölkdays.”

Och nu fick de brått, nu kom de ihåg, att de hade varit alltför länge borta. De tackade för vad de hade fått att äta, och Mor strök dem över kinden och sa: “Kom snart igen!”

[...] Men utanför porten låg snön djup och skogen frostig och kall i vinterskymningen. Mattias tog Anna vid handen, och så sprang de ut genom porten. Strax var kölden över dem, men också hungern, det var som om de aldrig hade ätit några pannkakor och som om de aldrig hade fått något bröd.

(Lindgren 1959: 21–22.)

Then Matthew and Anna followed the other children over the meadow to a little cottage, and there was Mother. You could see that it was Mother, she had a mother’s eyes and a mother’s hands, and her eyes and hands were there for all the children who were flocking around her. She had made pancakes for them and she had been baking bread, she had churned butter and she had made cheese; all of this the children were allowed to eat of as much as they liked, and they were sitting in the grass while they were eating.

“This was the most delicious [food] I’ve eaten in my child’s life,” Anna said.

But Matthew suddenly grew pale and said:

“God help us if we aren’t home for milking.”

And now they were in a hurry, now they remembered they had been away for too long. They said thanks for the food they had been given to eat, and Mother caressed their cheeks and said: “Come back soon!”

[...] But outside the gate the snow was deep and the forest frosty and cold in the winter twilight. Matthew took Anna by the hand, and they ran out through the gate. Soon the cold was over them, but hunger too, it was as if they had never eaten any pancakes or been given any bread.

The paradisiac world of this *Sunnanäng* [‘South Meadows’] rests on an idyllic chronotope, which Bakhtin characterises as a little spatial world

“limited and sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places” (Bakhtin 1986a: 225; see also Savolainen, this volume). This characterisation certainly fits South Meadows; it is wholly self-contained. Unlike idylls in a completely thisworldly setting, the link between place and the succession of generations is not so prominent in Lindgren’s story in the sense that all generations would be visibly present in the otherworld. Mother and her children do nevertheless represent this idea in condensed form. The nurturing aspect of Mother that is emphasised in the passage quoted above actualises another important aspect of the idyll, according to Bakhtin: the association of food and children. Food and drink is social, or rather family, in nature in the idyll, and Bakhtin relates this to the tendency of the idyll to transform agricultural labour into life events in the lives of the characters: they consume the produce of their labour (Bakhtin 1986a: 227). In Lindgren, the serving of food and drink is closely connected to the image of the good family, and in South Meadows, the children are not part of the labour force that produces this food. This is in stark contrast to the situation at the farm of Myra: the children had to work to produce the food, but were not allowed to consume the fruits of their own labour.

Bakhtin also links the role of children in the idyllic chronotope to the notion of the beginnings of growth and the renewing of life (Bakhtin 1986a: 227). This trait is certainly present in Lindgren’s story: the children do represent the beginnings of growth and the renewing of life. However, implicit in this idea is the expectation that they will eventually grow up to become adults and make their own contribution to the succession of generations. Whether this ever happens in South Meadows is doubtful. Though it is never stated explicitly, my impression is that the children might remain children forever, and this would undermine the orientation to the future – or a sense of becoming – that is so characteristic of the idyll. (Waithe 2002: 462.)

If the children remain children in this otherworld, this assimilates the chronotope in Lindgren’s story to the chronotope of historical inversion, in which the future is leached of all weight. It differs from the common manifestation of this chronotope in one crucial respect, however, and that is in its stress on the ideal form of time as an eternal present, not as a paradise or Golden Age located in the past. (Bakhtin 1986a: 147.) In Lindgren, the past is rather transmuted into a distant memory. Anna and Matthew forget for a long while that they have to return to Myra, but eventually recall this at the last possible moment.

I argue that this is because the image of this paradisiac otherworld is modelled on folkloric descriptions of such realms. These tend to depict the otherworld as a world of wealth and plenty. This plenitude is usually material in nature in oral legends: the abode of the troll is standing on sixteen silver pillars (LUF 2354: 2), as in a legend from the parish of Mistelås, or filled with shining objects, a golden spinning-wheel in particular, as in a legend set in the parish of Karlslunda (LUF 971: 5). In Lindgren’s story, the children might be deprived of virtually all material comfort, but the loss they really feel deeply is that of the right to play and be children. Hence, their paradisiac world is a world of fun and play. However, the image of the nurturing

supranormal female giving children their favourite food does have parallels in oral tradition, as in the legend from the parish of Rumskulla quoted below. In Lindgren, the sandwich topped with honey has been replaced by pancakes:

En flicka i Vintzelholm en halv mil från Rumskulla kyrka blev enligt sägen bergtagen ett par tre dagar. Sedan man ringt i kyrkklockorna fann man henne dock i skogen ej lån[gt] från det berg, där hon troddes varit. Flickan talade om att hon varit hemma hos en främmande “moster” och fått “honungsmörgås” av henne. (LUF 1797: 55a–55b)

A girl in Vintzelholm fifty kilometres from Rumskulla church was according to legend taken into the hill for some three days. After ringing the church bells, they found her in the forest not far from the hill in which she was believed to have been. The girl said that she had been in the home of an unknown “aunt” and received “a sandwich topped with honey” from her.

The story ends with Anna and Matthew entering the otherworld of South Meadows for perpetuity, closing the door behind them to seal this paradisiac world off from the human world of suffering that they know (Lindgren 1959: 25–26). In a sense, it represents a return to the happy childhood that they experienced before their mother’s death, but it is enhanced and extended. For even though Lindgren never explicitly describes the past of Anna and Matthew, the life they were living when their mother was still alive, it must be reasonably assumed that it was a fairly happy – albeit materially modest – life, as this is a necessary backdrop to the horrible existence at Myra. On one level, the drudgery of Myra is implicitly constructed against a past happier life, and on another, more explicit level, against a general notion of what a child’s life should be like. Life at Myra is the antithesis of life fit for a child; even death is preferable, as Anna repeatedly says. This is the universal truth that the story is designed to illustrate: the good mother saves children gone astray from the biting cold of darkness and toil into the world of light and play. (Gaare & Sjaastad 2004: 138.)

### *My Nightingale Is Singing*

In “My Nightingale Is Singing” we are introduced to Malin, an eight-year-old girl who has lost her parents to tuberculosis. Since the farmers of Norka parish in which she lives fear she carries the disease as well, they refuse to take her in, and she is forced to move to the local workhouse (Lindgren 1959: 27). This is not a proper environment for a young girl, and Malin is horrified by the ugliness of the place:

Men här i fattigstugan var det så fult att man kunde gråta åt det, och utanför fönstret fanns bara ett magert potatisland, inget blommande äppelträd och ingen liljekonvaljelund. [...] Malin vaknade framåt morgonen, och i det kalla grå gryningsljuset såg hon vägglossens skaror spatsera på tapeten. Nu vände de



hem till sina gömmen och springor, men nästa natt skulle de komma tillbaka och mätta sig på Norka fattighjon. (Lindgren 1959: 31.)

But here in the workhouse everything was so ugly that it made you cry, and outside the window lay only a meagre plot planted with potatoes, no apple trees in bloom and no grove of lilies-of-the-valley. [...] Malin woke in the morning, and in the cold grey light of dawn she saw the hordes of lice walking on the wallpaper. Now they returned home to their dens and cracks, but the next night they would come back and satisfy their hunger on the paupers of Norka.

The chronotope of this world is constructed around the motifs of ugliness and hopelessness. They deprive the present of all meaning, and situate a happier existence in the past, when Malin did possess the things that made her life beautiful: an apple tree in bloom, and a grove of lilies-of-the-valley, a cupboard painted with roses and a blue chandelier, not to mention mother's newly baked bread. (Lindgren 1959: 30.)

The world of the workhouse is not a world in which Malin feels at home; she is an observer of this world, but does not engage with it emotionally. There is always a psychological distance between herself and the environment of the workhouse. This is somewhat reminiscent of the chronotope of the ancient adventure novel of everyday life discussed by Bakhtin, in which the hero is cast into the everyday world as a form of punishment. He remains an outsider, and eavesdrops on everyday life from the vantage point of a detached observer. Everyday life is then a condition from which he has to "liberate himself". (Bakhtin 1986a: 111, 120–121.) Likewise, the "everyday life" embodied in the workhouse is a condition from which Malin seeks to escape, but she does not suffer this degradation as a punishment. It is more the result of chance, and in this respect, the chronotope resembles that of the ancient Greek romance, which was entirely predicated on the vicissitudes of chance, according to Bakhtin (1986a: 94–95).

Malin is described as a distanced observer, but also as a paradigmatic folktale heroine with a good heart:

Men Malin hade ett gott hjärta och försökte vara lillpiga åt dem alla. När Höns-Hilma inte kunde knyta skobanden med sina förvärkta fingrar, då var det Malin som knöt dem åt henne, när Kära Hjärtans tappade sina nystan, då var det Malin som hämtade dem åt henne, och när Jocke Kis ängslades för rösterna som han hörde inne i sitt huvud, då var det Malin som gav honom lugn och tröst. Men sig själv kunde hon inte trösta, ty för den som inte kunde leva utan något vackert, fanns i Norka fattigstuga ingen tröst att få. (Lindgren 1959: 35.)

But Malin had a good heart and tried to be the little maid of them all. When Hen-Hilma could not tie her shoelaces with her aching fingers, then Malin was the one to tie them for her, when Oh Dear accidentally dropped her balls of yarn, then Malin was the one to fetch them for her, and when Jocke Kis was anguished by the voices in his head, then Malin was the one to give him peace and solace. But herself she could not console; for anyone not able to live without beauty, there was no consolation to be had in the workhouse of Norka.



The “image of man” that we can discern in the image of Malin in this passage might be derived from the folkloric notion of the kind girl. We know that Astrid Lindgren was very fond of the tale “Lilla Rosa och Långa Leda” [‘Little Rose and Tall Leda’], in which Little Rose is the kind girl who is rewarded for her benevolence, whereas her step-sister Tall Leda is evil and punished for her cruelty (Edström 1997). In this wondertale, which was collected in the province of Småland, Little Rose is mistreated by her stepmother, the evil new queen. Once she commands Little Rose to fetch the axe that had been forgotten by the castle’s gardeners in the forest:

När nu lilla Rosa kom ut i skogen, fick hon se var yxan låg. Men tre vita duvor hade satt sig att vila på yxskaftet. Då tog hon bröd, som var kvar av hennes frukost, smulade sönder det i handen och räckte det åt de små duvorna.

“Stackars mina små duvor,” sade hon vänligt, “nu får ni lov att gå därifrån, för jag är tvungen att bära yxan till min styvmor.”

Duvorna åt ur hennes hand och gick villigt bort från skaftet, så att hon kunde taga yxan. Men hon hade inte hunnit långt, förrän duvorna började tala med varandra och överlade om, vad lön de skulle ge lilla Rosa, som varit så snäll mot dem.

(Swahn 1986: 55.)

When Little Rose came into the forest, she saw where the axe lay. But three white doves had settled down to rest on the handle. Then she took some bread that was left from her breakfast, crumbled it in her hand and gave it to the little doves.

“My poor little doves,” she said kindly, “now you have to leave, because I must carry the axe to my stepmother.”

The doves ate from her hand and willingly left the handle, so that she could take the axe. But she had not gone far, before the doves started talking with each other and discussed what reward they would give Little Rose, who had been so kind to them.

The doves decide to make her twice as beautiful as she was before, give her golden hair, and let a red golden ring drop from her mouth each time she smiles. (Swahn 1986: 55.) Malin is just as kind to the paupers of Norka, but she does not receive her reward at this stage of the story. The tale of Little Rose and Tall Leda is the most important intertext for Lindgren’s narrative in many respects; just how important it is for the development of the details of Lindgren’s story has not been emphasised enough in prior research. Vivi Edström states that Lindgren transposes certain features from “Little Rose and Tall Leda” to “My Nightingale Is Singing” (Edström 1997: 133), but she does not mention all of them, and some of these are quite crucial for Lindgren’s story.

One of the parallels that Edström does mention is what we might term the turning point in the narrative, when Malin finally encounters something beautiful, something that makes life worth living. She has accompanied Pompadulla to the parsonage, and through an open door listens to a tale told to the parson’s children. The beautiful words of this tale resonate with her, and she gains new hope in her previously sordid world:

Hon hade inte vetat förut att ord kunde vara vackra, nu visste hon det, och de sjönk ner i hennes själ som morgondagg över en sommaräng. Ack, hon ville gömma dem hos sig till tidens slut och aldrig glömma dem, men redan när hon med Pompadulla kom hem till fattigstugan, var de försvunna ur hennes minne. Bara ett par av de skönaste hade hon kvar, och dem läste hon tyst för sig själv om och om igen.

Spelar min lind,

sjunger min näktergal,

så var orden hon läste, och i deras glans försvann fattigstugans hela armod och elände.

(Lindgren 1959: 36.)

She had not known before that words could be beautiful, now she knew, and they sank into her soul like morning dew over a meadow in the summer. Alas, she wanted to hide them within her until the end of time and never forget them, but already when she returned home to the workhouse with Pompadulla, they had vanished from her memory. Only a few of the most beautiful ones did she have left, and these she read silently to herself over and over again.

Is my linden tree playing?

Is my nightingale singing?

Such were the words she read, and in their glow the utter poverty and misery of the workhouse disappeared.

The words Malin half remembers are drawn from “Little Rose and Tall Leda”, and appear towards the end of the tale, when Little Rose has been transformed into a golden goose by her evil stepmother. Little Rose, who has married a king and given birth to a son, asks a fisherman on the seashore: “Is my linden tree playing? Is my nightingale singing? Is my little son crying? Does my lord ever make merry?” (Swahn 1986: 59.) The dreariness of the workhouse temporarily disappears, and Malin enters a different time-space, one of beauty and succour.

The magic of storytelling described in this passage also draws on a real-life chronotope, so to speak (on chronotopes in real life, see Bakhtin 1986a: 252–256), Astrid Lindgren’s own first encounter with the wonderful world of stories, in the kitchen of Kristin, the wife of the Eriksson family’s cow herd. Her daughter Edit read the story of the Giant Bam-Bam and the fairy Viribunda to a five-year-old Astrid Lindgren, who later talked of the experience as “setting my child’s soul rocking in a motion that has not quite yet abated” (Lindgren 1984: 240). This almost transcendent experience was a resource for Lindgren in her own creative work, just as it is for Malin, who uses it to transform her world. For the snippets she remembers from this life-transfiguring story also encourage her to take action to ameliorate her own situation by planting a linden tree herself. The problem is that she does not have a linden seed, so she takes a pea instead:

Medan hon låg där och kliade sig, följde hon med ögonen solstrimmans gång in under Sommar-Nisses säng, och då såg hon något ligga på golvet, något litet och gult och runt. Det var bara en ärt som hade trillat ur Sommar-Nisses trasiga påse,

men det kom för henne att hon kunde ta den i stället för ett frö. Kanske Gud i sin godhet för denna enda gångs skull ville låta en lind spira ur en ärt.

“Med tro och längtan så går det,” tänkte Malin. Och hon gick ut i potatislandet och grävde med sina bara händer en grop i jorden, där stoppade hon ner ärten som skulle bli en lind.

Och sedan började hon tro och längta. Hon trodde så starkt och längtade så innerligt, varje morgon när hon vaknade satte hon sig upp i bädden och lyssnade med hela sin själ utåt potatislandet efter en spelande lind och en sjungande näktergal. Men hon hörde bara hjonen snarka i sina sängar och sparvarna kvittra utanför.

(Lindgren 1959: 39–40.)

While she was lying there scratching herself, she followed the path of the sunbeam underneath Summer-Nisse's bed with her eyes, and then she saw something lying on the floor, something small and yellow and round. It was just a pea that had fallen out of Summer-Nisse's ripped bag, but she got the idea that she could take it instead of a seed. Perhaps this once, God in his kindness would let a linden tree sprout from a pea.

“With faith and longing it will happen,” Malin thought. And she went out into the potato field and dug a hole in the earth with her bare hands, in which she placed the pea that would become a linden tree.

And then she started believing and longing. She believed so strongly and longed so utterly; each morning when she woke up, she sat up in bed and listened with her whole soul toward the potato field after a playing linden tree and a singing nightingale. But she only heard the paupers snoring in their beds and the sparrows chirping outside.

In “Little Rose and Tall Leda”, the genesis of the linden tree and the singing nightingale is miraculous. At one point, Little Rose's stepmother conceives such an intense hatred for her that she hires a skipper to drown Little Rose in the sea. Before this evil plan can be carried out, the ship is destroyed in a storm, and Little Rose is the sole survivor, living as a castaway on an island. One day, she finds the head and legs of a deer that has been lacerated by wild animals. She puts them on a pole to allow the birds to eat the meat. She falls asleep, and when she wakes, she hears the wondrous jingle of a linden tree, and the singing of a nightingale. They have emerged out of the carcass. (Swahn 1986: 57.)

Malin has to wait for a long time before the miracle occurs, but one day a linden tree has sprouted in the potato field, and it is the most beautiful tree imaginable, with fine, tiny green leaves, beautiful little branches and a fine, straight trunk (Lindgren 1959: 42). But there is no nightingale, and the tree is dead:

I hela Norka socken var väl ingen vaken mer än Malin, ändå kände hon att natten var full av liv. I blad och blom och gräs och träd var vårens ande levande och nära, ja, i minsta ört och strå var ande och liv. Bara linden var död. Den stod i potatislandet vacker och tyst och var död. Malin la sin hand mot stammen, då kände hon med ens hur svårt det var för linden att ensam vara utan liv och att inte få spela. Och det kom för henne, att om hon kunde ge sin ande åt det döda trädet, så skulle liv strömma in i de gröna små bladen och de fina små grenarna,

och då skulle linden i ett jubel börja spela, så att alla näktergalar hörde det i alla lunder och skogar på jorden. (Lindgren 1959: 44–46.)

In the whole of Norka parish no-one except Malin was still awake, yet she felt that the night was full of life. In leaves and flowers and the grass and the trees the spirit of spring was alive and close, yes, in the smallest herb and straw there was spirit and life. Only the linden tree was dead. It was standing in the potato field, beautiful and silent, and was dead. Malin laid her hand on the trunk; then she suddenly felt how difficult it was for the linden tree, for it alone to be lifeless and not be permitted to play. And she realised that if she could give her spirit to the dead tree, life would stream into the tiny green leaves and the fine little branches, and then the linden tree would start playing in jubilation, so that all nightingales heard it in all groves and woods on Earth.



*Figure 2. Malin embraces the dead linden tree, and realises that she can give it life by surrendering her spirit to it. (Reproduced with permission courtesy of Ilon Wikland AB.)*

Malin decides to give her life to the tree, and becomes one with it. This process is not explicitly described; we are simply told that Malin vanished, and that her friend Jocke Kis, who suffered from a mental disorder, used to say that he heard her voice in his head every time the linden tree played. (Lindgren 1959: 46–47.)

In this story, Lindgren transposes wondertale elements into a more legend-like setting, in which the marvellous has no easy place. Malin's world is extremely prosaic, although this begins to change after her encounter with the magic of story. This experience is liminal in the sense that it creates a new space of betwixt and between in which she is transported from her old life and is en route to a new, happier existence.

The wondertale elements that are gradually inserted into the story serve to increasingly maximise the distance between the text and the legend-like elements of its generic model in order to reconstruct an existence that is tolerable for Malin, one in which she can enjoy the beauty of life by becoming beauty herself; I take this to be the universal truth embodied in the text. This means that I interpret the merging with the tree not as a simple escape from her dreary life, but as a positive form of self-transformation. At the same time, the generic framework shifts from a predominantly legend-inspired to a largely *Märchen*-inspired one. Yet it is not until the very end, with the emergence of the linden tree and Malin's fusion with it, that the *Märchen* chronotope truly begins to displace the legendary one. When this chronotopic transformation is complete, so is Malin's.

### *Towards a Third Level of Chronotopes?*

It is now evident that the original notion I had of the impact of the oral legend on Lindgren's short stories was too simplistic. Even though both stories have legend-like qualities, particularly in the basic construction of their world as one not fully merged with the supranormal realm, the increasing domination of wondertale elements in "My Nightingale Is Singing" undermines this initial position. The multitude of chronotopes that go into the construction of the text must be taken fully into account in order to understand Astrid Lindgren's use of folkloric chronotopes in the stories.

However, this much said, it seems that the chronotopes of the oral legend and wondertale serve to produce a different inflection to established literary chronotopes. In "The Red Bird", drawing on oral legends of the plenitude of the otherworld allows Lindgren to redefine the temporal orientation of the chronotope of historical inversion from a past- to a present-oriented one. Similarly, she undermines the orientation to the future so characteristic of the idyllic chronotope by appearing to imply that the children might remain children in the otherworld of South Meadows, rather than grow up to bear and rear their own children. This almost frozen chronotope is not unusual in oral belief legends (Ingemark 2006), and might represent another instance of how the impact of folkloric chronotopes has transformed literary ones. In "My Nightingale Is Singing", Lindgren adopts a similar strategy, but uses the oral wondertale to modify oral legend chronotopes. Here, the insertion of elements from "Little Rose and Tall Leda" have repercussions on the formation of chronotopes in the story; this indicates that the genre to which an intertext belongs is not neutral: the wondertale elements carry an aura of generic meanings into their new context, and eventually transform this context.

Notwithstanding, on the most basic level, the chronotope of the short story remains unchanged. The stories still attempt to voice a universal truth; they still privilege individual temporalities; they still owe their density to the brevity of form. The changes that do occur are situated on the level of the intersection between the chronotope of the secondary genre (the short story) and those of the primary genres that contribute to the fleshing-out of its rather abstract characteristics. I therefore suggest adding a third level of chronotopes inserted between Bakhtin's original two, the chronotopes of genres and the chronotopes of motifs. This level could be referred to as intergeneric or intertextual, and it mediates between the other two. In his classic essay, Bakhtin does not sufficiently explain how the chronotopes of genres can change, and I perceive this as a result of the lack of a mediator between his two levels of chronotopes. In terms of the future prospects of research on folkloric chronotopes and genre, the notion of an intergeneric level of chronotopic constitution might be worth a look. This could profitably include scrutiny of the gendered nature of chronotopes, an issue I have not been able to address here.

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## 9. Genre and the Prosimetra of the Old Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*

The manner in which this paper seeks to approach genre is as a generative system of prescriptive elements and features within Old Norse vernacular literary culture that are seen as belonging together, with poetry in particular focus as one element in the genre system of the saga that can be employed or not. “Genre” is understood as both a fluid term and concept to denote a type or kind of literature. It surfaces as an expectation in our own reading of a text and may lead us to project this expectation backwards onto those who created that text. The potential gap in expectation between the creator of the text and reader is the space bridged by typologies of two kinds: one that could be said to stem directly from the texts in a descriptive fashion, and another that could be forced onto the texts prescriptively by the reader to corral the material into more easily analysed categories. Both of these typological mechanisms can be described by the term “genre”.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this paper is to consider the question of genre in Old Norse saga literature from the perspective of the inclusion of poetry in prose works, and I will use both of these approaches to genre to study the origin of both the prosimetric and non-prosimetric *fornaldarsögur*. This article argues that the presence or absence of verse has a fundamental role in the questions of both the genre and development of the *fornaldarsögur*, and that the absence of poetry in some sagas depends on the fact that they are influenced by the *riddarasögur*, a saga subgenre with a different origin that lacks verse.

Although often a mixture of prose and verse, the Old Norse-Icelandic narrative form “saga” is considered a prose genre of Old Norse literature. Subgenres of the saga form include *fornaldarsögur* [‘sagas of ancient times’],<sup>2</sup> *Íslendingasögur* [‘sagas of Icelanders’], *konungasögur* [‘sagas of kings’], *riddarasögur* [‘sagas of knights’], *heilagramannasögur* [‘sagas about holy people’], *biskupasögur* [‘sagas about bishops’], and *postolasögur* [‘sagas of the apostles’]. The saga subgenres are diverse in terms of content, the source of that content, and the expression of that content, and they are linked together only by the most basic criterion that they are a narrative primarily in prose, whether that is a story, history or hagiography. A premise of my argument in this paper is that I accept that these genre typologies in Old Norse literature (typologies not used as such by the medieval authors),<sup>3</sup> are indeed useful analytical tools, which nevertheless can be refined. These constructed

genre groupings are useful to modern critics because they group the sagas into manageable units for study, and because they prompt us to identify similarities and differences between sagas, which can suggest research questions into the relationships between the saga subgenres.

### *Saga Genre in Manuscript Compilations*

The genre terminology used by modern scholarship to discuss Old Norse saga literature is, on the whole, not a medieval one (with the notable exception of *riddarasögur* in the field of romance sagas).<sup>4</sup> Medieval manuscript compilations frequently contain a mixture of the saga subgenres according to their modern designations, but nonetheless the divisions made in the saga genre by modern scholarship can to some extent be backed up by codicological evidence. Certain codicological decisions in medieval manuscripts seem to indicate that, while Icelandic medieval scribes did not have an articulated genre system, particular types of sagas were thought to go together.<sup>5</sup> Two good examples of this are books that could be described as “romance anthologies”, the manuscripts AM 343a 4to and AM 471 4to, which are related vellum manuscripts from the fifteenth century. AM 343a 4to groups *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* together, and has the following contents (in manuscript order):

*Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* (1r–5v); *Samsons saga fagra* (5v–14r); *Egils saga einhenda og Ásmundar berserkjabana* (14r–21v); *Flóres saga konungs og sona hans* (21v–30v); *Vilhjálmss saga sjóðs* (30v–48v); *Yngvars saga víðfjrla* (48v–54r); *Ketils saga hængs* (54r–57v); *Gríms saga loðinkinna* (57v–59v); *Órvar-Odds saga* (59v–81v); *Áns saga bogsveigis* (81v–87r); *Sálus saga ok Nikanórs* (87r–98v); *Hálfðanar saga Eysteinnssonar* (99r–103v); *Bósa saga* (2 fragments: the first on 103v, the second on 104); *Vilmundar saga viðutan* (105r–108r); *Perus saga meistara* (108r–110r)

Of the sixteen sagas, nine are *fornaldarsögur* and six are *riddarasögur*. AM 471 4to, on the other hand, groups *Íslendingasögur* [‘sagas of Icelanders’] together with those *fornaldarsögur* that have been described as leaning towards that subgenre, and one popular *riddarasaga*; it preserves the following sagas:

*Þórðar saga hreðu* (1r–21v); *Króka-Refs saga* (21v–36r); *Kjalnesinga saga* (36r–49r); *Ketils saga hængs* (49r–56v); *Gríms saga loðinkinna* (57r–60v); *Órvar-Odds saga* (61r–96v); *Viktors saga ok Blávus* (96v–108v)

These are three *Íslendingasögur* (*Þórðar saga hreðu*, *Króka-Refs saga*, and *Kjalnesinga saga*), three *fornaldarsögur* and one *riddarasaga*. None of the three *Íslendingasögur* sit comfortably in that subgenre: according to Jónas Kristjánsson, *Þórðar saga hreðu* is only an imitation of older *Íslendingasögur* and both it and *Króka-Refs saga* are entirely fictional. Meanwhile, the strong links of *Kjalnesinga saga* to the *fornaldarsögur* have also been noted (Jónas

Kristjánsson 2007: 239, 286, 289). The compiler of the manuscript likely collected the sagas in the manuscript together for this reason.

In other instances too, medieval feelings of suitable sagas to collect together closely mirror our own. Such is the case with *Möðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol.) from the mid-fourteenth century, a manuscript that contains eleven *Íslendingasögur* arranged topographically, some of which are extant in their complete form only here. As a collection, this codex even to some extent defines the subgenre of the *Íslendingasögur*. (See Sigurður Nordal 1953: 180; Clover 1982: 57; Jónas Kristjánsson 2007: 208). Manuscript collections of *konungasögur* too, such as *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna* and *Flateyjarbók*, also indicate that medieval Icelandic compilers sometimes directly employed what we would acknowledge to be genre divisions. In the case of the compilations of kings' sagas, this division was perhaps enforced by the expectations of their royal audiences. Although typologies are not explicit in such codices, they are suggested, and the apparent sense of the manuscript compilers concerning which texts went together seem to have intuited some of our own divisions.

Many of the saga subgenres contain poetry, particularly the *fornaldarsögur*, *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur*, but use diverse poetry in different ways. The other saga subgenres do not habitually contain verse. The role of poetry in the sagas has been used profitably to open avenues of questioning on the narrative roles of verse in the different saga subgenres and about the development of the sagas. The examination of the role of verse in sagas also ought to allow us to probe the similarities and differences between sagas in the same subgenre, for example, whether verse is present and what narrative function it fulfils in the prose narrative.

### *The Role of Verse in the Prose Sagas*

The *fornaldarsögur* containing both prose and verse are termed “prosimetric”. The prose–verse mixed form in Old Norse Icelandic texts preserves much of our extant skaldic and eddic poetry from the medieval period. This literary form was apparently established long before being committed to writing (Kuhn 1952: 276–277; Poole 1991: 23), and is termed “prosimetrum” after its service in describing a similarly mixed classical form.<sup>6</sup> As such, the term “prosimetrum” does not indicate what one might expect to find in terms of narrative content, and its generic applications are diverse.

Typically, there are thought to be two roles played by verse in Old Norse prose: evidence-based quotations or verses in a situational role (O’Donoghue 2005; Phelpstead 2008: 25, 35 n.12). Bjarni Einarsson, however, has a slightly different classification, preferring to divide verses into one group of evidence based stanzas and a second group of story stanzas, those that are considered part of the story (Bjarni Einarsson 1974: 118). This implies two different opinions on whether the verses carry the narrative, because although evidence stanzas can be skipped without damaging the content, if one skips story stanzas the understanding of the context as a whole is damaged, largely because story stanzas are usually a versified reply to a question (Bjarni

Einarsson 1974: 118, 122). The latter type of prosimetric verse has also been termed “ornamental”, but, as Heather O’Donoghue points out, the narrative function of situational or non-narrative carrying non-corroborative verse exceeds that of merely ornamental (2005: 5–6).

The role of verse in the prose typically differs between saga subgenres. In the *konungasögur*, stanzas are chiefly quoted as evidence, but in the *Íslendingasögur* this is rarely the case, where they function mainly as entertainment. Similarly, in the contemporary sagas, stanzas are chiefly quoted for entertainment (80% of the time), rather than evidence (20% of the time). (Bjarni Einarsson 1974: 118–119, 121.) Bjarni Einarsson emphasises that in the *fornaldarsögur*, verse is used as evidence far more commonly than in *Íslendingasögur* (1974: 124), whereas Karsten Friis-Jensen emphasises that the prosimetric form is displayed in the abundance of versified dialogue in the *fornaldarsögur* (1987: 46). Either way, such verses in the *fornaldarsögur* may, of course, be wholly fictitious (invented by the saga author), or made up by the story-teller if it originally were an oral saga (Bjarni Einarsson 1974: 124). Certainly evidence-based quotations of verse make up a clear category if one needs to define the obvious roles of the verse in their prose contexts; the idea that some verses are story verses and thus carry narrative is an important one, although they are not in the majority in the *fornaldarsögur*; the last useful category however – dialogue verses – are common in *fornaldarsögur*.

### *Poetry and the Development of the fornaldarsaga Corpus*

We have seen that the modern idea of a *fornaldarsaga* only partly corresponds to medieval codicological preferences. Modern scholarship classifies as *fornaldarsögur* those sagas and *þættir* [‘short tales’] (sg. *þáttir*) set in pre-Christian Scandinavia before the settlement of Iceland and the unification of Norway by Haraldr hárfagri. The term *Fornaldarsaga Norðurlanda* was coined by the Dane Carl Christian Rafn (1795–1864), who first collected together thirty-two similar sagas from manuscripts and published them under that title in his three volume edition of 1829–1830 in Copenhagen.<sup>7</sup> His rationale in selecting the sagas was to assemble those “er orðit hafa hér á Norðrlöndum, áðr enn Island bygðist á 9du öld” (Rafn 1829–1830 I: v) [‘which are set here in the Nordic countries before Iceland was settled in the ninth century’].<sup>8</sup> The *fornaldarsögur* were thus separated from other saga subgenres by “their chronological and geographical setting” (Torfi H. Tulinius 2007: 447). Rafn’s selection of sagas, made on the basis of the saga being set in the Nordic lands before the settlement of Iceland (Rafn 1829–1830 I: v), established a corpus that, in practical terms, remains largely unchanged today.<sup>9</sup> The normal genre grouping has been challenged on the grounds that the sagas fulfilling the criteria of being set in ancient Scandinavia before the settlement of Iceland are, in fact, rather dissimilar to each other (Torfi H. Tulinius 2007: 448). Nevertheless, this has not prevented several studies that analyse the *fornaldarsögur* as though they were a cohesive group in terms of content.<sup>10</sup>

Other attempts to distinguish the *fornaldarsögur* from other saga subgenres are more descriptive in nature, and often include observations that they have “traditional heroes, eddic-style poetry, wide-ranging geography, and occasional trips to the Otherworld” (Mitchell 1991: 13), or describe the sagas as “fictional”, “fantastic” and “stories told for pure entertainment”, in order to juxtapose them with the realism of the *Íslendingasögur* (Lönnroth 1975: 419–420). The latter statements are particularly unhelpful in this regard, since they deal not so much with the text itself, but rather with the reaction of the audience to the text (Bibire 1982: 55), which has likely changed over time.

In the individual *fornaldarsögur*, we can also find different mixtures of the individual descriptive elements used in summarising the characteristics of the subgenre itself and that are used to differentiate the subgenre from other types of saga. Stephen Mitchell has proposed the following definition of the *fornaldarsögur*, which he calculates to include distinguishing characteristics of the *fornaldarsögur* but not those aspects that they share with other saga subgenres:

*fornaldarsögur*: Old Icelandic prose narratives based on traditional heroic themes, whose numerous fabulous episodes and motifs create an atmosphere of unreality. (Mitchell 1991: 27.)

We may take each of these prescriptive elements in turn. Whilst the supernatural is certainly central to the *fornaldarsögur*, this is not a definite criterion that alone can divide them from other saga subgenres. The *Íslendingasögur*, for example, contain a great number of supernatural episodes. The characteristic of the *fornaldarsögur* being based on “traditional heroic themes” must be qualified; as Matthew Driscoll notes, only some of the *fornaldarsögur* have a basis in the older heroic tradition (such as *Völsunga saga* and *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*), and have been accorded merit on that basis. Others, such as *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* and *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, are clearly not related to an old heroic tradition in origin or theme, rather being closer to the romance tradition, and their literary qualities have been derided. (Driscoll 2009: 72.) These are thus not conclusive factors in defining the genre.

One promising factor that might aid us in thinking about the generic categorisation of the *fornaldarsögur* is the presence of poetry in its narrative, and the type of poetry it contains. Like most other saga subgenres described as prosaic, they are in fact prosimetric, that is, they contain a good deal of verse interspersed in the prose (for an overview of Old Norse prosimetric tendencies, see Harris 1997; Leslie 2013). More specifically, whereas the *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur* contain large amounts of skaldic verse, the *fornaldarsögur* contain mainly eddic verse, suggesting an immediate connection in their development with the eddic tradition (Torfi H. Tulinius 2007: 448). The *fornaldarsögur* are preserved predominantly in manuscripts from the fifteenth century onwards, but it is very likely that the sagas circulated in some form in oral tradition even a few hundred years before then, and that verses were central to these oral texts.<sup>11</sup> The manuscript *Hauksbók*, dated by

Stefán Karlsson to the first decade of the fourteenth century (1964), contains a version of *Hervarar saga* and the *Báttur af Ragnarssonum*, which shows that *fornaldarsaga* material was written down by then. The oft quoted wedding-feast that took place at Reykhólar in 1119 from *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða* tells that a saga was delivered, and *margar vísur með* (Brown 1952: ch. 10, p. 18) [‘with many stanzas accompanying it’], which seems to be a lost version of *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*. The saga as extant is from the seventeenth century, based on *rímur* and not prosimetric, so clearly the twelfth-century version was somewhat different, if the source is to be believed.<sup>12</sup> In the same account, it also says that *Ingimundur prestur sagði sögu Orms Barreyjarskálds ok vísur margar ok flokk góðan við enda sögunnar, er Ingimundur hafði ortan* (Brown 1952: ch. 10, p. 18) [‘Ingimundur the priest told the story of Ormr Barreyjarskáld and many verses and a good *flokkur* (poem) at the end of the saga, which Ingimundur had composed’]. Ursula Brown [Dronke] describes these oral sagas’ likely format as “verses set in a simple narrative framework of prose” (1952: 75), and Mitchell has suggested that this is likely to have been the origin for many of the *fornaldarsögur*: traditional poetic material transformed into prose sagas, an argument that would also explain the genre’s distinct preference for eddic rather than skaldic poetry (Mitchell 1991: 67, 72).

Anne Holtsmark’s widely accepted theory from 1965 is that the prose passages likely first accompanied the verses in *fornaldarsaga*-like oral material for explanatory reasons and provided context, much like the apparent purpose of the prose passages that appear around many of the poems in the collection of eddic poetry found in manuscript GkS 2365 4to, the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*,<sup>13</sup> and it was the expansion of these passages in the *fornaldarsaga* material that eventually formed the prosimetric *fornaldarsaga* as we have it today. A similar process is envisaged by Lars Lönnroth, who conceives of the verses of a *fornaldarsaga* as the “nucleus” around which the saga would be built up (1979: 105). The foremost theories of *fornaldarsögur* development thus all propound that verse was the primary element in the development of the saga form, and that the existence of the prose portions of the saga is dependent on the presence of the verse in the first instance. However, this does not explain the sizable number of sagas that contain little or no verse.

It nevertheless cannot be assumed that the eddic poetry found in some *fornaldarsögur* is older than the prose narratives that hosts it. The poetry in the *fornaldarsögur* is often portrayed as spoken by a legendary figure from the distant past, and eddic poetry is affiliated in nature with ancient times. In purporting to be spoken by legendary figures, the poetry is claiming to be ancient, and although we cannot be certain of the actual age of most eddic poetry, it seems some of poems are indeed old. *Hljóðskviða* (known in English as *The Battle of the Goths and the Huns*) from *Hervarar saga* (Heusler & Ranisch 1903: 1–12), *The Death Song of Hildibrandr* from *Ásmundar saga kappabana* (Heusler & Ranisch 1903: 53–54), and *Vikarsbálkar* from *Gautreks saga* (Heusler & Ransich 1903: 38–43) are thought to be amongst the oldest Old Norse poetry (Clunies Ross 2005: 11). Otherwise, it is difficult to tell whether poetry in the *fornaldarsögur* is older than the prose that contains it, or whether it is the same age.



To further explore the ways in which poetry can aid in determining or dissolving generic categorisations, the prosimetric *fornaldarsögur* will be analysed below in terms of the role of poetry in constructing the narrative as a clue to its origin. Then, we will return to the question of *fornaldarsögur* without poetry, and consider some reasons for its absence.

We can conclude from this that although all of the elements that Mitchell identifies can indeed be found in the *fornaldarsögur*, they can be found in various permutations and not necessarily all in the same saga. This must suggest a flexibility in generative production and expression in the use of defining elements, rather than binary oppositions at play in the construction of sagas. This leads to the question of whether the presence or absence of eddic poetry should play a role in discussing the limits and formation of the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre and potentially classifications within it.

One other important point to make is that half the *fornaldarsaga* corpus does not contain poetry. As discussed above, in arguments engaging with the origin of the *fornaldarsögur*, weight is often given to the suggestion that sagas in the subgenre evolved out of material originally transmitted in eddic metre, their written prosimetric form being a reflection of and development from this.<sup>14</sup> This is to ignore the potential origin of half the corpus. Thus, the question of generic classification and the sagas' use of verse is an important one for the study of the *fornaldarsögur*. The established corpus of prosimetric and prose-only *fornaldarsögur* and related *þættir* are presented in Table 1.<sup>15</sup>

Table 1. The established corpus of prosimetric and prose-only *fornaldarsögur* and related *þættir*.

<b>Prose only <i>fornaldarsögur</i> (15 sagas)</b>	<b>Prosimetric <i>fornaldarsögur</i> (19 sagas)</b>
<i>Af Upplendinga konungum</i>	<i>Áns saga bogsveigis</i> (5 stanzas)
<i>Frá Fornjóti ok hans ættmönnum</i> <sup>16</sup>	<i>Ásmundar saga kappabana</i> (8 stanzas)
<i>Hálfðanar saga Brǫnufóstra</i>	<i>Bósa saga ok Herrauðs</i> (9 stanzas)
<i>Hálfðanar saga Eysteinsonar</i>	<i>Friðþjóðs saga ins frækna</i> (30 stanzas)
<i>Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana</i>	<i>Gautreks saga</i> (35 stanzas)
<i>Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar</i>	<i>Gríms saga loðinkinna</i> (7 stanzas)
<i>Hrómundar saga Gripssonar</i>	<i>Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappa hans</i> (11 stanzas)
<i>Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra</i>	<i>Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka</i> (78 stanzas)
<i>Sturlaugs saga starfsama</i>	<i>Helga þáttur Þórissonar</i> (1 stanza)
<i>Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum í Dana ok Sviaveldi</i>	<i>Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks</i> <sup>17</sup> (95 stanzas)
<i>Sǫrla saga sterka</i>	<i>Hjálmþes saga ok Ólvis</i> (46 stanzas)
<i>Tóka þáttur Tókasonar</i>	<i>Ketils saga hængs</i> (42 stanzas)
<i>Yngvars saga víðfǫrla</i>	<i>Norna-Gests þáttur</i> (27 stanzas)
<i>Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar</i>	<i>Ragnars saga loðbrókar</i> (41 stanzas)
<i>Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns</i>	<i>Sǫrla þáttur</i> <sup>18</sup> (1 stanza)
	<i>Volsunga saga</i> (30 stanzas)
	<i>Þáttur af Ragnarssonum</i> <sup>19</sup> (9 stanzas)
	<i>Qrvar-Odds saga</i> (146 stanzas)
	<i>Göngu-Hrólfs saga</i> (3 stanzas)

At the very least, the reason for the absence of verse from half the standard corpus ought to be considered. This area of investigation has been overlooked in favour of debating the fuzzy fringes of the subgenre (for example,



whether *Ynglinga saga*, which begins *Heimskringla*, the great compilation of *konungasögur*, might be a *fornaldarsaga*),<sup>20</sup> and consequently there have been few reflections on the role of poetry in determining the generic status of the core body of texts.

### *Divisions of the fornaldarsaga Subgenre*

Scholars have attempted to compensate for the genre's lack of internal cohesiveness by dividing the corpus into subcategories, the most enduringly popular being Helga Reuschel's 1933 division of the corpus into *Heldensagas* ['Heroic sagas'], *Wikingersagas* ['Viking sagas'], and *Abenteuersagas* ['Adventure sagas'], subdivisions that became entrenched by Kurt Schier's adoption of them in his 1970 handbook (86–91). Reuschel creates her subgroups on the basis of important aspects of the material and content of the *fornaldarsögur*: they come out of heroic legends and traditions, stories of Viking travellers, myths and folktales, and influences from continental romance traditions (Torfi H. Tulinius 2007: 448–449). Heroic sagas / legends and adventure stories of heroes are set at two extremes of content, with Viking tales in between. Certainly, the *fornaldarsögur* are in many ways a hybrid genre in terms of their use of material, pulling elements, motifs and structures from various sources (including folkloric, heroic and wholly invented material), yet combining them in a manner that makes the resulting saga recognisable as belonging to the subgenre (see Lönnroth 2003).

Reuschel's divisions of the *fornaldarsögur* into three categories broadly coincides with the presence or absence of verse in the sagas. It can be observed clearly that the *Heldensagas* and *Wikingersagas* contain the most poetry, something I will return to below. The internal genre system of the *fornaldarsögur* devised by Elizabeth Ashman Rowe is another useful tool with which to examine the prosimetric sagas, since it allows sagas containing similar narrative material to be considered together. She divides the *fornaldarsögur* into five groups: genealogical sagas and regnal lists; sagas of Germanic heroes and Scandinavian mythology; kings' sagas; family sagas, and romances (1990: 26). The distribution of the prosimetric sagas across these groups is thus: no genealogical sagas or regnal lists have verse; all sagas regarding Germanic heroic or mythological material contain verse; likewise, all the family *fornaldarsögur* are prosimetric and almost all the sagas linked with *konungasögur* contain at least one stanza. By and large, the romances do not contain verse, with the notable exceptions of *Gautreks saga* and *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*. In the following, I will discuss the relation of each category to eddic verse in more depth, and reflect upon what we can deduce from this about the role of eddic poetry in the formation of the *fornaldarsaga* corpus.

### *Genealogies and Regnal Lists*

It is the content not the expressive style of the narrative of those texts in the category “genealogies and regnal lists” that generically link them with the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre. Given the genealogical or list form of the sagas fall into the first group (genealogies and regnal lists), it is unsurprising that they do not contain interspersed verse: the narratives are very compressed and concise, for example:

Nú skal segja dæmi til, hversu Noregr byggðist í fyrstu eða hversu konunga ættir hófust þar eða í ǫðrum löndum eða hvi þeir heita Skjöldungar, Buðlungar, Bragningar, Ǫðlingar, Völsungar eða Niflungar, sem konunga ættirnar eru af komnar (*Hversu Noregr Byggðist*, ch. 1, p. 137)

Now the story be told of how Norway was settled in the beginning or how the generations of kings dwelt there or in other lands or why they are called Skjöldungar, Buðlungar, Bragningar, Ǫðlingar, Völsungar or Niflungar, from whom the generations of kings came.

Margaret Clunies Ross has demonstrated the importance of genealogies to *fornaldarsögur* writers (1993), and, as I have argued elsewhere, the sagas in this small group share strong concerns in the establishment of the worldview of the *fornaldarsögur* with the other members of their subgenre (Leslie 2008), both prosimetric and pure prose.

### *Fornaldarsögur Related to konungasögur*

Next we might consider the set of short texts relating to *konungasögur* that contain non-structurally significant eddic verse. Of these, three are prosimetric: *Helga þáttr Þórissonar*, *Norna-Gests þáttr* and *Sǫrla þáttr*. All the texts in this category are *þættir*, and appear embedded in longer sagas about kings, *konungasögur*. These short texts can thus be viewed as hybrids that straddle two saga subgenres. Their affinity to the *fornaldarsögur* is granted by their inclusion of eddic verse as well as motifs familiar from the *fornaldarsögur*. The *konungasögur* predominantly employ skaldic verse in an evidence-based role. That the eddic stanzas in the *þættir* are predominantly used as dialogue or situational stanzas serves to highlight these embedded tales from their larger context in the kings’ sagas that contain them. In *Norna-Gests þáttr*, the narrative is built predominantly around quotations of other poems containing Völsung material, although they are all used as dialogue or situational stanzas rather than as evidence (the use of the verses in *Völsunga saga* is divided between evidence and dialogue). The single stanza in *Helga þáttr Þórissonar*, preserved in *Flateyjarbók*, is a situational stanza spoken by Óláfr Tryggvason. It is characteristic of stanzas that function as dialogue in the *fornaldarsögur* to be versified replies to a question, but not so here: the king’s stanza is very much a comment on the narrative happenings:

Konungr lætr fylla hornin Gríma af góðum drykk ok lætr byskup blessa ok lét færa þeim Grímunum, at þeir drykki fyrst af. Þá kvað konungr vísu þessa:

Gestir skulu hornum  
 í gegn taka,  
 meðan hvílast látum þenna  
 þegn Guðmundar,  
 ok af samnafna  
 sínum drekki;  
 svá skal Grímunum  
 gott ǫl gefast.

Þá taka Grímar við hornunum ok þykkjast nú vita, hvat byskup hefir yfir lesit drykkinum. Þeir segja þá: “Eigi ferr nú fjarri því, sem Guðmundr, konungr várr, gat til. Er þessi konungr prettótr ok kann illa gott at launa, því at konungr várr gerði til hans sæmiliga. Stöndum nú upp allir ok verðum í brottu heðan.” (*Helga þáttur Þórissonar*, ch. 2, p. 424).

The king has the horns Grímr and Grímr filled with good drink, and has the bishop bless them and had them brought to the men Grímr and Grímr, so that they could drink first. Then the king said this verse:

Guests shall take the horns while they get to rest, Guðmundr’s thanes, and drink from their namesakes, so shall the Grímrs be given good beer.

Then the Grímrs took the horns and now it occurred to them what the bishop has read over the drinks. Then they say: “now it’s not far from what Guðmundr, our king, supposed. This king is deceitful, and can reward good with evil when our king deserves his honourable treatment. Everyone stand up now and get away from here!”

The metre of the stanza is (eddic) *fornyrðislag*, as is normal in *fornaldarsögur*, although the kings’ sagas, where this stanza is preserved, usually contain skaldic verse. Only in *Sǫrla þáttur* is the role of the single *haðarlag* stanza evidence-based.<sup>21</sup> The diverse use of eddic verse in these *þættir* demonstrates the aesthetic capabilities of poetry to embellish narratives, as well as being an element that contribute to the classification of the *þættir* as *fornaldarsögur*.

### *Germanic Heroic Legend*

The sagas in the category “Germanic Heroic Legends and Scandinavian Mythology” are all prosimetric, but exhibit markedly different developmental trajectories when it comes to the formulation of the narratives that include verse. Nevertheless, it is sagas like these that gave rise to theories like that of Holtsmark (1965), who argues that the *fornaldarsögur* developed out of heroic poetry (see above). It is nonetheless important to notice that while all of these sagas may have developed from poetry to some extent, they did so under different impulses. The stanzas of *Vǫlsunga saga*, for example, are citations of verse material known from elsewhere; the saga author has thus structured his prose around quotations and this prose is clearly dependant on poetry, rather than prose and verse existing in a more symbiotic relationship (cf. Finch 1962–1965). The prose and verse of *Hervarar saga*, on the other hand, while generally intensely prosimetric, has a substantial inset

poem *Hervarkviða* [‘A Poem about Hervör’], which is versiprose, that is, it has substantially more verse than prose in its description of Hervör raising her dead father, Angantýr (ch. 4, pp. 198–203). In contrast to *Völsunga saga*, it must be noted that the verse is not preserved elsewhere and thus it cannot be conclusively determined whether the *Hervararkviða* poetry was in written circulation before its inclusion in the saga. The riddle section at the end of the saga is very different, in which the god Óðinn, calling himself Gestumblindi, challenges King Heiðrekr’s wisdom: the riddles are posed in verse and answered in prose. There is nothing to suggest that the answers were ever preserved in verse. The verse and prose of this section are thus organically linked. From this, it cannot be argued that all of the prosimetric *fornaldarsögur* share the same developmental trajectory any more than it can be said that the sagas with and without verse are similar in terms of origin.

### *The Hrafnista Family Sagas*

The *fornaldarsögur* in Rowe’s category “family sagas” (*Ketils saga hængs*, *Gríms saga loðinkinna*, *Örvar-Odds saga* and *Áns saga bogsveigis*), are presumably categorised thus because they all deal with the same family descended from Hallbjörn hálftröll of the island of Hrafnista in Norway (see *Ketils saga hængs*, ch. 1, p. 246; Leslie 2010). The Hrafnista sagas are all prosimetric, but they also all use the poetry in slightly different ways. *Ketils saga hængs* contains rather many verses (42 in the 1943 edition), and predominantly uses the verses as dialogue. A good example is the spirited exchange between Ketill and a hag (1943: 259–226, and which can be found edited separately by Heusler & Ranisch 1903: 80–82). *Gríms saga loðinkinna* contains only seven verses, five of them also in a run of dialogue (ch. 1, pp. 270–272) between Grímr and two troll women. The remaining two stanzas are situational stanzas spoken to commemorate the slaying of twelve berserkers, introduced with *Þá kvað Grímr vísu* [‘Then Grímr spoke a verse’], followed by *Ok enn kvað hann* [‘And yet he said’] (ch. 3, p. 278), to indicate a continuation of the stanza sequence, a relatively common conjoining phrase found within runs of stanzas spoken by the same character (see also, for example, *Örvar-Odds saga* ch. 14, p. 325).

*Örvar-Odds saga* in its longest redaction contains 146 verses, by far the most of any of the *fornaldarsögur*. The saga is more like the Germanic Heroic Legends (for example *Hervarar saga*), in how the poetic materials are employed in the saga narrative. This is because the stanzas are generally employed in very specific contexts rather than as stanzas simply dotted here and there as dialogue (*lausavísur*) (although see *Örvar-Odds saga* 1943: 302–303 for two stanzas used as such, and also: ch. 18, p. 340, spoken by a giantess; ch. 23, pp. 356–357, for stanzas spoken by the evil Ögmundur).

An exchange in verse form between Hjálmar, Oddr and Angantýr in *Örvar-Odds saga* echoes in tone the exchange between Hervör and a shepherd in *Hervarar saga* (ch. 4, pp. 199–200). In both *Örvar-Odds saga* and *Hervarar saga*, these exchanges are followed by groups of stanzas that seem to form standalone poems, poems that could be considered formal

units and building blocks of the sagas. In *Qrvar-Odds saga*, it is followed by a section known as Hjálmar's death song, metrical last words that the hero Hjálmar recites as he dies (Heusler & Ranisch 1903: 49–53; *Qrvar-Odds saga* ch. 14, pp. 327–330).<sup>22</sup> In *Hervarar saga*, the scene with a poetic exchange between Hervor and a shepherd is followed by *Hervararkviða*, the poem mentioned above in which Hervor raises her dead father. Also of note is the section known as Qrvar-Oddr's drinking contest (following the title of an essay by Lars Lönnroth), a *mannjafnaðr* ['comparison of men'] that Lönnroth (1979: 109) proposes as a candidate for the "traditional nucleus" from which at least part of the saga could have developed. This is because it summarises much of Oddr's life, but the same is true of Qrvar-Oddr's death song, a lengthy poem recited by Oddr as he dies, summarising all the escapades and friends of his long life (*Qrvar-Odds saga* 1943: 391–398). As in *Ketils saga hængs* and *Gríms saga loðinkinna*, *Qrvar-Odds saga* also has an exchange between the protagonist and a supernatural creature (ch. 29, pp. 382–384), this time a pagan priestess who can shoot arrows out of all her fingers (ch. 29, p. 382). The saga closes with the death song, which is conceived of as a poem in itself by the saga prose: *ok er lokit var kvæðinu...* (ch. 32, p. 398) ['and when the poem was finished...']. The final poem also has stanzas that frame the recounting of Oddr's life that anchors the poem in the present context of the saga narrative.

*Áns saga bogsveigis* continues the family line as the final saga in the cycle of the *Hrafnistumannasögur* ['Sagas of the Men of Hrafnista'], as he is descended from the daughter of Ketill hængr, and is the generation after Qrvar-Oddr.<sup>23</sup> Although references to the men of Hrafnista can seem somewhat superficial in the saga,<sup>24</sup> there is enough evidence surviving externally in the genealogical tradition, likely to have been preserved orally, to demonstrate that Án really was considered to be part of the clan at the time the *fornaldarsögur* were written down as well as earlier (see Leslie 2010). The prosimetric structure of the saga is however somewhat different from those commemorating his forbearers. The saga contains only five stanzas. The first stanza is a *dans* stanza, the lyrical first stanza of a *ríma*, and it is used in the saga prose as situational verse, introduced with *Án kvað þá vísu* (ch. 4, p. 410) ['Án spoke a verse']. While this first stanza has the metre of *rímur*, the rest of the stanzas are metrically mixed: the second stanza is in (eddic) *ljóðahátt* (ch. 4, p. 412), the third is skaldic (ch. 14, p. 413), and the fourth and fifth are in *fornyrðislag* (ch. 4, p. 416; ch. 5, pp. 417–418). Stanzas two to five are *lausavísur* ['loose verses', i.e. not part of a longer poem], and are introduced as situational verses. These four "family" *fornaldarsögur* are clearly related to each other in content, but their use of verses is diverse, even including skaldic verse. This demonstrates that even skaldic and eddic verse are not necessarily diametrically opposed in the *fornaldarsögur*.

### Romances

The "romance" category of *fornaldarsögur* is rather diverse in terms of its use of verse, despite the fact that few of these sagas are prosimetric. Of the

fourteen sagas in this category, only five contain verse: *Orvar-Odds saga*, *Gautreks saga*, *Bósa saga*, *Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis*, and *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*. In this categorisation, *Orvar-Odds saga* straddles the romance and family sagas types, and has been discussed above with the family sagas. *Gautreks saga* and *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* stand out in this category, because despite being grouped in content into a category that is largely not prosimetric, both of these sagas contain rather a number of stanzas, *Gautreks saga* containing 35 (in the 1944 edition) and *Hálfs saga* containing 78 (in the 1944 edition).

*Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* is not unlike *Orvar-Odds saga* in its composition, in that it contains many stanzas and several longer inset autobiographical poems. Several of the situations in which stanzas appear in *Hálfs saga* have immediate parallels in other sagas. As in *Hervarar saga*, in which the dead Angantýr speaks stanzas from the mouth of his grave mound, poetry is spoken from a grave: *Hann heyrði vísu þessa kveðna í hauginn* (ch. 2, p. 160) [‘he heard this verse spoken in the mound’]. As in *Ketils saga hængs*, stanzas are also spoken by supernatural creatures. The king Hjörleifr has a short poetic exchange with a *þurs* [‘ogre’<sup>25</sup>] (ch. 5, pp. 162–163), and their speeches are specifically noted by the prose to have been in verse, since although Hjörleifr’s stanza is simply introduced with *Konungr kvað* (ch. 5, pp. 162–163) [‘the king said’], the creature’s stanza in reply is introduced with *þá kvað þurs af bjargi annat ljóð* (ch. 5, p. 163) [‘then the giant said another verse from the cliff’].<sup>26</sup> A stanza heard by King Hreiðarr is unusual because it is heard out of nowhere: *er Hjörleifr konungr kom, heyrði Hreiðarr konungr kveðit* (ch. 8, p. 167) [‘when King Hjörleifr came, King Hreiðarr heard pronounced’]. Also found in this saga is a long exchange of dialogue similar to that in *Ketils saga hængs* between Ketill and the troll woman. Here, however, the rather long exchange of fifteen stanzas is between the character Innsteinn and King Hálfr (although the last stanza is by a third character Útsteinn) (ch. 6, pp. 170–172). This is followed by a related five-stanza speech by Innsteinn about the situation in which they find themselves, as they are trapped in a burning hall (ch. 7, p. 173) – a situation that the stanzas he spoke with Hálfr had predicted. Such a long commentary about an immediate situation (rather than a retrospective at the time of death), is rather unusual, and it continues with several short prose interludes for four stanzas (ch. 8, pp. 174–175). Suddenly, however, it becomes clear to the audience that Innsteinn is indeed about to meet his death. The last four stanzas build up by recording the deaths of Hálfr and Hrókr; the penultimate stanza switches tone to a concise retrospective mode:

Ek hefi út  
 átján sumur  
 fylgt fullhuga  
 flein at rjóða.  
 Skal ek eigi annan  
 eiga drottin  
 gunnar gjarnan  
 né gamall verða. (ch. 13, p. 174.)



I have been raiding eighteen summers, followed a dauntless hero to redden an arrow. I shall not have another lord eager for battle, nor become old.

The retrospective mode continues with Útsteinn's stanzas, which record the death of Hálfir while commenting on it in hindsight (ch. 15, pp. 176–177), first in a *mannjafnaðr* and then in a long *ævidrápa* ['poem about a life'] (ch. 16, pp. 178–180). It seems here that this section of the saga, recording the death of King Hálfir, is built around the poetry, similar to many sections containing inset autobiographical poetry in the *fornaldarsögur*. Autobiographical poetry is a condensed way to preserve the life stories of heroes and was likely an oral genre; the most extreme of these is Orvar-Oddr's death song, which preserves events that run through the entire saga. In *Hálfs saga*, the poetry is thus used in very specific contexts rather than as general stand alone dialogue stanzas. *Lausavísur*, unconnected to other stanzas, are at a minimum: there are only two: one in which Alrekr foresees a Geirhildr's child being given to the god Óðinn (ch. 2, p. 160), and the very last stanza in the saga (ch. 17, p. 182), a *lausavísa* by the skaldic poet Bragi inn gamli Boddason, who is envisaged in the saga as having been present, since he partakes in the action and speaks his verse as a situational stanza, which is nevertheless in an eddic metre. Eddic poetry is thus vital to the construction of *Hálfs saga*, and in its construction it is closer to sagas such as *Orvar-Odds saga* and *Hervarar saga* than it is to other sagas in the romance category that are not formed by verses. *Gautreks saga*, though a romance and prosimetric, is constructed rather differently.

*Gautreks saga* provides an example of saga prose being composed around stanzas. The saga is made up of three *þættir*: *Gauta þáttr*, containing five stanzas, *Víkars þáttr*, a story about Starkaðr, containing most of the stanzas in the saga,<sup>27</sup> and *Gjafa-Refs þáttr*, containing two stanzas. The form of the saga containing all three of these *þættir* is the longer redaction of the two existing forms;<sup>28</sup> the shorter form does not contain *Víkars þáttr* and the shorter form thus has far fewer stanzas. It is generally held that the shorter version, without much poetry, is older than the longer version that includes *Víkars þáttr*, and as such that the longer version is a reworking of the shorter version (Bampi 2006: 91). Massimiliano Bampi contends that:

the saga writer has probably decided to insert *Víkars þáttr* into *Gautreks saga* because the story of Starkaðr was suitable to represent a further example of the themes the saga dealt with. In particular, the analogies between *Gjafa-Refs þáttr* and *Víkars þáttr* are rather interesting in that they represent stories of gift exchange with different outcome. (Bampi 2006: 91.)

*Víkarsbálkr* is thought to be amongst the oldest Old Norse poetry, dated by Heusler & Ranisch (1903: xxxiii) to the eleventh century, and is another example of a form of death song (*ævidrápa*) in the *fornaldarsögur*. The fact that the stanzas about Starkaðr are corroborative verses may be an indication of their age, since this is the predominant use of (skaldic) stanzas in the *konungasögur*, a saga subgenre that was written down before the *fornaldarsögur*. This section of the saga was almost certainly composed



around the stanzas. The stanzas in *Gauta þáttr* are used as speech stanzas, whereas of the two stanzas in *Gjafa-Refs þáttr*, one is a skaldic stanza spoken by Jarl Neri about a shield, introduced as a situational stanza – *Hann kvað þá vísu* (ch. 9, p. 32) [‘he spoke a verse’] – and the other is an eddic stanza spoken by an anonymous speaker, introduced simply with *þá var þetta kveðit* (ch. 11, p. 38) [‘then this was composed’].

The clear correlation between what kind of content the sagas have and whether or not they contain poetry may suggest that the type of material drawn upon for the plot of the *fornaldarsaga* could determine, in general, the generic demand for verse in that saga (there are exceptions to this, as I have shown). Were a *fornaldarsaga* to be composed, for example, on a Germanic/heroic theme, generically that saga type may have been expected to contain verse. Whether the narrative itself was formed from verse or what role the verse otherwise plays in the narrative could differ. This shows that the expectation of the presence of verse is a different question from how or whether verse in the sagas can determine their origin; the ways in which sagas developed from and employed verse are manifold.

### Fornaldarsögur *without Verse*

If we accept that fact that sagas that do not contain verse can be counted as *fornaldarsögur*, then we must also concede that the inclusion of poetry was not an absolute aesthetic or structural demand in the composition of the subgenre. One reason for the absence of verse in the sagas would thus simply be normal variation with the subgenre. However, there are other reasons why some sagas that are counted as *fornaldarsögur* might not contain verse that we ought to consider. The most obvious is that there was no verse material about that particular story line for the saga writer to draw upon when the saga was recorded, and, since the inclusion of verse is not an absolute necessity, the writer did not feel compelled to compose any especially for the presentation of the saga (although certainly some of the verses in the *fornaldarsögur* were composed at the same time as the prose). This means that, in the current corpus, not all *fornaldarsögur* developed out of poetic material, or at least did not preserve the poetic material even if they did. The disparate origin of the sagas in the subgenre regarding the potential for a prosimetric form is apparent in this respect.

It is also possible that verses did once exist and were simply paraphrased into prose. Indeed, sometimes they are still traceable: this is clearly the case in *Völsunga saga* (see Finch 1962–1965), and in some of the short prose parts of the *Poetic Edda* and additionally in parts of *Gylfaginning* in *Snorra Edda* (see Lorenz 1984). In these cases, however, tracing the transition from verse into prose is facilitated by the preservation of the younger verses especially in the collection of eddic poems known as the *Poetic Edda*. I also do not find it likely that any of the *fornaldarsögur* that do not contain verse exclude poetry solely for this reason. It is difficult to say how parts of sagas in prose that are identifiably based on verse should be viewed. Ronald George Finch (1962–1965) has isolated the parts of *Völsunga saga* to have come directly

from eddic poems. This bears witness to a saga composition process that relied on verse (and thus to some extent prosimetrum). On the other hand, the author of the extant saga explicitly chose to express certain material in prose rather than presenting traditional verses that we know were available, and it is not clear why.

From an opposing perspective, there is the possibility that some of the material classified as verse may indeed simply be embellished prose (see Abram 2006). This concerns the difficulty of discerning a distinct metre in prose that could otherwise simply be heavily rhythmical or alliterative. Michael Schulte (2009) has discussed this difficulty in connection with early (potentially) metrical runic inscriptions. However, the prose in saga literature is often ornamented in this manner as a direct result of the translation of verse into prose, as with the saga subgenre of the translated *riddarasögur* [‘sagas of knights’]. In this case, the noticeable rhythm and alliteration in the prose has been explained by Þórir Óskarsson (2007: 367) as “a sort of compensation for the poetic colouring that is lost when poetry is translated into prose”. As far as the *fornaldarsögur* are concerned, as in the early runic inscriptions, the issue is more often material arranged as verse that could well be rooted in prose. Prosaic proverbial material is the most likely candidate – in *Hrólfs saga kraka* we find: *Eigi flýr sá eldinn, / sem yfir hleypr* (ch. 61, p. 73) [‘That one flees no fire, [he] who jumps over it’]. This proverb is metrical enough to be verse (it is in *fornyrðislag*), even if only two lines long. Another couplet also occurs nearby: *Aukum nú eldana / at Aðils borg* [‘Let us now increase the fires at Aðils stronghold’] (ch. 61, p. 72). Such alliterative, short statements could be taken as prose but these are usually considered verse, although there is also nothing in the prose surrounding them that indicates they should be so interpreted.<sup>29</sup>

Other, more overtly literary, narrative strategies may have been enjoyed by the saga writers and employed at the expense of verse, particularly in the later periods. It is speculative but interesting to suggest that prosimetric *fornaldarsögur* could have been associated by writers and audiences with an oral period, and as the genre developed in its written form, along with influences from subgenres of saga writing such as the *riddarasögur*, the prosimetric style became less important as other narratological concerns took precedence.<sup>30</sup> *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* may be a good example of this. It is likely to be a somewhat younger saga, and the oldest manuscript is AM 343a 4to from the fifteenth century. There are no verses, but the narrative is sophisticated, with a series of inset stories, prolepsis and analepsis in a narrative construction that do not seem to have come from an oral background (Leslie 2009). Here, other aesthetic demands than prosimetrum seem to control the narration.<sup>31</sup>

It is also worth mentioning that verse originals in another language were sometimes translated into prose in Old Norse. Those foreign romance tales that were translated into Old Norse fall not into the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre, but rather into the related *riddarasaga* subgenre. Suffice it to say here that it is not obvious why continental and German verse romances were translated entirely into prose rather than into prosimetric or verse forms, but there is a good chance that this choice of pure prose influenced the *fornaldarsaga*

subgenre, notably those sagas in the romance category, which are close to the *riddarasögur* in style and very few of which contain verse.<sup>32</sup>

As a final point, I would like to suggest that it is possible that the non-prosimetric sagas in Rowe's "Romance" category have been influenced by contact between the vernacular oral genre of the *fornaldarsögur* and the *riddarasögur* texts. It seems probable that they have found their form through this stimulus. The *riddarasögur* were initially translations made in Norway from continental sources (translated *riddarasögur*), but indigenous sagas of the type quickly followed (for overviews, see Driscoll 2007; Glauser 2007). These indigenous sagas have been well summarised by Paul Bibire as having "abandoned inherited narratives in favour of morphology and motif composition" and do not seem to have developed under the influence of other native saga subgenres to any meaningful degree (Bibire 1982: 62).<sup>33</sup>

It is possible that the thirteenth century translation of the *riddarasögur* into Old Norwegian provided the initial inspiration to write down oral *fornaldarsögur*. Neither the translated nor indigenous *riddarasögur* contained verses, and once the native *riddarasaga* was established as a productive class of narrative discourse, it likely influenced the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre. Much material handled in the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre reflects long-standing vernacular traditions. However, at the time of the entry of the *riddarasögur* into Old Norse literature, the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre was still a productive one in terms of saga composition, and the *fornaldarsögur* without verses are likely the product of this influence. The absence of verses in the *riddarasögur* is thus probably the reason for the absence of the verses in the Romances included in the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre.

## Conclusions

My study of the popular subdivisions of the *fornaldarsögur* show that the prosimetric sagas have affinities with certain types of *fornaldarsögur*. Within the threefold division of Reuschel and Schier, the prosimetric sagas fall predominantly into Heroic and Viking saga categories. In addition, different sections of the same saga can vary as to the origins and use of the verse employed, as was shown in *Hervarar saga* and *Gautreks saga*. This must reflect the origins of the sagas to an extent. The development of the sagas from an oral stage of verse interspersed with prose can only be true for some of the prosimetric *fornaldarsögur*. Rather, the development of individual sagas or *þættir* must have happened in several ways:

1. The prose is developed on the basis of poems that were already in circulation even in written form (known in the cases of *Völsunga saga* and *Norna-Gests þáttir*).
2. The prose is an organic development from sequences of verse (e.g. sections of *Hervarar saga* and almost all of *Hálfs saga* and *Örvar-Odds saga*).
3. The prose and verse seem to be on equal standing, with verse intertwined with the prose as natural dialogue and as part of the story (e.g. *Ketils saga hængs*). This may – but does not necessarily – imply that the verses of this kind of saga were composed at the same time as the prose.

Nevertheless, the inclusion of verse is but one element of the generic system that produced the *fornaldarsögur*. The Romances are kept within the parameters of the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre by virtue of their being set in prehistoric Scandinavia. However, they do not have a core of verse, nor do they try to imitate the prosimetric form by including stanzas. Rather, they are imitative of the *riddarasögur*. These sagas can be approached as a special hybrid subgenre that can be distinguished from *fornaldarsögur* proper, which are characterized by more traditional structure and content. Sagas and *þættir* with minimal verse, say one stanza or poem, may well be grouped more appropriately with those that contain no verse, since their metrical segments are likely to be structurally and developmentally insignificant.

Even if the non-prosimetric or minimally prosimetric *fornaldarsögur* potentially ought to be thought of differently in terms of the trajectories of the development of the subgenre, both orally and into its written manifestations, it is after all the clear link in content (not structure or form) that lead to the sagas lacking verse to be grouped with the heavily prosimetric sagas in the first place, and the expression of this generically related content must not be underestimated. As Alastair Fowler has said:

genre has a quite different relation to creativity from the one usually supposed, whereby it is little more than a restraint upon spontaneous expression. Rightly understood, it is so far from being a mere curb on expression that it makes the expressiveness of literary works possible. Their relation to the genres they embody is not one of passive membership but of active modulation. Such modulation communicates. (Fowler 1982: 20.)

Fowler's general point has a useful application to the *fornaldarsaga* corpus in underlining that however disparate their origins and forms may be, the generic expression of shared content in the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre happened for a reason. For example, the genealogies or regnal lists counted as amongst the *fornaldarsögur* have at their core a concern with the boundary between this world and the otherworld, the crossing of the boundary between then and how the two worlds can blend. In *Fundinn Noregr* (ch. 2, p. 151), for example, the woman Góí is kidnapped by Hrólfur ór Bjargi, the son of the giant Svaði, who takes her to Kvenland. After her brother Nórr fights the giant's son and both are wounded and reconciled, Nórr marries the giant's sister and Hrólfur marries Góí. This key focus on the boundary of the otherworld and its transgression is a central part of the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre and brings these shorter narratives firmly into the orbit of the rest of the legendary sagas. (Leslie 2008.) As discussed above, the appearance of translated and then indigenous *riddarasögur* likely facilitated the emergence of the non-prosimetric *fornaldarsögur*, and the shared content and strategies of the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre serve to hold an otherwise, perhaps unforgivably, diverse genre together.<sup>34</sup>

The non-prosimetric *fornaldarsögur* need further study concerning the balance of their content and structure and their origin as a probable hybrid between the prosimetric *fornaldarsaga* subgenre and its episodic use of verse and the motif-based and highly patterned structure of the

indigenous *riddarasögur*. A fuller understanding of that relationship could perhaps provide a more certain understanding of the development of the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre itself. Genre studies of the *fornaldarsögur* must be augmented with more consideration of the role of prosimetrum in the development of the sagas, and the role of the verses in the sagas as we have them preserved today. More generally, the preceding survey and discussion demonstrates that a generative approach to genre is more helpful when trying to make sense of disparate elements in otherwise clearly related texts than approaching generic categories at any level as exclusive.

## NOTES

- 1 For a wide-ranging approach to the definition of genre, see Frog, this volume.
- 2 The subgenre designation *fornaldarsögur* is translated variously in English as “legendary sagas”, “heroic sagas”, “legendary-heroic sagas”, “mythical-heroic sagas”, and “sagas of ancient times” (the most literal translation). The variation in translations reflects the fact that the sagas contain legendary, heroic, mythical and ancient material, albeit rather mixed together. *Norð(u)urlanda* [‘of the Northern/Nordic lands’] is sometimes appended as a clarifying element to *fornaldarsögur*, since all these tales are set in ancient Scandinavia (as opposed to Iceland, the scene of much other medieval Icelandic literature).
- 3 Any evidence that can be gleaned from the medieval sources themselves has usually held to be preferable to the modern genre categories that could be seen as being imposed on the medieval material; unfortunately the sources offer very little in the way of establishing a set of genre norms. Lars Lönnroth in his 1975 article “The Concept of Genre Literature” defends his approach in this vein (first published in detail 1964), against Joseph Harris’s criticism of paying attention to medieval terms to look for suitable labels or approaches to genre classification (1972).
- 4 Note that here I use the term “romance” in the sense of a collective designation for *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur*. It refers to their mode of expression and is not a genre term in itself. Later in the article, “romance” is used as a term to denote a subdivision of the *fornaldarsaga* subgenre; when it should be understood thus ought to be clear. The medieval use of the term *riddarasögur* is found in the longer version of *Mágus saga jarls* from the mid-fourteenth century.
- 5 See Fisher, this volume, for another example of constructing genre based on the arrangement of texts within manuscripts.
- 6 Most notably menippean satire and Boethius’s *Consolatio Philosophiae* (see Dronke 1994). For a study of Old Norse prosimetrum focused on eddic poetry, see Leslie 2013.
- 7 This is counting what Rafn titles *Frá Fornjóti ok hans ættmönnum* as two texts: *Hversu Noregr byggðist* and *Fundinn Noregr*, which he groups together.
- 8 Guðni Jónsson published several editions of the *fornaldarsaga* corpus based on Rafn’s edition with several texts added. All quotations from the *fornaldarsögur* in this paper are from the three volume edition he published with Bjarni Vilhjálmsson in 1943–1944. All translations from Old or Modern Icelandic are my own.
- 9 Although the additions made by Guðni Jónsson are by and large accepted; see above and Driscoll 2009: 73–74.
- 10 For example Righter-Gould’s study of the structure of *fornaldarsögur* (1980) and Hallberg’s treatment of the *fornaldarsögur* as a corpus (1982). Righter-Gould’s conclusions have been criticized by Marianne Kalinke as her findings are equally applicable to the *riddarasögur*, although from the point of view of

- genre development, this makes Righter-Gould's results even more interesting in themselves.
- 11 In addition to the scene from *Borgils saga ok Hafliða* discussed below, the inclusion of *fornaldarsögur* type material in Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* from around 1200 shows that such material was in oral tradition across Scandinavia (see Bjarni Guðnason 1981).
  - 12 *Borgils saga ok Hafliða* is from the fourth decade of the thirteenth century (Brown 1952: 17–18), and it has been questioned whether a saga composed so long after an event claimed to have happened in the early twelfth century is valid evidence for the claims made about the saga in the seventeenth (see Foote 1953–1956; Jesch 1984).
  - 13 The manuscript from c.1270 preserves eleven mythological and eighteen heroic poems in eddic metres. Two short pieces only in prose accompany the poems (known as *Dráp Niflunga* and *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*).
  - 14 For a debate on many of the issues touched upon here, see “Interrogating Genre in the *Fornaldarsögur*: Round-Table Discussion” (2006) and Leslie 2013. It could be noted here that these arguments pertain only to the *fornaldarsögur* and not to the *Íslendingasögur*, for which a different development trajectory is posited with regards to how verse may have influenced their development. The *Íslendingasögur* that lack verse probably date from the same time and have the same origin as those with verse. Nevertheless, the role in the narrative that verse plays in these two saga subgenres is naturally comparable.
  - 15 The numbers in parentheses after the title of the saga is the number of stanzas that the saga contains according to the three volume collection edited by Guðni Jónsson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsón (1943–1944). See also my discussion of the selection of the corpus below. The corpus was initially determined by Rafn (in his edition of 1829–1830), and later by Guðni Jónsson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsón (in their edition of 1943–1944), who expanded the corpus slightly.
  - 16 *Frá Fornjóti ok hans ættmönnum* is used here as a common name to designate the related texts *Hversu Noregr byggðist* and *Fundinn Noregr*.
  - 17 Also known as *Heiðreks saga konungs ok Hervarar*.
  - 18 Also known as *Héðins saga ok Högna* or *Högna saga Hálfðanarsonar*.
  - 19 Also known as *Ragnarssona þáttr*.
  - 20 For the relationship of *Ynglinga saga* to the *fornaldarsögur* see e.g. Mitchell 1991: 18, 104; Jørgensen 2009; Mundal 2009.
  - 21 *Haðarlag* is a simple metre somewhat in between eddic and skaldic measures; it has been described as *málaháttur* with *dróttkvætt* rhymes (Turville-Petre 1976: xxxiv–xxxv). It is most well-known for its use in *Hrafnsmál*. On this stanza in *Sǫrla þáttr*, see Leslie-Jacobsen 2015: 40–41.
  - 22 *Hervarar saga* also contains Hjálmar's death song (see Heusler & Ranisch 1903: xxxvii–xliv). For an analysis of Hjálmar's death song in the two texts, see Leslie 2014.
  - 23 Án is the younger son of Björn and Þorgerðr, who is the daughter of Þoðmóðr Framarsson and Hrafnhildr, the daughter of Ketill hængr (*Áns saga bogsveigis*, ch. 1, p. 404).
  - 24 This is interesting particularly given Elizabeth Ashman Rowe's work on *Áns saga* as a hybrid between a *fornaldarsaga* and an *Íslendingasaga* (1993), where the emphasis is on *Áns saga* as a family saga.
  - 25 The literal translation of this term is problematic: in the context, this creature seems to be a kind of generic troll (see also Frog 2013).
  - 26 Other stanzas spoken by supernatural creatures in the saga are introduced with the standard *hann kvað* [‘he said’] or similar (for example: one stanza in ch. 6, p. 164, by a man-shaped cliff coming out the sea; eight stanzas by a sea-goblin in ch. 7, pp. 165–166).



- 27 In the edition of *Gautreks saga* from 1944 there are 33 (chs. 3–7, pp. 13–28), but in Heusler & Ranisch 1903, edited differently, there are 24 (1903: 38–43).
- 28 Note that several of the *fornaldarsögur*, for example *Qrvar-Odds saga* and *Bósa saga*, exist in more than one form, usually a longer and shorter one. I have not gone into detail about this here, but mention it for *Gautreks saga* since the difference between the versions is rather extreme considering the saga is not that long.
- 29 Another dubious alliterative couplet of this kind is in *Gylfaginning: Hár segir at hann komi eigi heill út nema hann sé fróðari, ok 'Stattu fram meðan þú fregn/sitja skal sá er segir'* (Faulkes 1982: 8) ['High says that he would not emerge unscathed unless he were wiser, and "Stand forward while you enquire, the one who says shall sit"']. Faulkes comments that these lines "are metrical enough to be arranged as verse, but whether they are a quotation, and if so from what, it is impossible to say" (Faulkes 1982: 58).
- 30 The transformation of the *fornaldarsögur* material into *rímur* and ballads in the late and post medieval period seems to support this (see Hall 2005).
- 31 It is also possible that there were once verses that have disappeared in the course of transmission, although this is by and large impossible to say.
- 32 There is not space here to go in to the complex question of why verse romances were translated into prose in Old Norse, but see Bibire (1982: 59–61), whose two arguments can be summarised by saying that prose was the preferred target form because unsuitable metres existed in Old Norse, and because the prose saga was the dominant literary art form. Both are interesting suggestions but neither are convincing: as for the first suggestion, Bibire dismisses outright the possibility of translation into skaldic verse (which I agree with, because it was usually used for completely different purposes), and discounts using eddic verse because it "may not have been culturally acceptable because of the specific associations of these metres with the native heroic myth and poetry" (1982: 59); as I commented on above, however, there is a large amount of skaldic-type material in eddic metre, so there must have been a great deal of flexibility in the use of the eddic metres. His second reason, that the *riddarasögur* were translated into prose because it was the dominant art form does not explain why they predominantly contain no verse at all: translations moulded specifically to fit the dominant art form would have been prosimetric, nor does Bibire's explanation that the Icelandic saga "developed more or less simultaneously with the European romance during the second half of the twelfth century" (1982: 61) help this; this is likely the time of the transition of the saga to the written form, but the native saga form must have existed in oral tradition for a long time before this, prosimetric sagas included.
- 33 Other scholars have sought rather to emphasise the difficulty in drawing sharp lines between the various saga subgenres belonging to the romance tradition. This topic is too large to open here, but it is worth mentioning Marianne E. Kalinke's (1982: 77) observation that grouping sagas too definitively into distinct categories of *riddarasögur* versus *fornaldarsögur* presents the danger of precluding the study of interrelationships between them.
- 34 Although topoi could, however, be shared between the *riddarasögur* and the *fornaldarsögur*, for example the bridal-quest plot type (Kalinke 1990), influence of the *fornaldarsögur* upon the *riddarasaga* subgenre seems to have been avoided (see also Bibire 1982: 73).



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## 10. From Traditional to Transitional Texts

### South Slavic Oral Tradition and Its Textualization

The concept of the transitional text has so far suffered the fate of the spectre of oral studies – its disturbing presence occasionally comes into view, but somehow without a proper recognition and place in the real world. Initially rejected and then accepted by Albert Lord (1960: 129; 1986a: 479–481), the term subsequently gained some currency among the leading theorists (Foley 1988; Finnegan 1992: 116), only to be questioned again in the more recent scholarship (Jensen 1998: 94–114; 2008: 50). By revisiting Lord's analyses and South Slavic oral and written tradition, this article describes transitional texts as a distinctive generic form involving two principal modes of enunciation – a literary notion of fixed textuality and an oral performative principle of composition in performance in traditional oral-formulaic language. Following the discussions of Lord and John Miles Foley, it also offers a synthetic framework for their analysis, based on the phraseology, style, outlook and contextual evidence for their documentation and singers.

South Slavic tradition offers a continuum of published texts with various degrees of oral-traditionality. Upon closer examination some turn out to be literary works written by educated poets familiar with oral tradition, whereas others are nothing more than fixed, fossilized texts that do not involve oral composition in performance and are not part of a living oral tradition (see also Miletich 1988: 100–102). But this still leaves us with a number of examples that involve both oral and written attitudes and techniques of composition, and these cannot be reduced to either one of them. After examining early-nineteenth-century examples of the emerging literary influence on the still predominantly oral Montenegrin culture of the time, I will argue that such transitional South Slavic texts emerged in two principal ways, either by educated writers adjusting their literary technique to accommodate an oral traditional content, or by oral singers appropriating originally literary characteristics to their oral performative manner and style. In the final instance, the article advocates that a consistent theoretical model of transitional texts can provide leverage for comparative studies of the contacts between orality and literacy, and invites further analyses of the interpellations between oral and literary culture in other traditions.

### *Direct Copying and the Notion of Fixed Textuality as Literary Features*

Since, as Lord says, in order to speak about transitional texts one has to have some actual knowledge of oral traditional texts (1995: 216), I will briefly describe the concept of oral tradition as developed in the Parry-Lord theory, and then supplement these views by Lord's later analyses of South Slavic transitional texts. Milman Parry and Lord conducted their research in former Yugoslavia, where oral tradition still lived on among predominantly illiterate oral singers, who composed their songs using the repertoire of traditional formulas and patterns inherited from the oral tradition. In other words, they did not actually memorize songs by heart but developed procedures for recomposing them during each performance, which is a process Parry and Lord perceived as essentially different from written literature (Lord 1960: 13–29).

Approaching the question of the differences between traditional and transitional texts, essential criteria that Lord proposes for such discrimination is the distinction between the composition in performance as a fundamental oral principle and the notion of the fixed text as a literary feature. As he points out, "one of the important differences between an oral traditional singer and a non-traditional one is the fact that the traditional singer does not think in terms of fixed textuality, whereas the non-traditional singer does" (Lord 1995: 213). This induces Lord to suggest that the notion of fixed textuality could be taken as the distinctive factor between them. Lord takes the moment "when he begins to think of really fixed lines, when he actually memorizes them" (*ibid.*: 213) to be the point when a traditional singer becomes a non-traditional poet.

Lord's criterion may seem to be vague and rather metaphorical, since it is hard to see how such a moment could ever be identified. Nonetheless, let us first consider the core of his argument, which rests on composition in performance as the fundamental principle of oral tradition. Both Parry and Lord repeatedly insist that what actually matters is not whether the song is simply recited orally or not, but whether it is composed and performed according to the principles of oral composition. In Parry's words, "[n]o graver mistake could be made than to think that the art of the singer calls only for memory [...] the oral poem even in the mouth of the same singer is ever in a state of change" (Parry 1987: 336). In other words, it is the rule of oral composition that, unless it is fossilized in the textual form, a song constantly changes from one performance to another and one singer to the next. Lord, for his part, also reminds us that oral "does not mean merely oral presentation [...] what is important is not the oral presentation but rather the composition during performance" (Lord 1960: 5).

It should be noted that Lord's remarks about fixed textuality were made specifically about the twentieth-century South Slavic oral tradition that was under strong literary influence, and where a particular notion of the fixed text clearly affected oral tradition from the written sphere and, as it were, marked its decline. Cases of 'classical' Somali or medieval Scandinavian and Celtic genres show that certain oral traditions are less flexible and rely



on memorization far more than is the case with South Slavic or Homeric epic. This would indicate that we could differentiate between the tendency towards word-for-word memorization that is intersubjectively maintained through social practice in certain, although relatively rare, oral traditions, from the conception of a fixed text that objectively exists in written form outside a given oral tradition, which affects the oral tradition through literary influence.

While a strict distinction between improvisation and memorization therefore seems to be false, as Frog recently persuasively argued (2011: esp. 23–24; see also Frog, this volume), it does not invalidate the investigation of the consequences of interplays between our basic notions of literary fixity and oral flexibility in a given tradition and particular cultural practice. Even scholars like Ruth Finnegan, who argues against the strict distinction between memorization and composition in performance, still admit that “[a]s soon as one looks hard at the notion of exact verbal reproduction over long periods of time, it becomes clear that there is very little evidence for it” (Finnegan 1977: 140).<sup>1</sup> Ian Morris summarizes the point as follows:

The idea of exact reproduction that we hold, as members of a literate society, does not exist in oral cultures [...] certain controls over elements of plot and devices of epic distance [...] will apply, but neither the poet nor his hearers wish for more than this. This observation has been made by nearly all ethnographers interested in oral poetry and is one of the most securely established generalizations. (Morris 1986: 85)

In any case, South Slavic tradition enables us to follow how the notion of a fixed text that exists in a written form directly affects oral performances and particular oral singers, and some typical examples of this interplay are given below.

Perhaps, as I indicated earlier, it is impossible to capture literally the moment when a singer actually “begins to think of really fixed lines”. But in South Slavic tradition we often have at our disposal various songs with the same subject, documented from different singers from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century. The newer variants of these songs are sometimes apparently influenced by the ones from previously published popular collections. In such instances, comparative analysis enables us to determine quite accurately to what extent these newer songs are actually the product of composition during performance in oral traditional language.

### *Basic Characteristics of Transitional Texts*

Distinguishing between oral traditional and literary style and approach, Parry and Lord initially claimed that texts can be either oral or literary, and denied the possibility of transitional or mixed forms. In his seminal work, *The Singer of Tales*, Lord explicitly refuted the possibility of transitional texts:



It is worthy of emphasis that the question we have asked ourselves is whether there can be such a thing as a transitional *text*; not a *period* of transition between oral and written style, or between illiteracy and literacy, but a *text*, product of the creative brain of a single individual. [...] I believe that the answer must be negative, because the two techniques are, I submit, contradictory and mutually exclusive. (Lord 1960: 129.)

This conclusion followed from Parry's and Lord's general understanding of oral tradition and their fundamental hypothesis about the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as oral-dictated texts. Emphasizing the oral-formulaic character of the Homeric epic, they imagined Homer as a traditional oral singer. As Foley later commented, "only if Homer were himself an unlettered bard, so went the original explanation, could he have composed the epic. Since there could be no 'transitional text', the only recourse for writing would be dictation to an amanuensis" (Foley 1997: 162).<sup>2</sup>

Such a strict distinction between oral traditional and literary style soon became subject to criticism. Continued analyses of medieval and Old English poetry, for which no data about their origin and documentation have been preserved, showed that they typically display both oral-formulaic and literary characteristics (Stevick 1962; Campbell 1966; Curschmann 1967; Campbell 1978). In several articles, John Miletich conducted an elaborate microstructural stylistic analysis in order to distinguish between oral and literary style in South Slavic and ancient and medieval traditions in general. Lord criticized Miletich for bypassing the question of formula in his analyses (Lord 1986a: esp. 481–491) but he also went on to reconsider his original views and recognized that "there seem to be texts that can be called either transitional or belonging to the first stage of written literature" (*ibid.*: 479–480). Lord admitted that his initial approach to such texts by analysing the density of formulas as a test of their orality "was too simplistic to cover the variety of situations in the medieval milieu", and that one also has to consider their oral-traditionality and the oral-traditionality of the structures or systems to which they belong (*ibid.*: 481). Commenting on this article, Foley made a further remark that one cannot generalize freely about "the transition", and that it must be recognized that the nature and results of the merger depend on the life history of the individual and the role of literacy in his/her culture (Foley 1988: 55). Meanwhile, much has been done in terms of analysing relations and interpellations between oral and written traditions in the South Slavic context (Miletić & Pešić 1976; Bošković-Stulli 1983; Petrović 1988), but the term "transitional text" somehow disappeared from these discussions.

I shall now focus on the South Slavic oral tradition before addressing wider issues in the concluding part of the paper. As suggested, there is an obvious advantage in discussing transitional texts in the South Slavic tradition in comparison to the medieval European and Homeric contexts; as Lord says, "we have enough information in the South Slavic material to make that determination. There is an abundance of pure oral-traditional South Slavic verse extending over several centuries" (Lord 1986a: 493). It enables us to reconstruct a genuine oral traditional style and phraseology,

and to describe a number of traditional subjects, formulas and themes. In addition, the earliest published collections of folk songs from the first half of the nineteenth century already usually contain data about the singers, contributors, editors and collectors. Such data are usually not comprehensive, but they nevertheless contain some background information about the date and place of collection, the name of the singer and his/her short biography. All this allows us to examine such a text, just as Foley and Lord instruct, in the context of a singer's biography, the role of literacy in his/her culture, and the overall oral-traditionality of structures and systems adopted in the songs. Upon revisiting some of Lord's analyses of several distinctive cases of such contacts and mergers, I will distinguish transitional texts composed by literate poets from those representing textualized performances of oral singers.

### *Transitional Texts in South Slavic Tradition Composed by Literate Authors*

The first group scrutinized by Lord are South Slavic texts written by literate authors well versed in traditional style and manner. As mentioned earlier, his initial rejection of transitional texts meant that they could therefore only be either oral or literary. Consequently, in *The Singer of Tales* he described as literary works the collections that adopt many traditional elements but were written by literate authors, like *Ogledalo srbsko* ['Serbian Mirror'] (1846), edited by Montenegrin Bishop-Prince Petar Petrović Njegoš, or *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga* [A Pleasant Discourse of the Slavic People'] (1756), published by the Franciscan monk Andrija Kačić Miošić: "strikingly close though they may sometimes be to the folk epic, [they] are nevertheless definitely written works" (Lord 1960: 132). In later articles, Lord adopts a different attitude towards such works, and suggests that Njegoš passed from a traditional singer in his early years to a literary poet (Lord 1986b: 19–64; 1995: 212–238). Firstly, Lord takes into consideration several early songs by Njegoš published by his tutor, the prominent Serbian poet and collector of folk songs Sima Milutinović Sarajlija in his collection of Montenegrin oral songs, *Pjevanija Crnogorska i Hercegovačka* ['Montenegrin and Herzegovinian Songbook'] (1837). Following the analyses of these songs by Vido Latković (1963: 32–38), Lord quotes the opening verses of the songs *Crmnječani* ['The Crmnječani'] (No. 25) and *Mali Radojica* ['Little Radojica'] (No. 56) and concludes that they are written entirely in traditional form. These songs are thus oral traditional songs that young Njegoš, like any Montenegrin of his time, had learned during his youth in a society with a strong oral epic tradition. Lord suggests that there are several other songs in the collection that Njegoš did not learn from other singers but composed anew in the traditional manner. Lord focuses on a song called *Nova pjesna crnogorska o vojni Rusah i Turakah početoj u 1828. godu* ['New Montenegrin Song of the War between the Russians and Turks that Started in 1828'] and indicates that it has much in common with traditional songs about recent events sung by illiterate local singers but also contains certain non-traditional elements. As he explains, in *Nova pjesna crnogorska*:

there are elements not belonging to traditional style which reflect the cult of the gusle and the influence of Serbian nationalism. After a contrived evocation to the vila asking that she “bring together all voices into the gusle”, the song itself opens with a statement of date, “In one thousand eight hundred / and half of the twenty-seventh year”, an element not found in truly traditional epic. (Lord 1995: 234)

Because of these non-traditional features, Lord argues, “we are justified in considering the period of Njegoš’s output of ‘new songs’ written by himself and not learned from singers, as transitional between the oral style and the written” (*ibid.*: 234). Lord then briefly follows Njegoš’s literary evolution and considers his later famous works like *Luča Mikrokozma* [‘The Ray of Microcosm’] (1845) and *Gorski vijenac* [‘The Mountain Wreath’] (1847). Even though they were also predominantly written in epic decasyllables, with occasional use of formulas and other elements of traditional style, Lord concludes that they are nonetheless clearly written, literary works composed by an educated poet. Njegoš’s literary work and career, therefore, offer a variety of forms, from genuine oral traditional songs and transitional texts to literary epics inspired by the oral tradition (*ibid.*: 225).

Lord finds a similar diversity of texts with varying degrees of traditionality in Kačić’s *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga*. Like Njegoš, Kačić was immersed in the traditional style from his youth and, as he himself relates, travelled with a *gusle* in his hands “from Skadar to Zadar, from Mostar to Kotari” (*od Skadra do Zadra, od Mostara do Kotara*, Kačić 1988: 16). In the spirit of the Enlightenment, Kačić composed his *Razgovor* in the style of traditional poetry in order to make them accessible to a wider audience. However, even though Kačić liked the traditional epic songs, he was suspicious of their historical veracity and wrote his *Razgovor* as a unified history of the South Slavs that seems to be founded more on available chronicles, histories, documents and personal accounts than on folk epics. Scholars usually consider only two out of 157 songs from Kačić’s *Razgovor*, *Ženidba Sibirjanin Janka* [‘The Wedding of Sibirjanin Janko’] and *Dragoman Divojka* [‘Dragoman Girl’], to be genuine oral traditional songs. In addition to being fully traditional with regard to their manner and style, both appear after Kačić’s explicit comment that the two songs were widespread among the South Slavs, although perhaps not completely reliable as historical sources (see Pantić 2002: 195–207). Lord goes further in examining Kačić’s style and input and analyses in more detail the relation between traditional and non-traditional elements in the songs from *Razgovor*. Considering in particular the beginning of the first song, entitled *Pisma Radovana i Mjelovana* [‘The Song of Radovan and Mjelovan’], Lord shows that its opening lines are fully traditional and have many parallels in other South Slavic oral traditional songs. However, Lord continues, Kačić then introduces certain non-traditional elements, such as the consistent rhyming in the verses:

<p>U knjizi ga lipo pozdravljaše, ter ovako starac bjesidaše, “Mjelovane, sva je vjeka na te! probudi se, biće bolje za te!” (Lord’s translation.)</p>	<p>In the letter he greeted him well and thus the old man said: “Mjelovan, long life to you! Wake up, it will be better for you!”</p>
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Furthermore, Lord argues that in addition to end rhyme, the correspondence between the characters bears other characteristics of the literary epistolary style of the time. His conclusion is that “the letters from Kačić No. 1 stem from that literary genre, not from traditional epic, although the formulas of the frame are traditional” (Lord 1995: 229).

The analyses of Njegoš’s and Kačić’s works thus led Lord to change his previous claims and to conclude that “there *are* transitional texts in South Slavic epic, probably several kinds” (Lord 1986b: 34, emphasis original); some:

were written by authors who were either members themselves of the traditional community or had become immersed in the traditional poetry to the point that they could compose as a member of that community, even if they had been brought up in a very written literary milieu (Lord 1986b: 34).

Certain texts that, like the opening song from Kačić’s *Razgovor*, show a tendency towards consistent rhyming couplets and have a recognizable literary origin are, as Lord says, rather literary than transitional. Others were written in the traditional style, which makes such a differentiation much harder: “This is so true of Kačić that many of his poems are indistinguishable from genuine oral traditional songs. In those, he shows himself as an outsider who has become an insider, or who can compose as one” (Lord 1995: 231). It appears that Lord here applies the term transitional text only to particular texts that successfully merge both forms, which were written by literate authors raised in the traditional oral milieu or exceptionally well versed in oral traditional style. In other words, it seems that in Lord’s view transitional text is more than a mere imitation of oral tradition – in a way, it needs to be both oral traditional and literary, but not to the point where literary elements and non-traditional subjects and perspective quite clearly dominate over traditional ones.

To sum up, Lord’s analyses enable us to capture a wide group of South Slavic texts, written or composed by literate poets well immersed in oral traditional manner and style, by differentiating three distinct cases. Only insofar as a literate poet acts purely as collector-performer and accurately reproduces oral traditional song without his/her significant editorial and artistic input can such a text be taken as oral traditional; such are *Ženidba Sibirjanin Janka* and *Dragoman Divojka* from Kačić’s *Razgovor*, or *Crmničani* and *Mali Radojica* from Milutinović’s *Pjevanija* performed by young Njegoš. If, however, such a text is written in a literary manner, then it should be described as a written literary text, as is the case with Njegoš’s later works or songs from Kačić’s *Razgovor* with recognizable literary origin and style. Finally, if such a text resembles oral traditional songs in both its subjects and style, it might be classified as transitional text; it contains a distinctive combination of, on the one hand, subjects, themes, oral formulas and formulaic expressions that are part of oral tradition and are commonly used by traditional singers and, on the other, literary features introduced by an educated poet. According to Lord’s discussion, Njegoš’s *Nova pjesma crnogorska* and many songs from Kačić’s *Razgovor* belong to this group.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the songs from this third group are not the only instance of transitional texts in the South Slavic tradition. A more detailed analysis, I submit, would show that a number of other examples could be found among apparently doctored texts from Njegoš's *Ogledalo srbsko* and in other later South Slavic collections for which Foley's term oral-derived texts for "the manuscript or tablet works of finally uncertain provenance that nonetheless show oral traditional characteristics" seems particularly suitable (Foley 1991: 5). In this respect, they resemble works that Lauri Honko labels semi-literary epic, such as Lönnrot's *Kalevala* or Kreutzvald's *Kalevipoeg*, which contain significant editorial input on the overall level, but still retain "the strong imprint of traditions underneath these epics" (Honko 1998: 12). Insofar as songs from such collections are not simple mystification of oral tradition such as Prosper Mérimée's *La Guzla, ou Choir de Poésies Illyriques recueillies dans la Dalmatie, la Croatie et l'Herzégowine* (1827) or Václav Hanka's allegedly Czech national poems *Rukopis Královédvorský* ['Kralovedvorska Manuscript'] (1817) and *Libušin Soud* ['Libusa's Judgement'] (1817), but compiled and altered by educated authors immersed in a given oral tradition, they too can be approached from the perspective of transitional texts.

### *Transitional South Slavic Texts Documented from Oral Singers*

Another question that stems from the previous discussion is this: is a reverse process possible? That is, can an already fixed and published text become adopted or readopted by oral tradition? Alan Jabbour postulated such a case in the context of Old English poetry, and proposed the definition of transitional text "as a text which, though appropriated from written into memorial tradition, has not yet been subjected to the full gamut of traditional modification and remains close to its written exemplar" (Jabbour 1969: 181). The problem with this description, as Jabbour himself readily admits, is its speculative nature:

We can never be sure that the memorial interpretation just presented, or any other interpretation, actually fits the facts of Old English tradition. The facts which have not been lost forever are imbedded in debatable hints, ambiguous suggestions, and fragments of evidence. (Jabbour 1969: 182.)

South Slavic context provides a safer ground for such discussion, and enables us to identify transitional texts documented from singers who adopt a notion of fixed textuality but also retain to some extent the principle of composition in performance. A consideration of this, therefore, provides a more systematic account of a possible merger between the worlds of literacy and orality and indicates the ways in which the elements of literary culture can be introduced in an oral tradition by the singers themselves. Lord was fully aware of the enormous influence of the popular published collections on the singers that he and Parry met with during their fieldwork. In the article entitled "The Influence of a Fixed Text" (Lord 1991: 170–185), he classified the songs from Parry's collection into three categories. While

the first are independent of the published tradition and “pure’ in their traditional orality”, the second are a mixture of the adopted and traditional elements: “even when a singer who can write copies it, he makes changes, tending to express some lines in the formulas to which he is most accustomed in his own singing. Even as copyist he remains to some extent a traditional singer” (*ibid.*: 183). In distinction, texts from the third group are “nothing more than relics of epic tradition and clear cases of direct copying or word-for-word memorization” (*ibid.*: 171).

Recorded cases show that South Slavic singers can respond to published songs in different ways. Avdo Međedović’s poem *Ženidba Smailagić Meha* [‘The Wedding of Smailagić Meho’] offers an example of a genuine oral traditional song produced from an already published text. Međedović was an exceptional singer, the most talented of all Yugoslav singers Parry and Lord worked with. Although Međedović was an illiterate traditional singer, he sometimes used published collections to learn new songs. This is how he learned the song *Ženidba Smailagić Meha*, which was read to him by his friend from a late-nineteenth-century collection of folk songs published by Friedrich S. Krauss (1886). When Međedović later performed his version, he added more elements of ornamentation, developed the characters and expanded the song from 2200 verses to over 12,000 verses. Thus, although the source of the song is clearly in the published collection, in this particular case this fact hardly lessens its oral traditional character. Međedović, as Lord says, “did not consider text in the book as anything more than the performance of another singer” (Lord 1960: 79); the result is the same as if the singer had heard it from another singer as a part of the living oral tradition. It differs only in the distribution of the song from one traditional singer to another being achieved with the aid of a different medium.

Matija Murko describes a completely different outcome of an encounter between an oral singer and a previously published song:

In early 1928 singer T. Vučić, having been invited by me to sing the poem “Majka Jugovića” for the Seminar for Slavic Philology in Prague, asked for the text collected by Vuk Karadžić, which he studied assiduously before appearing in public. (Murko 1990: 124.)

In other words, although Tanasije Vučić was a distinguished traditional singer who performed his songs according to the rules of oral tradition, in this particular case he behaved contrary to his usual practice. The formal character and scholarly context of his performance, as well as, it appears, his appreciation for this particular, famous song published by Karadžić a century before, all induced him to treat it as a fixed text and to try to reproduce it as accurately as possible. In other words, the singer in this case departed from the authority of oral tradition, which is impersonal, in the name of the authority of Karadžić’s version established in literary tradition. Thus, although his performance was still oral in the literal sense, it did not actually follow the principle of composition in performance – the notion that there is an authoritative version that should be accurately reproduced is essentially an idea from a literary world.



I would, therefore, classify as transitional those texts that represent performances of the second type in Lord's discussion. Such texts offer a mixture of a fixed text and a song orally composed in performance; they were written down or recorded from singers who adopt the notion of fixed textuality and exact reproduction, but also continue to some extent to follow the principle of composition during performance. In addition to Parry's and Lord's recordings, comprehensive early-twentieth-century collections, such as those of Novica Šaulić, Nikola Kašiković and Andrija Luburić, for example, contain many instances of this type.<sup>4</sup> Typically, these texts present versions of popular songs that closely resemble Karadžić's texts but still retain performative features that provide evidence of the contemporary oral tradition of a certain region and its singers.

All the aforementioned cases examine only singers influenced by the textualized performances of other singers, that is, previously published traditional oral songs. What would be their response to literary epics, such as those from Kačić's *Razgovor*? According to Lord's dictum, we would expect traditional singers to appropriate literary features to some extent according to their oral practice, introducing more oral-formulaic elements into literary features like frequent parallel rhymed verses and unusual phraseology. In the following section, I shall argue that this is exactly how an early-nineteenth-century oral singer, Đuro Milutinović Crnogorac, performed an originally literary song about the battle against Mahmut Pasha. As the earliest example of this sort for which sufficient background information is available, this case enables us to go further from the previous twentieth-century examples of the merger between oral tradition and the already firmly established written culture, into a period of emerging literary influence on the predominantly oral Montenegrin society of the time.<sup>5</sup>

### *Comparative Analysis of the Songs about the Battle against Mahmut Pasha*

Karadžić wrote down this song from a live performance of Montenegrin singer Đuro Milutinović Crnogorac around 1820 in central Serbia and published it as a folk song in his collection of *Narodne srpske pjesme* in 1823 (see Karadžić 1986, No. 10). Afterwards, Karadžić realized that this song was originally composed in the manner of oral songs by the Montenegrin Bishop-Prince Petar I, the uncle of the previously mentioned Petar II Petrović Njegoš. Like his more famous nephew, Petar I was also well immersed in local oral tradition, and occasionally composed such songs about relatively recent events, celebrating the role that his ancestors and he himself had had in the Montenegrin struggle against the Turks. His most popular compositions of this sort were the songs about the Montenegrin battles against a Turkish dignitary, Mahmut Pasha, from Skadar fought in 1796, as these were documented in several versions throughout the nineteenth century (Banašević 1951: 275–299; Zuković 1988: 145–168). A particularly suitable text for our comparison is a version that Sima Milutinović Sarajlija documented from the Montenegrin priest Rade Knežević and published



under the title *Boj u Martiniće Crnogoracah s Kara-Mahmutom Bušatlijom* [‘Montenegrin Battle of Martinići against Mahmut Pasha Bušatlija’] in his *Pjevanija* (Milutinović 1990, No. 168). Sima Milutinović had collected his version in Montenegro in late 1827 or 1828, that is, during Bishop Petar’s lifetime and only several years after Karadžić’s song was published. As it appears, during this period these songs were adopted by more advanced members of the Montenegrin society rather than by illiterate local oral singers. Being a priest, Rade Knežević belonged to a still comparatively narrow group of literate Montenegrins of the time, and Đuro Milutinović also received some education both before and after he became blind at the age of sixteen after suffering from small-pox (Durković-Jakšić 1952: 141–156). Thus, even though the bishop’s autographs were not preserved, it appears that literacy played an important part in the composition and distribution of these songs.

The analysis will show that the version from Milutinović’s *Pjevanija* (*Pjevanija* version henceforth) displays more literary and non-traditional elements. Four differences in Karadžić’s version in respect to the *Pjevanija* version will be identified: (a) the absence of the exact dating of events, (b) the absence of verses with the wider knowledge of historical context unusual for traditional song, (c) the transformation of the non-traditional verses and phrases into traditional lines and formulaic expressions, and (d) the decrease in the number of rhymed verses.<sup>6</sup>

I mentioned earlier Lord’s conclusion that “the statement of date is an element not found in truly traditional epic” (Lord 1995: 234).<sup>7</sup> The absence of a precise dating of the events in Karadžić’s version can thus be taken as the first notable difference between the two songs. Already the first two lines in the *Pjevanija* version: *Na tisuću i sedme stotine / devedeset i šeste godine* [‘In the year one thousand / seven hundred and ninety-six’] are thus non-traditional. In addition, the *Pjevanija* version contains another non-traditional element of a similar nature. The singer specifies that the battle took place *na julija dan jedanaesti, / baš na praznik svete Jefimije* [‘On the eleventh of July / on Saint Euphemia’s day’]. As already pointed out, both the specification of the exact date of the battle and the mention of this relatively minor and not widely known Christian saint indicate an educated author from the clerical circles (Banašević 1951: 283). Both couplets are absent from Karadžić’s version, which opens without mentioning a precise date and its place in the Christian calendar.

The second prominent difference between the two versions is wider knowledge of the historical context and international relations in the *Pjevanija* version. In Karadžić’s version, we typically find such information to be reduced or completely absent. A single example is taken as an illustration of this point. Revealing his plans to the Turkish representatives, the vizier Mehmet explains that the moment has come for them to capture the coastal territory:

A sad nejma u Boki Kotorskoj  
 Principova broda nikakvoga,  
 Ni golema u Primorje momka,  
 No sve pođe u Taliju ravnu  
 Da čuvaju Mletke od Francezah,  
 Kojizi su naši prijatelji,  
 Oni će nam u pomoći doći,  
 Kako su mi skoro obećali  
 Na dogovor što smo svijekali.

Sad ne ima u Boku Kotorsku  
 U njoj nema momka nijednoga,  
 Sve je pošlo u Taliju ravnu,  
 Baš da brani Mletke od Francuza;

For the moment, in the Bay of Kotor  
 Not a single principal's ship is found,  
 There are no brave men on the coast  
 For they all went to Italy  
 To protect the Venetians from the French,  
 Who are our friends and allies,  
 They will come to our rescue,  
 As they recently promised to me  
 During the summit that we held.<sup>8</sup>  
 (*Pjevanija* 1990: 682.)

At the moment, in the Bay of Kotor  
 Not a single man is found,  
 They all went to Italy  
 To defend the Venetians from the French.  
 (Karadžić 1986: 67.)

Even though both versions have quite a similar formulaic opening (with insignificant alteration of: *A sad nejma / u njoj nema*) and content, the differences in perspective and outlook between them are prominent. In the *Pjevanija* version the vizier Mehmet explains to the distinguished Turks that there are no Venetian ships because of their preoccupation with the French forces in Italy. Furthermore, he mentions the French as their allies and, basically, refers to their diplomatic contacts and agreement over the allied action. Such verses, containing a thorough knowledge of international relations and revealing information apparently inaccessible to the traditional singer, are absent from Karadžić's version. Hence there is no reference to the Venetian doge (*princip*) or to the diplomatic and military alliance of the French with Mahmut Pasha. Karadžić's version therefore adopts these elements to a lesser degree than the *Pjevanija* version and appears as more traditional.

The two quotations also differ in respect to their usage of traditional stylistic devices, which are more frequently applied in Karadžić's version. In the first line of the passage from the *Pjevanija* version, the use of the locative (*u Boki Kotorskoj*) suggests an educated author with a knowledge of formalized grammar. Karadžić's singer, on the other hand, uses the accusative (*u Boku Kotorsku*) as a characteristic feature of the local dialect but also as a kind of distinctive device in the traditional songs. While in some cases traditional singers use the locative instead of the accusative to fill in a missing syllable, in others they inversely use the accusative for the locative to achieve euphony (*u Boku Kotorsku*) and to transform geographic markers into formulaic expressions. Thus although the occasional examples of the locative are not uncommon for the oral singers, they are far more inclined to use the accusative instead of the locative in their songs.

In addition, the opening of Karadžić's version contains repetitions characteristic of oral performance, such as: *Sad ne ima / U njoj nema* ['Now there is no / In it there is no']. In distinction, the line of thought in the *Pjevanija* version is barely disrupted by the decasyllable. The sentence progresses without interruption from one line to another and encompasses several verses. This characteristic is commonly found throughout the song. For example, lines 1–4 and 5–7 in the *Pjevanija* version can be read as two separate sentences:

Na tisuću i sedme stotine	In the year of one thousand
devedeset i šeste godine	seven hundred and ninety-six
Mahmut vezir sovjet učinio	Vizier Mahmut called a meeting
u bijelu Skadru na Bojanu.	in white Skadar upon Bojana.
Svu gospodu tursku izabranu	All notable Turkish lords
na divan je bio sakupio,	he summoned to an assembly
pa im 'vako Mahmut govorio:	and then addressed them as follows:
( <i>Pjevanija</i> 1990: 682.)	

Although the expression is separated into decasyllabic verse with the tendency towards rhymed couplets, the opening lines basically convey two complete sentences. Karadžić's version, on the other hand, typically displays a series of repetitions and retardations characteristic of the oral performance, as in lines 1, 3 and 5:

Mahmut vezir vijeć učinio [...]	Vizier Mahmut called a meeting [...]
Na vijeću vezir sakupio [...]	at the meeting he summoned [...]
Kada ih je vezir sakupio	When the vizier summoned them

These verses are very similar and basically reformulate the same idea. Such repetitions are typical signs of composition in performance, providing the singer with short rests or retardations that enable him to proceed further. While it can be objected that similar stylistic devices can perhaps be employed deliberately by educated poets as well, a number of similar examples, found throughout Karadžić's version, present the persuasive evidence of the partial transformation of non-traditional elements in the manner of traditional oral song.

Finally, the verses also illustrate the decreasing number of rhymed verses in Karadžić's version compared with the one from Sima Milutinović. In the above example, the verses from the *Pjevanija* version show a tendency towards consistent rhyme: aabccbb. Out of seven rhymed verses, verses 3, 6 and 7 have corresponding participle endings, which is a quite common form of rhyming in traditional songs. Verses 1–2 and 4–5, however, contain rhymed couplets of nouns, with full rhyme that encompasses several syllables. In the corresponding verses from Karadžić's version, we find only the rhyming of participle endings in lines 1–3 and 5–6. This is typical for the two songs in general. Đuro Milutinović Crnogorac behaves as a traditional oral singer, avoiding rhyming and parallel rhymed couplets. Consequently, in Karadžić's version corresponding rhymed verses from the

*Pjevanija* version are typically excluded, or have a different word order and grammatical person. Several typical cases are given:

Crnogorci, moja braćo draga, Nuto nama nenadnoga vraga! Evo me je knjiga dopanula. [...]	Crnogorci, moja braćo draga! Evo nas je knjiga dopanula. [...]
Crnu goru i Primorje ravno, Kakono smo žuđeli odavno. [...]	Crnu goru i Primorje ravno Kojeno smo odavna žuđeli. [...]
Ali evo moje rane ljute, Brđani mi zatvoriše pute.	Nego evo moje rane ljute Brđani mi pute zatvoriše.
Montenegrins, my dear brothers, We are facing real troubles! I have received a letter. [...]	Montenegrins, my dear brothers, We have received a letter. [...]
Montenegro and the Adriatic Coast That we desire the most. [...]	Montenegro and the Adriatic Coast That we desire for so long. [...]
But I am still suffering the most, From the Brđani who keep their roads closed.	For I am still suffering the most, From the Brđani who closed their roads.
( <i>Pjevanija</i> 1990: 682–684.)	(Karadžić 1986: 67–69.)

While rhyme in oral traditional South Slavic songs has a very limited range and is strictly subjected to the traditional diction and style, both songs about the battle against Mahmut Pasha published in *Pjevanija* and Karadžić's collection contain an exceptionally large number of rhymed verses. The *Pjevanija* version, in addition, contains whole chains of rhymed verses. Alongside the mentioned septet at the beginning, the most prominent examples are verses 9–14, 27–30, 37–40, 90–94, 97–101, 148–151, 184–189, 211–215 and the concluding octet with four rhymed couplets. In total, at least 85 out of 256 verses in the *Pjevanija* version are rhymed, and many of them contain a proper rhyme. In Karadžić's version the total number of rhymed verses is also exceptionally high – approximately 57 out of 293 verses, but still much lower in comparison to the *Pjevanija* version. In other words, while in the *Pjevanija* version one third of the verses are rhymed, in Karadžić's version that number decreases to around one fifth of all the verses. Most often, rhymed lines in Karadžić's version are couplets with the corresponding participle or verb endings (*sakupio / govorio* ['gathered / addressed'], *pregaziše / dohodiše* ['crossed / arrived'] etc.) – as many as 22. Karadžić's singer also uses leonine rhyme, but only in clearly formulaic expressions or geographic topoi, as in the verses *Vr'jeme dođe, udarit' se hoće* ['The time has come'] or *Od Sjenice i od Mitrovice / I lijepe šehar Đakovice* ['From Sjenica and from Mitrovica / and beautiful town of Đakovica']. Consecutive series of parallel rhymed verses are especially rare. While the *Pjevanija* version, in addition to the opening septet and concluding octet, contains three rhymed quatrains, four quintets and one sextet, Karadžić's

version has a single quartet. Nevertheless, even Karadžić's version only partially succeeds in absorbing the non-traditional elements and adjusting them to traditional phraseology. Thus, it occasionally contains lines with proper rhyme that encompasses several syllables (25–26, 40–41, 113–114, 255–256). Altogether, the total number of rhymed verses in Karadžić's version in general remains significantly higher than in genuine oral traditional songs and other songs collected from the same singer, where it stays below 10 per cent of all the verses.

On a more general level, the *Pjevanija* version contains a number of features that speak strongly in favor of its essentially non-performative character; such are the verses that appear to be more appropriate for literary style than for oral presentation (41–43, 128–129, 200–209). In accordance with the previous discussion, these verses either have a more traditional form or are simply absent from Karadžić's version. This all shows that Karadžić's version compared with the *Pjevanija* version shows a strong tendency to reproduce those verses that appear as traditional and to exclude or transform non-traditional verses and other literary characteristics in general.

To sum up, the evidence presented shows that the *Pjevanija* version is essentially a literary epic, a poetic composition written in a manner and style of traditional epic songs, while Karadžić's version contains far more traditional elements. I would, therefore, classify the *Pjevanija* version as a literary text written by an educated poet in the manner of traditional oral songs, and Karadžić's version as a transitional text that organically combines oral and literary features. It exemplifies another type of transitional text, documented from oral singers who adopted or appropriated texts composed outside oral tradition in a non-traditional manner. In other words, even though they are not originally a product of oral tradition itself, insofar as they have been in circulation they should be included in any consideration of oral tradition.

Such transitional texts are commonly found in the later part of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, when South Slavic oral tradition came under a stronger impact from literary culture. As the boundary separating originally written compositions and oral songs became more indistinct, it became easier for these literary epics to find their way into the repertoire of oral singers. For example, Murko's field research of Herzegovinian oral tradition in the 1930s showed that much of the repertoire of local oral singers consisted of songs originally composed by literate authors in a traditional manner and style, such as those from Maksim Šobajić's *Osveta Kosovska* ['The Revenge for Kosovo'] (1875). Local singers thus adopted these songs and performed them in oral form, and Murko rightfully took them into consideration when describing contemporary oral tradition.

But can such non-traditional texts ever be fully appropriated by oral tradition? In other words, can an originally literary text become a genuine oral traditional song? Even though such a scenario seems hypothetically possible, I am not aware of such a case in the South Slavic context and I think that it is unlikely that an adequate example could be found among the songs

about newer events. These songs were documented relatively soon after being composed, and thus could not have been thoroughly reinterpreted by oral tradition over a longer period, although they sometimes had a limited circulation among different oral singers. Thus, as much as the songs about the battles against Mahmut Pasha from Karadžić's collection show traditional characteristics, they still retain certain recognizably non-traditional elements in regard to their style, outlook and the role of Bishop Petar in the plot. What is more, with the increasing influence of literary culture on South Slavic oral tradition in the later period, it became even less likely for the songs about recent events to be frequently and continuously recomposed in each performance by generations of oral singers.

As far as the songs about older heroes and events are concerned, the problem is that we lack such compelling evidence of their non-traditional origin. To be sure, in certain songs about Marko Kraljević and the Kosovo battle, such as those describing Marko's capture of Kostur or the quarrel between Miloš Obilić and Vuk Branković, one recognizes subjects described in the old chronicles or monastic literary tradition. But it is still far from saying that such texts actually existed as oral songs, and that these songs originally contained strong literary features that later became fully appropriated by oral tradition. In any case, available evidence from a more recent period shows that originally literary songs were performed in oral form and even became popular among oral singers, but still retained quite recognizable traces of their non-traditional origin and thus deserve a generic label distinct from genuine oral traditional songs.

In brief, I consider as transitional those texts from South Slavic collections that appear to combine the notion of fixed textuality with performative features and display the aforementioned stylistic characteristics. These texts are strongly influenced by previously published collections or traditional-like songs composed by literate authors, but also show oral features arising from the singer's use of formulaic language and composition during performance. Like transitional texts of the first type, they are not simple imitations of oral songs, but are closely related to local oral tradition and fuse with it. Of course, it would be unjustified to make general claims about oral tradition based solely on such texts, but I believe our picture of a given oral tradition or a certain period would be incomplete if we exclude them altogether from our consideration.

### *Towards a Consistent Theoretical Model of Transitional Texts*

After the original "strong thesis" that oral and literary modes are mutually exclusive, oral theory relatively soon acknowledged that there is no great divide separating oral and written literature, and that interchange and merger between the two spheres are quite common (Finnegan 1977; Foley 1988: 16–18). Still, while *periods* of transition from oral to literary culture and transitional *figures* (such as Andrija Kačić Miošić and Petar Petrović Njegoš II) that passed from oral to literary culture have readily been acknowledged (Lord 1986b; 1995), less has been done to identify actual transitional texts.

South Slavic oral tradition proved to be particularly valuable for such consideration: being textualized in a relatively recent period, it contains information about its singers, contributors and editors, and thus provides solid evidence of how the transitional texts originated and from whom. In several articles written during the 1980s, Lord thus adopted the category of transitional texts to denote a group of South Slavic texts written by literate authors raised in the traditional oral milieu. Although Lord did not offer a systematic account or classification of such texts, he nevertheless examined several forms of merger between the oral and written spheres and identified some distinctive cases and groups.

In this essay I have argued that transitional South Slavic texts emerged in two ways. In the first case, they were composed by literate authors well versed in traditional style and technique. Such transitional texts are, for example, certain songs published by poets raised in a traditional milieu like Petar Petrović Njegoš and Andrija Kačić Miošić; even though these works were published by educated writers, they stem from local tradition and merge oral traditional features with literary style. Secondly, I considered as transitional those texts documented when singers performed orally a previously published text or a non-traditional text composed in the manner of oral song. It is indicated that oral singers can respond to published songs in various ways. If they show appreciation of their “author” and try to reproduce the text accurately, we are already on the terrain of the literary world. However, insofar as they remain traditional singers, their performance will involve elements of oral singing – that is, they are likely to appropriate some of the literary features such as statement of date, parallel rhymed verses or unusual phraseology and adapt them to an oral formulaic style and outlook or to improvise certain elements instead of copying them directly. If the result of their performance shows such an appropriation of literary features in oral traditional manner and style, it is best described as a transitional text. The variety of South Slavic cases discussed in this article shows that transitional texts cannot be simply discarded as aberrant phenomena or artificial products of obtrusive editing. Found throughout South Slavic tradition, they became more prominent with the increasing influence of literacy and published collections from the second half of the nineteenth century, and testify to a prolonged and productive interchange between oral and written tradition. My approach to such texts has been to analyse their style and phraseology, in the context of our previous knowledge of this tradition, as well as their outlook and contextual evidence about their documentation and singers. Consideration of oral traditions where these data are available provides, I believe, a consistent theoretical model of transitional texts for further comparative studies of the contacts between orality and literacy, which promises new insights into older traditions and collections where we lack such information about the conditions and circumstances of their textualization.



## NOTES

- 1 To be sure, the principle of composition in performance does not necessarily need to be recognized as such by the oral singers themselves. As far as the South Slavic context is concerned, singers interviewed by Parry and Lord typically claimed to reproduce the songs exactly as they had heard them. For instance, Đemail Zogić even boasted of being able to memorize the song of another singer immediately after the performance. However, Parry's and Lord's records show that when Zogić actually performed the song he had just heard from another singer, the two versions differed considerably, and that even Zogić's own version changed to a certain extent in later performances over the years (see Lord 1960: 27–28).
- 2 Jensen's more recent contesting of transitional texts apparently stems from this basic presumption about Homeric epics as oral compositions of a singular brilliant oral poet: "the mastery with which the poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* handles huge poems is based not on card indexes or anything of that nature, but on his professionally trained memory and creative powers ... My conclusion is that what Lord was fighting, when he declared that transitional texts are excluded on principle, was important and worth fighting against ... because Homerists have been unwilling to accept oral tradition as the proper framework for understanding the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*" (Jensen 1998: 111–112).
- 3 I am not sure, however, that so many of Kačić's poems are, as Lord says, "indistinguishable from genuine oral traditional songs", and I think that their detailed analysis would probably reveal literary features and thus confirm their transitional character. But, even if we assume that Lord is right on this matter, it would make no difference to their generic status. Kačić uses oral-formulaic language and style in a different medium to produce a written, fixed literary text in the manner of folk epic, not for the purpose of composition in performance or free recomposition of a general theme as an oral singer does.
- 4 Šaulić, Novica 1927–1929. *Srpske narodne pjesme. Iz zbirke Novice Šaulića*, III vols. Beograd: Grafički institut "Narodna misao". Kašiković, Nikola. *Srpske narodne junačke pjesme iz Bosne i Hercegovine*. Beograd: Arhiv SANU (Etnografska zbirka). No. 245: *Zaostavština Andrije Luburića*. Beograd: Arhiv SANU (Etnografska zbirka). No. 355; *Zbirka Andrije Luburića*, Beograd: Arhiv Srbije. AL-4, AL-6, AL-7, AL-8, AL-9, AL-10.
- 5 Older examples of transitional texts in South Slavic tradition can certainly also be identified in the collections dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Collections like that of Bogišić or the Erlangen manuscripts and popular manuscript songbooks from the southern parts of the Habsburg Empire were all compiled in the areas where written literature and oral tradition coexisted for centuries (see Pantić 2002). Nonetheless, given that in these cases we lack reliable information about their textualization and singers, I have focused here on the songs from the nineteenth century onwards.
- 6 Categories taken into consideration here are, of course, illustrative rather than exhaustive. For a more detailed and nuanced analysis of oral vs. literary features see Miletich (1974; 1976; 1978; 1988). However, it is worth pointing out Lord's critique of Miletich for bypassing the question of formula in his analyses (Lord 1986a: esp. 481–491). In any instance, as I argue here, stylistic differences alone cannot provide definitive answers in the discussion on transitional texts, and need to be accommodated to the oral-formulaic theory and supplemented by contextual evidence about a given song and the tradition it belongs to.
- 7 This is a valid point for the songs with recurrent themes transmitted by oral singers for generations, which we commonly associate with South Slavic oral tradition. In

the chronicle songs from certain areas more exposed to literate culture, such as the “Frontier Songs” which describe contemporary eighteenth- and nineteenth-century battles and events in the region of the Habsburg Military Border, it is not so uncommon to find a statement of date in the opening lines (see Matički 1974). Nevertheless, in the songs about the battles against Mahmut Pasha analysed in this chapter, we still find a statement of date (that had been omitted) excluded in the more traditional versions. Moreover, this statement here has a form of a nominal phrase distributed across two consecutive lines, which is another literary tendency untypical of the South Slavic decasyllable.

8 All translations from the two songs are mine.

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Emic and Etic Definitions IV



## 11. Proverbs – A Universal Genre?

Genre was viewed within folklore well into the twentieth century as something *real*; in other words genres of tradition were thought of as existing naturally, and researchers had merely to recognise and name them. This approach is exemplified most clearly in the case of Carl von Sydow (Honko 1989: 13–16). A realist, and characteristically etic, concept of genre is evident in the field of paremiology: thus Edward Westermarck in his investigation of Arabic proverb tradition, *Wit and Wisdom in Morocco*, gave a brief account, based on European tradition, of the characteristic features of the proverb, and then set about unproblematically using the term “proverb” in his discussion of Moroccan materials and of their typical features and contexts (Westermarck 1930: 1–3). He did not in any way attempt to investigate whether the Moroccan oral tradition corresponded to the European category of the proverb, or what the native Moroccans’ own genre classification and terminology might be.

Gradually, scholars such as Lauri Honko highlighted the possibility that genre classification might be a nominalist categorisation, and that folklore was not in fact ready-divided into genres. The dichotomy took shape between ethnic genres internal to a culture and genres in the sense of analytical types shared between cultures, as defined by researchers. Honko argued that it should not be thought that only one of these categorisations was relevant; he criticised Dan Ben-Amos for thinking that only ethnic types were important, and opposing analytical categories created by researchers. Honko regarded the etic-type categorisations created by scholars as essential for research, but such nominalistic categorisations needed to be continually accommodated to empirical materials and emic categorisations, to keep the nominalist categorisations of scholars as close as possible to a realist genre system. (Honko 1989: 18–19; the dialectics of “real” and construed concepts of genre and the possibility of a universal genre are discussed by Kokkonen & Koivisto elsewhere in this volume.)

Ruth Finnegan has also emphasised these two alternative approaches to genre. Although she has favoured the genre categories and approaches of the bearers of folklore as a starting point, she has adopted the attitude that it is inevitable, given the needs and comparative nature of research, for researchers to use a common, etic-based conceptualisation of genre.



Native emic genres are generally non-standard and insufficient, and do not cover the field of folklore systematically. (Finnegan 1992: 137–139.) Thus Finnegan supports Honko's views on the need and usefulness of analytical etic categories.

Dan Ben-Amos questions Honko's notions of tradition genres, and especially the concept of the ideal type, accusing Honko of striving for a nomothetic science which explains general rule observances, since behind the ideal type lurk universal tradition genres. Hence Honko is supposedly changing folkloristics into a natural science, into a formulation of universal laws. (Ben-Amos 1992: 14–21.) For Ben-Amos, the genres of folklore and literature are social cognitive categories. The genres of folklore can only be culturally bound, and universal genre is a conceptual incompatibility. All universal laws can only be hypothetical, since it always remains possible to find an ethnos whose folklore does not fit the categorisation. Ben-Amos concludes by suggesting that the terminology and categories used by tradition-bearers themselves are the only possible foundation for research. All attempts to create an analytical uniformity have been seen to fail. (Ben-Amos 1992: 20–26.) Ben-Amos's view is quite emphatic, and it means that it would be pointless to even try to define universal genres of proverbs, since the very attempt is based in erroneous principles, and in addition it would always be possible to suppose the existence of oral cultures for which the analytical category of the proverb is not suitable. (The debate between Honko and Ben-Amos is also presented in the article of Frog in this volume, as well as the general history of the concept of genre.)

At the same time as the dispute between Honko and Ben-Amos in the late 1980s, Charles Briggs presented a critique of the research-based category of the proverb genre. He argued that the proverb is one of the most established analytical genre types. One fault in the definition of the proverb genre was that most researchers formulated definitions on the basis of either textual or logical characteristics, and only a few united these two approaches. A second problem was the confluence of analytical genre types and culture-specific types in definitions, which led researchers to claim that one culture's proverb genre automatically has correspondences in other cultures. A third problem is what Briggs sees as a circular argument in the definition of genre: a researcher selects a familiar empirical collection of material on the basis of his own cultural intuition and on the basis of the common features he observes he formulates a definition of the proverb, which in fact just repeats the original intuitive concept. (Briggs 1988: 101–102.)

Briggs's approach may be understood as indicating that the great majority of European proverb researchers have defined genre on the basis of their own culture and then attempted to generalise this conceptualisation of genre into what they consider an analytical type applicable to the whole world, when it is in fact something culture-bound (Briggs 1988: 101–102). Researchers have, according to Briggs, actually done what Honko too urged them to: to create an intercultural conceptualisation of genre suitable for scholarly use, based on the best possible empirical foundation. Thereafter researchers have merely thrown into the mix a critical re-evaluation and redefinition of analytical genre and intracultural genre categorisation.

In some ways Briggs follows Ben-Amos in seeing analytical types or genre classes formulated etic-type by scholars as a threat to empirical research. For Briggs, the challenge for researchers is how to avoid the trap of the analytical type formulated by scholars as they begin to deal with culture-specific material, so as not to automatically seek out those characteristics in this material which belong to the analytical type (Briggs 1988: 100).

There are examples of this, which for example Wolfgang Mieder mentions in the introduction to his *American Proverbs*. It is, he argues, quite probable that researchers reliant on European culture have been incapable of recognising a category corresponding to proverbs in the oral culture of America's native population, since they are too bound up in the proverb genre of their own culture. (Mieder 1989: 99–103.)

On the other hand, a researcher must have some sort of conceptual starting point, and some definition of the genre in his mind, when he begins to research inductively one or many foreign cultures, in order to uncover some genre corresponding to proverbs in their folklore utterances, or to assert a lack of such a genre. Comparative research cannot be carried out if such conceptual tools as make comparison possible are not used. The problem is to an extent comparable with so-called material-based research or grounded-theory research, where the material is investigated openly, without any preconceived theories. The shock surge of “theorylessness” demanded in this research approach has been criticised among others by Pertti Töttö (2000: 38–45).

This piece has two objectives. On the one hand there is the task of checking what researchers have observed of various ethnics' own ways of expressing proverbs and what significance etic-type, nominalist genre definition and categorisation of proverbs – the *analytical type* – has had, which researchers have employed, most likely formed on the basis of European tradition; and then to research how different, clearly non-European oral-cultural categorisations which resemble proverbs are either coherent with or differ from the European proverb. My aim is both to bring to attention the sort of conclusions the scholars in question have come to and to assess what sort of relationship exists between the oral culture under consideration and the analytical type. Finally I intend to conclude the empirical overview with some kind of synthesis of the question of whether the proverb can be spoken of as a universal tradition genre. What could an analytical category of the proverb, universally applicable, be like?

Another task is to investigate, on the basis of the criticism directed at the analytical category of the proverb, how scholars have fared with the demand to establish research into the proverb as an emic genre and comparison with the analytical type, which leads to some kind of synthesis: the emic genre in proportion to the intercultural analytical type. The danger of circular argument is evident, but, conscious of this hazard, I will try to avoid it.

A number of researchers who have investigated proverbs from a cognitive perspective have explicitly or implicitly claimed that it is a matter of a universal tradition genre: it is a question of implicitness when the writer fails to heed cultural or linguistic matters. George Lakoff and Mark Turner used the term “proverb” without any cultural limitations in their cognitive

investigation of the significance and use of metaphors (1989). Hence we may assert that they implicitly regarded proverbs as a universal phenomenon of linguistic usage.

In Outi Lauhakangas's work within the field of social psychology proverbs are seen as an explicitly universal traditional genre, though adapted and open to interpretation within each culture (Lauhakangas 2004: 13). Apart from this brief mention the character of the work and the empirically gathered material from throughout the world show that the writer has indeed understood the genre category of the proverb as universal.

Genre is, according to Honko's synthetic approach, a way of speaking and expressing familiar things which are characteristic of the genre. In his later approach Honko continued to focus on the ideal-type nature of genre as a productive methodological concept. He also presented a critique of Ben-Amos's one-sided view on the exclusive use of emic genre. Ben-Amos rejected researchers' analytical categories on the basis that they are inadequate for the description of emic genres in real life. Honko argued there is reason to distinguish the different levels of the concept of genre. These include microgenres at small-group level, regional macrogenres and global megagenres. (Honko 1998: 24–26.)

An exponent of tradition may have his own set of genre concepts, which may differ from those of another exponent. These need checking within a regional context, as with Gopala Naika's epic within the oral genre system of Tulu. Within a global concept of genre one encounters researchers' Eurocentricity. The solution to this problem suggested by Honko is a phenomenological comparison, with the task of showing whether a truly global phenomenon exists in any case or whether it is a historically determined cultural structure. The impression arises from Honko's categorisation that microgenres are emic categories, and the broader the scope of the category the more it relies on the analytical types of scholars, since emic categories are simply non-existent on a global scale.

### *Features Typical of the Proverb Genre*

The general genre characteristic of proverbs of the greatest consequence is traditionality: authority or social wisdom derived from history is what makes proverbs work. According to Briggs, proverb performances invite the elders of bygone days into the room (Briggs 1988: 100). Shirley Arora looks into the characteristics and recognisability of the proverb, and referring to the work of Alan Dundes and Arewa problematises how a child recognises a sentence used by its parents as a proverb and is conscious that it is not created by the parents. Thus at some stage the concept of proverbs as a distinct form of speech must form in a child. Arora argues that a central point is that in using a proverb an individual moves responsibility off his or her own shoulders to anonymous "people" of a bygone age. Understanding a proverb is a twofold process in the mind of the listener: first he understands what is said as belonging to the cultural or ethnic genre of proverbs, and

then he understands the applicability of the proverb used to the particular circumstances. (Arora 1984: 1–5.)

Arora, like Briggs, bases her own approach on research into the use of proverbs among a Mexican population. The decisive point, for her, from the perspective of proverb use is the fact that the listener understands the collective nature of the saying, and that it is not created by the speaker – “they say” instead of “I say” (Arora 1984: 7). Repetition is the basis of this collectivity, and on this Archer Taylor too based his classical definition: a proverb is a saying current among people. “Faulty recognition” may arise when a new saying observes a conventional pattern – interpreted by the listener as the pattern of a proverb – sufficiently closely. In addition, proverb texts may contain stylistic features (markers) that communicate to the listener, even on first hearing, that what they have heard is a proverb. (Arora 1984: 9–10.) Arora refers to Beatrice Silverman-Weinreich’s observations on Yiddish proverbs, where there are various structural and semantic features which distinguish them from everyday speech.

Support for Arora’s view of the recognition of the proverb as a special type of utterance may be found in a performance-based approach. The central starting point here is, following Richard Bauman’s definition, the endowing of what is uttered with a special significance differing from normal referential speech: interpret what I am saying in a special way, don’t take my words in their normal senses. The performance forms the framework of interpretation in which the message must be understood, and which in some way diverges from a normal, literal meaning. (Bauman 1978: 9.)

In part, the framework of performance is formed by various stylistic and structural characteristics, specific markers, which communicate to the listener that it is a matter of performance, not ordinary speech. Bauman uses the term “keying” for the various textual methods, such as special codes, figurative language, parallelism, formulae, appeal to tradition, which also serve well to illustrate what makes proverb utterance into a special form of communication recognised by the listener. The fundamental intention of an ethnographic description of performance is to define the culture-specific constellations of communicative methods that serve to “key” performance in the community. (Bauman 1978: 15–22.)

Interestingly, Bengt Holbek (1970: 56) argues, on the basis of an examination of Danish proverbs, that metaphor and structural and stylistic characteristics may be complementary: if a proverb uses straight language, then it most likely has stylistic characteristics which differ from prose speech. It is the job of these characteristics, whether metaphor or style, to communicate to the listener that what is spoken belongs to the genre of proverbs and must be understood accordingly.

In contrast, Arora argues that the more markers there are in a saying, the more likely it is to be recognised as a proverb; if they are lacking, even a fully traditional saying may remain unrecognised when first heard, since the listener does not have the wherewithal to discern it as a proverb. In the same way, Arvo Krikmann, explaining the essence of the proverb, held one of the fundamental characteristics to be that the saying does not

fit into a normal, plain textual context, which leads the listener or reader to understand it as a proverb, and to seek out a different sort of meaning in it. The main point about contextual inappropriateness is metaphor, but the text's structural and stylistic characteristics may also communicate the same message. (Krikmann 1974: 16–17.) An oral or written text must be recognised as a proverb for its message to be correctly understood. This in turn implies the existence of the proverb type as a recognised category of utterance. The one who recognises must have a cognitive category in his mind as a referent to compare what he hears or reads and to decide whether it belongs or not.

The quest for a universal proverb genre can only be based on a researcher adopting some sort of familiar corpus as a starting point, along with an analytical type of the proverb based on research, and beginning to investigate the oral cultures of different quarters of the world from the perspective of ethnic genres to establish whether a given culture has an oral tradition which corresponds to the European-derived international category of the proverb. Research literature offers rich corpora for the formation of a source-based analytical type. Briggs counted 245 pieces of writing in the paremiological bibliography of Wolfgang Mieder up to 1982, in which the definition of proverb is considered (Briggs 1988: 102). From the point of view of the universality of the proverb, it is worth paying special attention to peoples and cultural regions where proverbs have been claimed to be absent.

In 1989 Mieder discussed the problem of the definition of the proverb extensively, and presented definitions offered by earlier researchers. On the basis of a frequency analysis of features appearing in the definitions, he presents the following summary: “A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.” He also briefly presents emic possibilities, folk definitions, which are based on proverbs which characterise the proverb among various peoples. (Mieder 1989: 15.) He concludes with a sort of intuitive solution, and partly shares Archer Taylor's well-known pessimism: an “incommunicable quality” is the reason proverbs can be distinguished from non-proverbs. (Mieder 1989: 13–24; Liisa Granbom-Herranen discusses the concept of proverb and the emic–etic dichotomy elsewhere in this volume.)

An alternative method is to start from a strong fieldwork-based familiarity with one culture, and see if criteria derived from it can be extended to the inter-culturally recognised category of utterance which may be termed “proverb”. The following discussion presents examples of how a proverb-like category of utterance is recognised among different cultures in different parts of the world.

## The Chinese

There is, regrettably, only sporadic research on Chinese proverbs available in European languages, though proverbs as a category of utterance appear to be a central part of Chinese language use and thought. I am forced to base this overview of mine on two short and chronologically disparate presentations of the categories and most important characteristics of Chinese proverb-like sayings.

In 1875 William Scarborough published a collection of Chinese proverbs, and provided explanations in an introductory article of the proverbs' general characteristics. One example he presents of an emic category is *su-'hua*, "general saying", which he says does not correspond to a European definition of a proverb. The form of sayings belonging to this category is very varied, appearing ostensibly ruleless. A *tui-tzu*, an antithetical pair of verses with parallelism, is based on precise textual guidelines. For example, "All the stars in heaven greet the north; every river flows to the east" means that a ruler is the focus of attention. The third category distinguished by Scarborough is the *lien-chü*, "combined phrases", such as "A poor man should not quarrel with a rich; nor a rich man with officials" (Scarborough 1875: iv–xii).

A similarity with European proverbs appears to be a recognised figurativeness and genericness. According to Scarborough, proverbs have a distinctive high moral, and conversely they contain much cynicism and caution, but also humour. He presents many parallels between European and Chinese proverbs, such as "Easier said than done", "It's never too late to learn", a pig in a poke for the Chinese is "a cat in a bag". Proverbs are used especially on paper decorations at the new-year festival. The normal circumstances for using them was in everyday speech. Proverbs adorn speech, and lack of familiarity with them is held as a sign of stupidity. They also discharge social tensions and replace a long argument. (Scarborough 1875: xii–xvi.)

John S. Rohsenow (2001: 149–159) in an overview article presents another sort of emic classification and view of the general features of Chinese proverbs. He argues the Chinese are famed for their proverbs, which characterise them perhaps more than any other people. The ordinary people in particular used proverbs prodigiously in speech, and they are essentially an oral form of utterance. They encapsulate the experiences, observations and wisdom of ordinary people in short, pithy, colloquial statements and judgements phrased in easily memorised forms. The Chinese term used by Rohsenow is *yen*. Later he distinguishes between the terms *yen-yü* (proverbs) and *su-yü* (proverbial expressions), which apparently means a turn of phrase. Also distinguished are *ko-yen* (maxims), which are a literary type.



## *The Oral Culture of the Arabs*

Robert A. Barakat's contextual research into Arab proverbs (Barakat 1980) is explicitly based on extensive field collecting (1980: 7) both in the Middle East and America. Barakat was especially interested in the directional nature of proverbs, in other words who could use proverbs in which social milieu and which hierarchical situations. Barakat to a degree adopted an emic view of genre in his research, since he was interested in his informants' ways of classifying different sayings.

In Arabic, "proverb" is usually translated *mathal* (plural *amthal*). Translated the other way, *mathal* may be either "proverb" or "simile"; in other words, the Arab emic genre classification is not as precise as the European scientific classification. Proverbs are highly regarded in the Arabs' oral culture, a regard deriving from the respect the Arabs feel towards both their written and oral traditions, and more widely to their past. Respect for the past focuses above all on the Koran and the whole Islamic religious tradition. (Barakat 1980: 5–8.)

Barakat observes that various other concepts are linked to proverbs in Arab spiritual culture. The *Hadith* is the narrative of what Muhammad said or did, but not the direct word of God like the Koran. The books of the *Hadith* were gathered in the early centuries of Islam. *Silsila* means the chain of intermediaries from the first times up to his last utterance, which confirms the genuineness of the *Hadith*. If the chain cannot be recited or is uncertain, a given sentence is not a genuine *hadith nabawi*. *Hadith* can be translated "narrative". The presence of the definite article *al* indicates "the Prophet's tradition", as does *hadith nabawi*. According to Barakat, *hadiths* are, like old saws, the respected wisdom of the forefathers, as their foundations are rooted in the past. For their authority they rely on themselves, and hence they shift the responsibility away from the speaker. (Barakat 1980: 11–12.)

*Hikma* means pieces of wisdom, profane and sacred, and hence relates to proverbs. Most of Barakat's informants were of the opinion that proverbs contain *hikma*, but the degree of it depended in practice on context. The same saying, such as "Seek knowledge from birth to death", could be counted a proverb, a maxim or just *hikma*. At times *hikma* by itself refers to wise sayings, at other times to the wisdom contained in them. Thus proverbs are wisdom because they contain wisdom – or proverbs contain wisdom because they *are* wisdom. The saying "You are governed by your peers" was considered by the majority of informants as *hikma*, because it is part of the Prophet's *hadith*. (Barakat 1980: 13–15.)

As an example of the influence of context on the genre classification of a saying, Barakat adduces the text "The misfortunes of some are a blessing for others". Three people classified this as a maxim and three as a proverb. The basic difference between proverbs and maxims is based on the wisdom (*hikma*) contained in them and in the situation in which the saying is uttered. According to Barakat, the Arabic term *mathal* can be translated "proverb", and the term *qa'ida*, which can be translated "maxim" (Barakat 1980: 5, 13). Unfortunately, the author does not explicate the concepts by presenting the emic definitions or characteristics of proverb and maxim.



To the mind of those who classified the saying above as a proverb it was situation-oriented and connected to relationships between people. Proverbs always have a characteristic and tight bond with context, with the situation in which they are used. A maxim, on the contrary, can be uttered outside any specific utilitarian situation, in which case it is understood as a general utterance of opinion. (Barakat 1980: 15–16.)

On the basis of information garnered from Barakat's informants a proverb must: (1) be situation-oriented on a personal level; (2) contain *hikma* wisdom; (3) be adaptable for use in contexts which are important in human interaction, and proclaim the traditional norms of Arab society; and (4) exhibit some general or universal truth regarded as significant by the community and its members (Barakat 1980: 16–17). As has been made clear, the boundary between proverbs and maxims is unfixed. Hence the same sentence may be a proverb (*mathal*) in some contexts, and a maxim (*qa'ida*) in others.

Within the Arabs' own emic categorisation, the genre of proverbs may be further divided: *amthal fasiha* are classical proverbs, in Classical Arabic, of an elevated nature; *amthal al'ammiyya* are proverbs in the everyday language. *Amthal fasiha* are literary, *amthal al'ammiyya* oral. Classical proverbs are considered more elegant than colloquial ones. Using them can bring out one's cultural level, but also respect towards the addressee. Thus elders tend to be spoken to using classical proverbs. (Barakat 1980: 41–41.)

Many contextual rules apply to the use of proverbs, which are linked to social position. "Dog" is an ugly word, which can only be used of those on the lower social rungs, such as by a father of his son. In terms of social coordinates, proverbs are unidirectional, omnidirectional, horizontally directional or indirectional, depending on whether they are directed at social superiors, inferiors or peers. A proverb is unidirectional when it is appropriate to use it only in social situations where the speaker is higher in the hierarchy, and omnidirectional when anyone, be it the speaker or the listener, may be socially higher. A horizontally directional proverb may be used in conversation between people of similar social standing, and with indirectional proverbs the social relationship of the parties concerned is irrelevant; they are generally directed away from the addressee. (Barakat 1980: 42–47.)

### *The Maoris*

Raymond Firth set out in his own research with an introductory definition of the proverb, which may be based on his previous familiarity with European tradition and early-twentieth-century research literature (Firth 1926: 135). Thus, his object of research was proverbs which are strict in form and weighty in their meaning, often witty or figurative, containing wisdom and found in general use (Firth 1926: 136).

Firth asserts right at the start that apart from all the rest of their folklore the Maoris have a category called *whakatauki*, which are proverb-like sayings and maxims, whose themes are derived from surrounding nature

and people's customs and deeds; economic industriousness in particular is emphasised. *Whakatauki* play an important part in Maori social and economic life, and they are often resorted to in order to express an opinion (Firth 1926: 136–137).<sup>1</sup>

*Whakatauki* usually seem to be indicative, without generalising expressions like *always, every, each*, which are used for example by Europeans in proverbs, but which nonetheless are not a *sine qua non* criterion. The generic meaning becomes clear in use, which is metaphorical, and from the repeated presentation in suitable circumstances of a phrase which as a form of verbal utterance is relatively stable. Greed for food, for example, is pointed out by saying “Pah! See the neck turning from side to side. And the sinews of the neck strained to the uttermost”, where someone who is not satisfied with his own serving, who glances around at other people's portions, is compared to a bird sitting on a bough, turning its head to see all around (Firth 1926: 144).

According to Firth, the authority of Maori proverbs lies in the respect which is afforded tradition. The chieftains and heroes of times past are revered and their names are passed from one generation to the next. Thus the proverb “Hold fast to the words of thy father” are learned at an early age. Respect for past generations is also evident in the frequent use of the phrase *He whakatauki na nga tupuna* [‘a saying of the ancestors’] for proverbs. (Firth 1926: 257–258.)

The origin of some Maori *whakatauki* is clear: the original utterer of the saying is known. Many, however, are anonymous expressions of the wisdom and experience of the ages. They have gradually become honed into a state easy for a large community of users to remember. Firth, however, had doubts about the possibility of a collective process of creation, and considered that at some stage some individual came to utter a saying which others understood as a good image of the community's ideas. He concluded by presenting a hypothetical scenario of how Maori proverbs arose. First some individual presents a concrete assertion about prevalent conditions. Then others notice that the saying has a wider applicability, and that its form is suited to the expression of their ideas and feelings. Over time the phrasing or meaning of the saying is adapted in the process of transmission without anyone knowingly doing so, to become a proverb expressing a general opinion. (Firth 1926: 262–263.)

Firth also makes some comments about the form of *whakatauki*. Some sort of difference from everyday speech is essential to ensure they are remembered by the broader group. Maori proverbs are characterised by a balanced antithetical structure, such as “The battlefield with man, childbirth with woman”, in which the natural sphere of existence of each sex is depicted. The two phrases are similar in form, balanced in their rhythm and antithetical in their meaning. (Firth 1926: 263–264.)

Firth also opines on the function of *whakatauki* and their significance to users. It is to start with easy to sum up the day's happenings with their help. Because of their polished form of presentation they are more effective than a normal individual utterance. They also represent the experience and wisdom of past generations, offered up in an easily memorable form. In the

non-literary culture of the Maoris proverbs have been crucial for the transfer of knowledge and cultural tradition. The third function is to show directly or by negative injunction the ideal of social action and to correct behaviour which departs from the norm. (Firth 1926: 265.) Finally, Firth presents a definition of the proverb based on his empirical research:

a proverb is a concise and expressive, often figurative, saying in common use, which acts as a conveniently formulated means of expression, charged with emotional significance, to indicate and transmit the facts of experience, or to point out by injunction or prohibition an ideal of social conduct and behaviour (Firth 1926: 265–266).

In fact Firth had no need to substantially alter his initial definition, which he presented as the starting point of his investigation. It may be pondered critically how far the doubts of opponents of analytical genre categories concerning circular arguments are realised here: on the basis of the initial hypothesis a familiar corpus of material is recognised as consisting of proverbs, and on the basis of their common features a definition reminiscent of the initial hypothesis is arrived at. However, Firth carried out empirical work and shows that he took note of the Maori emic category of the *whakatauki* in his assessment of the initial starting point.

### *The Chamula Indians*

Gary Gossen, in his broad-ranging article on the taxonomy of Chamula Indian speech (Gossen 1995, initially 1973), has succeeded in following the demands of Charles Briggs and others to set to work from an emic perspective, by seeking out equivalents in the genre categories of research subjects to the etic-type category of the proverb, and by correcting the initial genre classification on the basis of the results of empirical investigation. Gossen's research has attracted a good deal of attention, for example from Richard Bauman in a work that amounts to a manifesto of the performance approach (Bauman 1977).

The Chamula are native inhabitants of the Chiapas in southern Mexico. Gossen carried out lengthy fieldwork among them in the 1960s. The articles he wrote appeared originally in the 1970s, but they have been republished since. His fieldwork observations on the emic taxonomy of Chamula oral utterance types are based on information given by seven male informants. On this basis, he formulated a taxonomy of utterance, characterised by an increasing formality, redundancy and invariance as it moves from commonplace everyday speech into utterance types regulated most tightly by tradition. More regulated than ordinary speech are the subcategories of the second main category, *speech for people whose hearts are heated*, including for example children's improvised games and songs, and talk on the way to justice courts and political oratory. The third main category is *pure speech* or *true speech*, divided into *recent words* and *ancient words*. A subcategory of "recent words" is *?ištól kòp*, defined by Gossen in English

as “frivolous language”, which consists of jokes, untrue narratives, puns, verbal duelling, proverbs and riddles. A subtype of *?ištol kòp* is *kèhel kòp* [‘indirect language’], corresponding roughly to old saws. Gossen says they are essentially normative statements, but suggestive rather than explicit.

The categorisation constructed by Gossen is the result of a long and troubled undertaking. He relates how he ended up taking a whole to explain to his informants his intention of finding proverbs without them understanding what this meant. No attempts to translate into their language examples of European proverbs brought any results. Only resorting to help from the more Europeanised inhabitants of a neighbouring region brought the response that something similar was found in the Tzotzil language spoken by the Chamula, but that picking out such phrases from the language would be impossible. (Gossen 1994: 360.)

The difficulty of distinguishing sayings belonging to the *kèhel kòp* category is nothing particularly exceptional. In many oral cultures, Finnish among them, people do not necessarily recognise their use of proverbs. They are activated in the course of speech, presented in given circumstances as a fitting comment or directive, and the categorisation of proverbs at a collector’s request outside a natural spoken context rarely brings about the desired result.

The *kèhel kòp* subcategory, to Gossen’s mind, has a special characteristic and a more complex role in the culture than proverbs do in Western societies. They are often norm-resistant in their apparent content, and they relate to involved social situations. The sayings highlight exceptional behaviour evasively, metaphorically, but in such a way that everyone understands whose actions they refer to. The category of *kèhel kòp* is itself unclear, nor did all Gossen’s informants recognise it.

Gossen acquired all his examples of the use of metaphors from one sole informant, a 17-year-old boy, who was fairly bilingual. All his conversations with Gossen took place in the Tzotzil language. One of the examples he gave was “The road is still open, but it will close”. This *kèhel kòp* was directed towards those who defecate on a general highway. Etiquette demanded that one should remove oneself some distance from the road. In this proverb text a multiplicity of meaning arises from the sound associations: the road also refers to the anus, and the whole text can be understood to mean at once that the road is open, but the defecator’s ordure prevents anyone else using it; or that the defecator’s anus is still open but it will soon close. In any event, the proverb indicates that the defecator, breaking etiquette, is like an animal or child. The proverb can also be viewed as a verbal wish for a supranormal sanction, by which the infringer will be caused physiological problems. (Gossen 1994: 361–362.)

Gossen considers brevity, multiplicity of meaning and adaptability in steering difficult social situations as general characteristics of the *kèhel kòp* genre. He even considers that the presentation of a definition which strives to be all-embracing would be contrary to the emic view the Chamula themselves espouse: the *kèhel kòp* category is characterised by lack of definition and avoidance of limitations. (Gossen 1994: 379–380.) It is true, indeed, that the whole taxonomic system is based on information afforded

by a mere six individuals, and even they were divided in their opinions about many categories, including the *kèhel kòp* genre. Hence the claim that an emic genre by this name existed or was clearly recognised among the Chamula rests on an uncertain foundation.

If the perspective is shifted towards an etic approach, as Gossen does intermittently, common features are noticeable which suit the category called proverbs as researchers have defined it. For Gossen, the traditional functional defining points of the proverb – the summarising of a situation, the presentation of a judgement, the recommendation of a course of action – do not in themselves suffice to paint a picture of the Chamula *kèhel kòp* category, as this may involve a good deal more: joking, insult, play, images and transgressing social boundaries. For Gossen, the important social task of the category is to help to steer difficult and fraught social situations. (Gossen 1994: 380–381.) This is not a function confined to the proverbs of the Chamula, as a corresponding usage and an important role in social life may be found among many other peoples and cultures (Lauhakangas 2004: 55–65). The generic nature of his examples does not emerge clearly from Gossen's investigation, but because the texts were spoken to him outside a performative context, it may be assumed that they were repeated in essentially the same form in circumstances in which their use was more *à propos*.

As a conclusion on the *kèhel kòp* category, Gossen outlines that within them is presented social order and its infringement, and the phenomenon of the physical world or nature, and these are in semantic alternation, highlighting, by metaphorical means, crime and possible sanction. Finally Gossen concludes by asserting that native taxonomies do not necessarily suffice to conceptualise categories of utterance for researchers. The key to understanding lies in the interplay of different semantic levels and in the role of proverbs in social exchange. (Gossen 1994: 383–388.)

It appears, on the basis of the examples, that manifest genericness – exemplified by the use of words like *always*, *every*, *each* – is missing from the Chamula *kèhel kòp* sayings, just as it is from the Maori *whakatauki*. The sentences are normal indicative utterances in their surface structure, and only on the basis of repeated use and their metaphoric semantics can it be noted that they possess a genericness characteristic of proverbs – they are used in essentially the same form repeatedly in situations which are similar to each other and correspond to those which form the arena for the use of proverbs.

### *Africa: Akan Rhetoric*

In the manner of Ben-Amos, Kwesi Yankah, who has researched the rhetoric of the Akan people of Ghana, sees a difference in viewpoint between analytical types and ethnic genre, although he argues that research needs to unite the two perspectives. His own term for proverb is *ebe*, which, however, is wider in its field of use than the type term created by researchers, and Yankah refers to corresponding situations among other African peoples: according to Finnegan, in the linguistic usage of the Jabo<sup>2</sup> and Zande the

concept corresponding to the proverb refers also to the parable, short animal tales and expressions with cryptic meanings. Attribution to one and the same concept derives primarily from contextual use. (Yankah 1989: 88–89.)

Yankah divided the *ebe* category into subcategories, according to the channel used for communicating the proverb. An auditory proverb could be heard orally or by drum, while a visual proverb could be realised as a design symbol or artefact or gesture. This categorisation reveals that the Akan *ebe* category cannot be equated with the analytical type of the proverb. Proverbs can be presented visually by means of clothes, gold jewellery, a speaker's staff and the point of a parasol. For example, gold jewellery and a man smoking a pipe with a pot in his hand refers to the proverb "We can smoke a pipe even while carrying gunpowder", which means there is no need to give up enjoyment even at times of crisis. (Yankah 1989: 98–99.)

The difficulty with the *ebe* category grows given that short stories can be used metaphorically or allusively in the manner of a proverb, in which case they too belong to the *ebe* category. Yankah divides the whole proverb tradition: to the attributive type belong short, apposite and usually quoted, typically impersonal and authoritative, sayings; to the non-attributive type belong more extensive animal tales, parables and stories, which generally do not have an authoritative beginning. (Yankah 1989: 88–95.)

On the basis of Yankah's research it appears that the emic *ebe* concept cannot be equated with the European proverb. Within *ebe*, however, are found sayings, Yankah's attributive type, which appear to correspond well to the proverb as an analytical category.

## *Hawaii*

According to Matti Kuusi, Hawaii and Samoa have clearly had more archaic proverbial language than the high cultures of Eurasia and its margins. According to information presented to Kuusi by Prof. Katherine Luomala of Hawaii University, fixed sayings are found on the Pacific islands which can be used in the manner of proverbs to comment on familiar sorts of situations. On Samoa phrases are cultivated which require cultural competence to associate with a situation: "Vailalo presented a speech, the meeting was already over" may be said to a late-comer who has lost his opportunity (Kuusi 1993: 11–12). Thus Kuusi argues that Hawaii and Samoa clearly belong – as he puts it – among the users of a more pristine language of sayings than the high cultures of Eurasia and its margins.

In conflict with this view are those examples which Wolfgang Mieder presented of Hawaiian proverbs. The seventeen texts he presents in the original language along with English translations are mainly reminiscent of proverbs from the rest of the world: "The little fish cannot swallow the big fish"; "The sand crab is small, but digs a deep hole" (Mieder 1989: 81–82).

Henry P. Judd, used by Mieder as his source, gives a picture of Hawaiian proverb tradition in the introduction to his collection, which first appeared in 1930, both from the perspective of the European concept of the proverb and by presenting an ethnic type classification. The main concept, he argues,



is the *olelo*, which he translates as “sayings”. This category is divided into the subgroups *olelo noeau* [‘proverbial sayings’], *olelo naauao* [‘learned expressions or wise sayings’], and *olelo nane* [‘riddles’]. The *olelo noeau* is probably closest to proverbs, but on the basis of the material Judd presents it appears that something wider than proverbs proper are involved, namely “proverbial sayings”, as Judd translates the Hawaiian term. He presents many examples of Hawaiian sayings which are parallel to English proverbs. In conclusion he observes that Hawaiian proverbial sayings have a characteristic power of observation, humour, a satirising of social life, an estimation of achievements, an observation of the relationships between different social groups and a declaration of religious and moral values in concise form. (Judd 1971: 3–5.)<sup>3</sup>

### *The Universal Analytical Type*

It is exceptional for the editor or compiler of an international collection or a paremiological theoretical study to have clearly stated that proverbs are not a universal genre of oral tradition and mode of thinking. Interestingly, many indigenous peoples of Eurasia and America whose economy was based on gathering and hunting are assumed to not have had any own proverb tradition. In the introduction to his work *Proverbia Septentrionalia* (1985) Kuusi referred to the viewpoint of Soviet linguists, who argued that the Skolt Sámi lacked a proverb tradition. Similarly, Kuusi argued that western Sámi groups had meagre numbers of proverbs, usually of Scandinavian origin (Kuusi 1985: 23). Ingrid Schellbach-Kopra has since queried, to a degree, the claim of the absence of proverbs from Sámi native tradition (Schellbach-Kopra 2008). Kuusi later stated in the introductory article to a presentation of world proverbial wisdom that many primitive cultures in subarctic Eurasia, in America and Oceania did not have a proverb tradition comparable to that of peoples in general in Eurasia (Kuusi 1993: 11–12).

In a similar way many Indian tribes of America were supposed to have lacked their own, indigenous proverbs (Mieder 1989: 99–101). But, as Mieder has commented, referring to Gary Gossen and Franz Boas, the reason for the visible lack of proverbs was probably the inability of foreign researchers to identify proverbial utterances among those peoples.

Peoples who are supposed to have lived without an elaborated proverb tradition seem to have belonged to a cultural category which in the past was called “primitive” – without literary culture and existing on simple hunting and gathering, and living in relatively small groups without a developed hierarchy and social division. Anyway, if cultures (of the primitive, hunter-gatherer type) and societal structures of a certain type do not have a proverb tradition, there must be some inherent, structural feature in the more complicated societies that calls for the formation of proverbs as a form of social communication.<sup>4</sup>

Here we come again to the problem of the definition of the genre – what kind of oral tradition are we seeking when we speak about the existence of proverbs? We need some kind of cross-cultural analytic type of the proverb



if we are to relate various *whakatauki*, *yen-yü*, *dicho*, *kèhel kòp* and *mathal*, *ebe* and *olelo* to each other on a more systematic level than mere comparative description. A systematic, comparative description, and the generalisations and crystallising of concepts made the basis of it, are, however, the best way to formulate an analytical type suitable for use within research.

Although some researchers have blamed the etic-type proverb category for causing misconceptions, in investigating empirical materials and especially in communicating observations, even to an enlightened readership, writers have needed the aid of the term “proverb” to indicate what they are discussing. Gossen has presented the same sort of critique as Ben-Amos and Briggs, but nonetheless he uses the term “proverb” continually in his writings, even if he emphasises in the concluding summary that “proverb” is only an approximation of what the Chamula category of *kèhel kòp* is. Gossen’s point is in accord with Honko’s concept of the ideal type. Honko is, of course, right to assert that researchers’ genre definitions are ideal types, constructions which can only approximately and summarily reflect the multitude of traditions to which they are applied (Honko 1998: 24).

On the basis of this limited, but geographically broad, inter-cultural examination, the answer to whether there exists a universal category of the proverb appears to be equivocal. On the one hand, all the peoples considered here have proverbs, which are repeated in roughly the same form time and again, and which have a generic character, and a meaning expressed through typically concrete metaphor. Some sort of common core exists to the category of the proverb, but the category is surrounded by a rich array of verbally varying expressions which fulfil some of the type criteria of the proverb but which differ in others. The use of proverbial sayings is typically associated in social life when encountering problematic situations, where it is a good conversation strategy not to present a critical viewpoint in one’s own name but to withdraw to the safety of collective experience. Similarly, figurative expressions are used when avoiding direct criticism of bad actions. Recognising what is said as belonging to tradition brings with it the authority of collective judgement.

Despite Ben-Amos’s doubts, it is possible, on the basis of many-sided examination, to present criteria which define approximately, as an ideal type, an analytical type of the proverb. His other warning, however, holds: a remote community may be found in some corner of the world where nothing like proverbs is found in their oral culture (one good candidate is the Pirahã tribe of the Amazon: Everett 2005). How much importance is attached to such an exception is another matter, since the oral cultures of peoples living on every continent of the world afford sayings of a proverbial type which in some way correspond to the analytical type of the proverb. There are indications that the proverbial-like sayings of the native Americans and Pacific islanders do not differ in their modality from everyday speech in the way Eurasian and African proverbs do. On the basis of the overview conducted, it appears that these lack manifest genericness, which is brought out by unusual linguistic structures and gives proverbs a clearly regulated character and at the same time aids their recognition. Yet they are latently generic, reflecting collective tradition and expressing points of view metaphorically.

## NOTES

- 1 The term *whakatauki* appears to have been in fairly widespread use in the Pacific outside the Maori area proper. In Tonga, a similar concept is found of *fakatata* or *paloveape* as subcategories of the *heliaki*, used in the sense of proverbs. Okusitino Mahina refers to the use of the *heliaki* as a translation of “proverb”. *Fakatata* – close to the Maori *whakatauki* – can be translated literally as “picture” or “the act of explaining one thing by means of another”. (Mahina 2004: 19.)
- 2 The Jabo are a Kru-speaking people in Liberia; the Zande or Azande live in Central Africa (Finnegan 1970: 418, 422–423).
- 3 A critical reader might accuse Judd of a circular argument based on English proverb tradition. However, Judd has clearly attempted to catch the emic characteristics of Hawaiian proverbs by analysing the emic category and subcategories.
- 4 It is another issue that modernisation has led to the dwindling of the importance of traditional, experience-based knowledge communicated orally from generation to generation, which is evident too in how proverbs are used in post-modern communities based on rational research. The didactic role, with an emphasis upon wisdom, has weakened, and wordplay and jokiness have increased, as has the application of parody.

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## 12. The Proverb Genre

### A Relic or Very Much Alive?

The aim of this article is to analyse some changes both in the concept of the proverb and in the genre of proverbs. The perspective is from folkloristic paremiology. The need to analyse the proverb genre comes firstly from the existence of diverse terms used when discussing proverbs and proverbial expressions in folkloristic paremiology<sup>1</sup> and in paremiology in general; the second reason is that the modern proverb tradition has brought about changes in the proverb genre, whereas the earlier oral tradition has found a place in the colloquial written language.

This article is based on the observations in my research focusing on Finnish proverbs in life stories (Granbom-Herranen 2004; 2008) as well as on study of the contemporary use of proverbs (Granbom-Herranen 2010; 2011a; 2013a; 2013b). The examples of traditional proverbs are taken from the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki, the material consisting of life stories connected with everyday life in Finland before World War II (PE85). The examples of modern proverbs come from newspaper material from the beginning of the twenty-first century (HS, SSS). Although the focus is on Finnish proverbs, many of the observations can be generalized within paremiology. Proverbs are viewed as a part of colloquial language, which occurs both in oral and written form. The empirical material has raised the question of what is meant by the concept “proverb”<sup>2</sup> and what is included in the proverb genre. As examples of proverbs in different contexts, this article includes both traditional and modern proverbs. The expression “traditional proverb” here means an utterance that is accepted as an old proverb<sup>3</sup> and “modern proverb” refers to all kinds of forms and names that proverbs have in contemporary usage, including the “anti-proverb”.

In this article neither the emic nor the etic concept “proverb” is seen as a universal concept (see also the article discussing the proverb genre as a universal category by Pekka Hakamies, this volume). In addition to the differences between cultures with emic concepts<sup>4</sup> there are quite big discrepancies between the academic disciplines with etic-concepts in the way they handle the concept of proverb. It is said that there are as many etic definitions for the proverb as there are scientific languages (Grzybek 1987: 44). Even if Peter Grzybek made this statement 25 years ago, it still holds good. On the one hand, there are the disciplines that handle proverbs as objects, like folkloristics (focus on effect), and linguistics and

philology (focus on formula and translations). There are fields that focus on the proverb itself and hold that proverbs can be attributed to a genre (paremiologic linguistics and folkloristics). Concerning proverb as object folkloristic paremiology can be said to concentrate on all the variants that can be found, whereas linguistic paremiology most often refers to codified versions in lexicographical sources (Grzybek 2012). On the other hand, there are disciplines that use proverbs as a method within their own specialities (as a tool). In Finnish studies proverbs are to be found as tools, for example, in economics, education, literary research, social sciences and theology.<sup>5</sup> Using proverbs as universal statements or a method quite often means the existence of some assumptions about their commonly known and universal interpretations.

### *Various Conceptions of the Proverb*

When defining the proverb possibilities are endless. For example in the abstracts of the 2010 Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs (ICP2010), the concept “proverb” comes up 106 times in about 50 forms:

a part of proverb, proverb proper, parody of proverb, didactic proverb, proverb parody, anti-proverb, proverb variation, existing proverb, new proverb, universal proverb, language of proverb, knowledge of proverb, Bible proverbs, Proverbs of King Solomon, European expressions or proverbs, proverbial expression, proverbial language, proverbial metaphors, proverbial rhetoric, proverbial instructions, proverbial wisdom, proverbial sign, proverbial meaning, proverbial, proverbial material, proverbial phrase, proverbially, saying, popular saying, phrase, idiom, expression, refrain, winged words, wellerism, popular quotations, traditional wisdom, relating to proverb/saying, distinct items of lexis describing a self-contained concept or idea, contemporary adaptation, conundrum, lexical unit, complex multi word unit, language of words, locution, short sentence.

In paremiology the only consensus focuses on the brevity of proverbs and some kind of traditionality<sup>6</sup> in them. There is always something more to be added in order to make sure nothing is left out of the definition. Elias Lönnrot (1981: 8), the author of *Kalevala* – the Finnish national epic – and one of the first Finnish proverb collectors, wrote in 1842: “Kaiken sananlaskuain rajoittamisen sananparsihin, sananpolvihin, sananmutkihin, vertauksiin j.n.e. luulemma soveliaaksi työksi sillen, jolla muuta työtä ei ole” (Lönnrot 1981: 8) [‘I will leave all that has to do with dividing proverbs into all kinds of subclasses like proverbs, sayings, phrases, comparisons, etc., to those who don’t have anything else to do’]. However, for researchers some etic definition of the concept “proverb” is necessary in order to recognize a proverb in speech or text, as Lauri Honko (1989: 18–19) has pointed out. For contemporary research into proverbs, it has to be decided if a part of a traditional proverb is enough to make a sentence a proverb also for etic use. If so, it has to be clarified if the beginning of the sentence is required or some key words are enough to make a sentence a proverb. Anyhow,

nowadays the concept “proverb” is most often used in the meaning “proverb and proverbial expression” both in emic and etic language. This follows the international tendency in paremiology. However, it may be considered “It is not always necessary, or even possible, in the dynamic research tradition to define the key concepts exhaustively, for there must always be room for new connections” (Honko 1989: 14).

The concept “proverb” has never been defined to perfection; it has been seen as too difficult a task, as there are no particular features that could indicate to us that a sentence is a proverb (Dundes 1981: 44). The problem of the challenge of definition is not new or specific to either traditional or modern proverbs. As Wolfgang Mieder (1993: 18) notes, it is obvious that the problem of defining a proverb is not new; the need to define it is as old as interest in it. He suggests it may be best to agree with Archer Taylor (1981: 6), who stated that “an incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not”. Since the 1970s researchers have been addressing the need to revise the proverb classification and the definition of the proverb genre based on the structure or form of the expression. Nowadays attempts to create a definition are most often directed to a specific language or cultural area. (Reznikov 2009: 4–5, 177–179.) For example, Mieder, one of the leading contemporary folkloristic paremiologists, still defines the proverb as something “handed down from generation to generation” (Mieder 1993: 24; 2004: 3). At the beginning of the twenty-first century proverbs in Finnish (and the same goes for many other languages too) are not primarily transmitted either orally or from one generation to another, but rather in written form (in written colloquial texts or in literature) and they are quite often used within one generation only. In the handbook of proverbs Mieder writes: “The definition of proverb has caused scholars from many disciplines much chagrin over the centuries.” He goes on to refer to Archer Taylor’s statement: “a definitive definition of the genre is an impossibility”. (Mieder 2004: 2–3.) Time demands changes, and new concepts and phenomena arise. Nearly everybody knows and uses proverbs. Those who study them are familiar with the concept and phenomenon. However, all this is done without being able to briefly and clearly define what a proverb is. This can be called the paradox of the proverb. It seems that scholars focusing on proverbs around the world will continue to find their own working definitions (Mieder 1993: 18):

[The proverb] is generally understood to epitomize simplicity and common sense, but it turns out to be both complex and hard to define. Although most people can list many examples of proverbs, few can accurately define what makes them proverbial. Scholars have discussed proverbs for hundreds of years, and hundreds of different definitions have been advanced, making it impossible to provide even a cursory summary of them. (Lau *et al.* 2004: 2.)

It may, however, be possible to find some commonly accepted attributes connected with the concept of “proverb”. Firstly, we need to accept the hypothesis that some linguistic features that are fundamental to proverbs must exist. The conditions that are needed for a sentence to be accepted

as a proverb in etic language must be itemized. Secondly, it should be known which of the features combined with the proverb are to be viewed as necessary premises, and which as sufficient ones, as well as which of them are enough to make a sentence a “proverb” (see also Hasan-Rokem 1982: 18–19). However, the features cannot be universal because even if paremiology focuses on proverbs, the facultative needs differ from each other. Aspects such as currency, tradition and familiarity have been taken as necessary ingredients for a proverb, yet the definition of the concept “proverb” has never focused only on these features. Nevertheless, they could seem attractive to use, as these are traits that can be quantitatively measured and used to verify the findings. Both Mieder (1994: 298) and Grzybek (1987: 73) consider frequency and general acceptance of the proverb necessary for it to be regarded as a part of folklore. The familiarity and frequency together form grounds for an expression to become traditional in the sense of typical and usual, either in the past or present. It is not entirely convincing that the demand for measured frequency does justice to modern proverbs, particularly in a small linguistic and cultural area like that of the Finnish language and culture. The familiarity of the proverb may be a more useful characteristic to focus on than mere frequency. Familiar items may or may not be frequent, but unfamiliar items cannot be frequently used.

Grzybek (1987: 40; 2012) views verified frequency at a particular time followed by frequency (= currency) over a given period as an indispensable premise for an utterance to be considered a linguistic cliché that may become a proverb. No doubt it is true that those forms of folklore as well as the forms of proverbs which do have utility value in contemporary lifestyle will remain. The difficulty is that when collecting contemporary proverbial expressions, we cannot know which of them will endure. It also means that there ought to exist a clear and ready-made understanding of the proverb, including old traditional, contemporary modern and future proverbs. The existing proverb definitions, when not allowing for the inclusion of “potentially-to-become-proverbs” (Grzybek 2011), do not support research that considers proverbs in present-day contexts. In vernacular language the Finnish proverb genre has expanded and found a new form when broadened from oral tradition to colloquial written language (as happened for example also with legends, on which see Kaarina Koski, this volume). Modern proverbs are to be accepted as potential ones even if the frequency is not definite nor the distribution verified. Otherwise the last acceptable and frequency-measured Finnish proverbs would be the traditional ones in the published collections including Finnish proverbs up to World War II.<sup>7</sup>

Modern proverbs have many names in paremiologic etic language, starting with quasiproverb, proverb parodies, anti-proverb, Antispruchwort, postproverb (Krikmann 1985; Kuusi 1989; Mieder 1993; Raji-Oyelade 2008). Other expressions for modern proverbs can also be found, such as alteration, fake proverb, hoax proverb, mock proverb, modification, mutation, occasional proverb, perverb, portmanteau proverb, pseudo-proverb, transformation, variant and variation (Grzybek 2012: 139), as well as fractured proverbs, proverb innovations and wisecracks (Litovkina 2011: 87). These are not what we are accustomed to consider as proverbs



in folkloristic paremiology. Even if Mieder's term *Antispruchwort* ['anti-proverb'] has widely been accepted, it may be worth being cautious with this and also with the other concepts presented above, for it is possible that the utterances labelled as anti-, quasi-, pseudo- or fake some decades ago are now more like modern proverbs with a hint of traditionality. We do not know what will happen to the proverbs in the future. In everyday use, a proverb survives as long as it is referenced. This means that when looking for proverbs in present-day contexts, we have to search both for traditional and shortened ones as well as references to known proverbs.

### *Some Features Connected with the Concept of the Proverb in Finnish*

The "Finnish proverb" can be understood as a short, independent statement, which is or has been familiar within a frame of time and place. The traditional proverb has been and may still be used in vernacular language, and this applies too to its modern counterpart. To be a proverb, a statement must be relatively familiar among the general public. When a proverb is used, the authority of the earlier proverb speaker may be present too. The presence of the earlier authority has been verified within pedagogical discourse (Briggs 1988; Granbom-Herranen 2008). However, this is an unclear statement in the urban tradition, which is not pedagogically oriented. In any case, the earlier speaker does not have to come from the distant past. The earlier speaker is somebody who has used the proverb but this has nothing to do with the inventor of the proverb.

Proverbs have been viewed as anonymous units (Harris-Lopez 2003: 105); a proverb is not supposed to be invented by a person with a name. As Shirley Arora (1994: 5) puts it when talking about Yoruba proverbs, they belong "to the anonymous past, the anonymous folk". This does not mean that all proverbs arose anonymously. The proverb is something that has been invented and used, and this is how it has become a part of vernacular language. Taylor does not take into account only the old and already existing proverbs but points out that a proverb can be either an old or a new comment, but the circumstances make the proverb widespread and well known (Taylor 1981: 3–8). Nowadays this process is fast and sometimes possible to track.

Modern proverbs are not necessarily anonymous in origin and they do not always come from the unknown past. There are many proverbs whose origins were known at some point, but were then forgotten over time. The proverb is always invented by somebody, as he or she has the idea of putting it in a statement. The circumstances bound up with the concept of historically anonymous expression have changed; thanks to fast communication, in many cases it is possible today to identify the "first" user of the proverb. This is the situation with politics and well-known people in the public eye. Quite often the public is aware of the origin of an expression that becomes an anonymous sentence, after which it becomes a cliché or saying and then a proverb. For example, among Finnish traditional proverbs there are some

that originate in fairly recent poetry. *Kell' onni on, se onnen kätkeköön* [‘He who has much happiness does well to hide it’] is the beginning of a poem by the Finnish author Eino Leino, *Laulu onnesta* [‘Song of happiness’], which was published for the first time in 1900, in a collection entitled *Hiihtäjän virsiä* [‘Hymns of a skier’] (Leino 1978). Nowadays it is a proverb and often people do not know its origin.

Besides traditional proverbs, there are modern ones whose origins are known. Among contemporary modern proverbs we can mention, for example, former Finnish prime minister Harri Holkeri’s *minä juon nyt kahvia* [‘I’m drinking coffee’<sup>8</sup>] from 1990. Holkeri as prime minister participated in a big meeting where the press wanted to get an interview from him. He felt disturbed and did not want to talk, and to all the questions he answered only: *Minä juon nyt kahvia*. (MTV3 7.8.2011.)<sup>9</sup> The response spread immediately via the media and afterwards the utterance came to denote superiority towards whoever dared to disturb someone above them.<sup>10</sup> Another is former prime minister Paavo Lipponen’s *karavaani kulkee* [‘the caravan goes on’], which is from the proverb *Koirat haukkuvat, mutta karavaani kulkee* [‘Dogs are barking, but the caravan goes on’]. The newspaper text in example (1) refers to what former Prime Minister Holkeri had said about drinking coffee some ten years before. The journalist wants to point out that Lipponen did not and was not going to comment and thus was not going to cooperate with the press:<sup>11</sup>

(1) Omien rivien repeämistä Lipponen ei juuri kommentoinut. “Karavaani kulkee”, Lipponen sanoi ja lähti hakemaan kahvia. (HS 17.3.2001)

Lipponen did not say much about the division inside his own ranks. “The caravan goes on”, said Lipponen and went to get coffee.

One of the best-known sources for modern proverbs is the former ski-jumper Matti Nykänen. Since the end of his career as one of the most famous sportsmen in the world, Nykänen has become famous for the expressions he has used in interviews. Long lists of them have been published on various internet sites,<sup>12</sup> and some of them have become commonly used proverbs, such as “fifty-sixty”. In an interview, Nykänen estimated his chances in a competition and presumably meant to answer “fifty-fifty” – which Finns commonly use in English to denote the percentage of even chances – but ended up with “fifty-sixty” (Mattinykanen.net). “Fifty-sixty” is now frequently used among Finns as a reference to uncertain chances. People implicitly refer to Nykänen with these new proverbs by deliberately adopting his linguistic or logical errors, saying “fifty-sixty” instead of “fifty-fifty”, and similarly “so not” instead of “so what”, “up yours” instead of “up to you” and “bon voyage” instead of “deja-vu”. Other popular Nykänen-based sayings include *Elämä on laiffii* [‘Life is life’] (see Granbom-Herranen 2013b) and *Elämä on ihmisen parasta aikaa* [‘Life is a person’s best time’] (Mattinykanen.net).

When a proverb is seen as a short unit, some common features behind the proverb performance in the verbal form and colloquial written language

become quite obvious. Firstly, the performer and the audience have to share some common knowledge about the past in order to be able to connect the message to the activity.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, when focusing on the features of the proverb in everyday communication, we can see that there are no fundamental differences between the oral use of proverbs and their use in colloquial written language. The presentational feature does not disappear when proverbs are moved to new surroundings, from speech to colloquial written language: the proverb is a fixed part of the event; it is intended to be associated with the situation; there is an expected foundational meaning behind the proverb;<sup>14</sup> the use of the proverb is meaningful in a particular context and it is used in order to be assertive (Briggs 1985: 798–802).

### *Finnish Proverbs in Oral Tradition and Literary Use*

Every folkloristic item has some special value and all the genres have their value-laden orientations (Hanks 1987: 671). In Finnish history the interest in folklore and language in the nineteenth century paved the way for the folkloristic research for quite a long period (Granbom-Herranen 2012). The ideas from that time can be anchored in seventeenth-century Finland as well as in the Reformation. These eras were significant for the beginning of folkloristic activities and have an impact even on contemporary folkloristics. All this gives a special status to traditional Finnish proverbs. Just like proverbs elsewhere, Finnish proverbs have an as it were sacrosanct label (e.g. Mieder 1993: 36). Very often proverbs are bound up with the history of a nation, as is clear also in Hakamies's article elsewhere in this volume. Finnish proverbs are linked to Finnishness as a national identity and the shared cultural frame of reference that such identity entails, which can thus be considered part of the value of proverbs in some contexts of use – i.e. as an expression which connects the user with the group that uses the folklore.

One of the definitions of the proverb used in contemporary Finnish folkloristics (Apo 2001: 338) relies on that of Charles Briggs (1988: 132–133), which states that a proverb is a short expression that is common among the folk. The meanings of “people” and “folk” have changed with time and the concept “folk” can refer to the total population of a country, or to a part of the population that is defined by their language or social status. As Alan Dundes (1980) has put it: “Who are the folk?” when going on with the discussion started in 1893 if not even earlier (Jacobs 1893). Nowadays in folkloristics as well as in paremiology the concept “folk” has the meaning “a group of people who share something in common” (Honko 1998: 56).

Differentiating between proverbs in oral tradition and in literature has been easy when looking at the pre-World War II era in Finland; prior to the twentieth century in Finland the main spoken language was Finnish although it was rarely the written language. The written standard Finnish language was developed for a particular use: in the beginning it was the language of the Bible (seventeenth century) and it was also used in order to teach the common people to read. In the nineteenth century, written Finnish was needed for official use in statutes, and later, chiefly in the

twentieth century, written Finnish was also used in newspapers. (Häkkinen 1994: 11–17; Laine 2002: 17; also Stark 2006: 22, 34.)

As mentioned above, one of the root differences between oral and written uses of proverbs is that the proverbs in Finnish in the nineteenth century were mostly used in speech, as being a part of the language of the underprivileged majority. Proverbs had an important role as informal knowledge compared to written information. (Granbom-Herranen 2008: 25–26, 36–39, 106–107; 2011b: 169.) The change from oral to literate society has not been just an “event” (Badiou 2009) but a longer process. This process, for proverbs, is different in oral use and in literate contexts. For literate and literary use, proverbs are taught and learned – the influence of school and teachers can be seen. Because they are a part of learning, there is also the matter of the right and wrong ways of using and understanding proverbs. Translations are needed in literature when using proverbs, which assumes some kind of universalism and using the ground meaning of the proverb. In ordinary life, the interpretation of a proverb is a matter of situational and individual experience. The meanings of proverbs in emic use rely on combinations of socio-cultural contexts, people, emotions and information in various situations. Nowadays the use of proverbs with an oral background and those from written sources has been merged, especially in colloquial written language. At the same time proverbs from literary sources have been in use in the vernacular language.

Nevertheless, today the proverb is used in spoken Finnish in much the same way as in the colloquial written language of the media, everyday political rhetoric, mass media or the internet. These days, the native Finnish-speaking population in Finland can read and write Finnish. This has changed the position of proverbs in Finnish and may be the explanation for the similarities between the use of proverbs both in the spoken language and in written colloquial form. In its entirety, oral and written communication has become more and more similar in many ways. (Granbom-Herranen 2011a: 289.) When defining the concept of proverb, significant changes between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries have occurred in the daily lives of Finnish people, as well as in the environment in which Finnish proverbs are used.

### *Finnish Proverbs in the Frame of the Emic–Etic Discussion*

The concept of “proverb” in emic language differs from that used in academic studies – the etic language. One of the most amusing descriptions of emic and etic concepts can be found in J. R. R. Tolkien’s novel *The Lord of the Rings*, when two hobbits meet a living tree, an Ent. Both the Ent and the hobbits give two names for themselves. The first is what they call themselves and the other is how outsiders have named them. (Tolkien 1967: 84–85.) This is what happens with the concept of “proverb”. The group has a name for the utterance that is more like a phenomenon. The group uses these expressions, names them proverbs and is somehow aware what using and hearing a proverb means. The outsider who needs expressions not for use

but for study as concepts or phenomena gives different names to them, classifies and categorizes them.

Kenneth Pike (1954: 8) was the first to elaborate the distinction between “emic” and “etic” in the 1950s. The dichotomy of the emic and etic in language use can be handled in various ways, as we can see in the discussion between Marvin Harris and Pike. The biggest difference becomes evident in etic interpretations and their justification. According to Pike (1990a: 71–72), the etic approach offers an opportunity for a global perspective and minimizes practical difficulties with research resources, while Harris (1990b: 214) points out the observers’ inability to connect all that is significant to an activity. The discussion derives from Harris’s and Pike’s worldviews. Top put it briefly, Pike relies on theism and brings in the insight into the given and the right, whereas Harris as a naturalist is relies more on cultural materialism and evolutionistic theory (Harris 1990b: 206; Headland 1990: 14; Pike 1990b: 186). As a matter of fact, they are very much of the same opinion regarding the emic. After the conversation between Harris and Pike, emic and etic have from time to time become a topical issue (see also Hakamies, this volume). In terms of paremiology, we can glean from this discussion that both the name of the proverb genre and the concept of proverb can be, have been and still are defined in emic as well as in etic language.

Research ought to obtain both emic and etic knowledge, which in the proverb genre means both emic and etic concepts of the proverb (Lett 1990: 132; Jardine 2004: 270). The presupposition is that researchers both understand the languages and are aware of the meanings that the users of tradition give to the utterances, actions, phenomena and so on. It is possible to understand the language but the tacit knowledge involved therein may remain unattainable (Jardine 2004: 263). This applies to one’s own culture in another era as well as foreign cultures, both in the past and present. The identification of a “proverb” is based on the assumption of socio-cultural knowledge but it is much easier to recognize the cultural connection in place than in time. When talking about Finnish proverbs, the question of emic versus etic concepts and interpretations cannot be passed over, as the foundations of the contemporary emic concept of the Finnish proverb lie in the etic concept of proverb from earlier times that also had connections as a concept with older emic terms. Most of the etic definitions are used in order to find out what the research subject actually is. The classification of Finnish proverbs and the proverb genre was mostly grounded in the existing folklore forms in the first half of the twentieth century and derives from the 1950s (Kuusi 1954: 7). It consolidates proverbs proper (*sananlasku*) – whole sentences with an independent thought – and sayings (*puheenparsi*) – smaller units conforming to the context in which they appear – into a larger category (*sananparsi*), which is also translated as “proverb” in English. This is confusing, especially when this categorization of proverbs is familiar only to Finnish paremiologists. For them it is complicated but somehow understandable, but difficulties are bound to be encountered when attempting to go from this system to address the Finnish concept of “proverb” in other languages when two of these terms are translated with the same English word.

If the language and proverbs are not understood as a part of culture, it is possible to conclude that some nations or ethnic groups do not have proverbs, as for example in the 1960s it was assumed that proverbs exist everywhere except among Inuits, most of the American Indians, and Pacific and Siberian peoples (Kuusi 1985: 82). Proverbs may exist in every language, even if they are called something else or they do not follow the same format as those defined in Western Europe and North America during the last 200–400 years. This leads to the question “what kind of oral tradition are we seeking when we speak about the existence of the proverb?” (Hakamies, this volume, p. 313).

For the everyday use of the concept “proverb” it does not help that Harris (1990a: 77) and Pike (1990b: 193) agree in one point: emic can become etic and etic can become emic. As Nick Jardine (2004: 275) formulates it: “Etics without emics is empty, emics without etics blind.” Dan Ben-Amos (1976a) talks about ethnic and analytic genres that are much the same as the genres with emic and etic definitions. He argues that the definition of ethnic genres (emic) is directed toward communication and the analytic ones (etic) toward text organization. The point is that the ethnic genres are real and the analytic genres abstract. They are both needed, but to model different things.

In etic language and in dictionaries numerous synonyms and parallel names given to the concept of the proverb can be found: aphorism, axiom, citation, dictum, doctrine, figure of speech, idiom, maxim, metaphor, phrase, quotation, saying, simile and so on (Granbom-Herranen 2010; 2011a). Paremiologists and other researchers use etic-based definitions when the study is connected with structures and typologies. From that point of view the emic-based definitions can be understood more as undefined concepts. The most important ways to refer to proverbs in emic language used in oral and colloquial written languages in both narratives and the media are:

<b>Emic term</b>	<b>Etic meaning</b>
1. “is like something” ( <i>on kuin jokin</i> )	= figure of speech, metaphor, simile
2. “proverb” ( <i>sananlasku</i> )	= dictum, proverb, quotation, saying
3. “phrase” ( <i>fraasi</i> )	= idiom, phrase
4. “general guide” ( <i>ohje</i> )	= axiom, maxim, doctrine
5. “somebody said” ( <i>joku on sanonut</i> )	= aphorism, citation

Although what is meant with the “proverb” (*sananlasku*) is, to a certain extent, clear to the Finnish proverb users, it is not as clear as Mieder and Arora have noted in their proverb materials among the English speakers (Mieder 1993: 36; Arora 1994: 4). Even if it is true that people have a clear idea of what proverbs (*sananlasku*) in emic use are when using the Finnish language, proverb users speculate on the name of the concept, wondering if it is right to say *sananlasku* or *sananpars* (both mean “proverb” in English), concepts for etic use. In any case, there prevails some uncertainty regarding all the etic concepts of short folklore forms. Both František Čermák (2005) and Risto Järv (2009) have pointed out that it is obvious that users of proverbs cannot always identify proverbs or distinguish between proverbs



and other proverbial expressions. The question is whether they should be able to do that.

For example, during the Europhras 2008 congress in Finland, the biggest Finnish daily newspaper published an article under the heading *Krokotiilin kyynelitä itketään ympäri maailmaa* [‘Crocodile tears are wept all over the world’] (HS 17.8.2008), for which a journalist had interviewed professors Jarmo Korhonen, Mieder and Gyula Paczolay about proverbs and phrases. At the end of the article, readers were invited to send in phrases and proverbs they used in their everyday speech. The quality and quantity of the material that the newspaper received implied an emic concept of proverb, as it consisted of all kinds of comments, sayings, poems, citations, traditional proverbs, phrases, short stories and modern proverbs. (HS material; Granbom-Herranen 2011a: 286.) The same phenomenon has occurred in the internet conversations when Finnish proverbs were collected on a website called *Suomalaisia sananlaskuja* [‘Finnish proverbs’]. The site administrator explained that:

the [...] endeavour resulted in a random, mixed collection of all kinds of contemporary texts, such as short stories and humorous comments about the former Finnish ski-jumper Matti Nykänen, international citations as well as utterances belonging to old Finnish folk tradition beginning from the citations of *Kalevala*. (*Suomalaisia sananlaskuja*, translated by the author)

According to the site administrator, the biggest problem seemed to be the concept itself, the “Finnish proverb” (*Suomalaisia sananlaskuja*). Both the readers of the newspaper and writers on the internet certainly have a reason to call the expressions they use “proverbs” but the reason cannot be elicited from the texts.

In the Finnish life stories from the early twentieth century (PE85), over 60 different concepts were given as synonyms for the *sananlasku* [‘proverb’], for example *arvo* [‘value’], *neuvo* [‘advice’], *periaate* [‘principle’], *sanonta* [‘saying’], *varoitus* [‘warning’] and *viisaus* [‘wisdom’], as can be seen in example (2). (Granbom-Herranen 2004, appendix 6.) There existed plenty of expressions that from the narrators’ emic point of view were called proverbs (*sananlasku*) and which actually from the etic point of view were something else. This also comes up in contemporary SMS-messages (examples 3 and 4). As synonyms, the narrators used terms such as *sananlasku* [‘proverb’], *puheenparsi* [‘saying’], *Raamatun lause* [‘Bible quotation’], and so on. Likewise, in the life stories there were many utterances that in etic language were proverbs but that the narrators had not labelled as such.

(2) Jos käytti toista hyväkseen, kuului arvostelu: “Hyvä se on vieraal kankul tullee istuija.” – Jos suri juorukellojen puheita, kuului lohdutus: “Kuiva rikka helmast karisoo” sekä “Siel (kuolleina) ovat koht kaik, ampujat sekä kolistajat!” (Moittijat ja pahansuovat). Arvokas elämänohje kätkeytyy sanontaan: “Minkä taakseis paat, sen iestäis löyvät.” (PE85, woman, born 1912.)



If you took advantage of others, you could hear the criticism (*arvostelu*): “It is easy to sit on the fire with someone else’s buttock.” – If you were sad about somebody spreading gossip, you heard the solace (*lohdutus*): “Dry litter drops from the hem”, or “Soon everybody will be there (dead), the shooters and the noise makers!” (The faultfinders and the spiteful). A very valuable guideline for life is given in the saying (*sanonta*): “Whatever you put behind you, you’ll find in front of you.”

(3) Sananlasku: Kyllä Georgiaan nopeasti pääsee mutta sieltä pois tulo on vaikeaa ja vie aikaa. (Jan) (SSS, sent 22.8.2008.)

Proverb: You can get to Georgia fast but coming back from there is difficult and takes time.

(4) Vaikka tuhat ihmistä uskoisi hölynpölyyn, se on silti hölynpölyä. (Kiinalainen sananlasku) (SSS, sent 25.7.2009.)

Even if one thousand people believe in nonsense, it is still nonsense. (Chinese proverb)

Arora (1994: 22–23) does not deny the need to know the criteria by which people in emic language classify proverbs in their own groups, yet she does not consider these sayings to be proverbs in etic use even if the users accept them as such. Mieder stressed in the 1980s that proverb scholars should pay more attention to the present use of proverbs while continuing to tackle the frustrating question of whether a universal etic definition of the proverb can be found. If some genre definitions have lost their relevance over time, it is not only the question of the genre but also of the users of genre systems (Ben-Amos 1976b: 215). The proverb genre is a tool, not an end in itself, but the genre frames the research and the discipline. If we try to rely on etic definitions in normal everyday communication, speech becomes quite irrelevant and the use of proverbial expressions sounds artificial. However, if we study proverbs in context, the emic view has to be reckoned with. (Mieder 1993: 36; Granbom-Herranen 2004; 2008; 2009.) In everyday life to have an idea of the proverb is in most cases enough for the proverb user. This may be what Taylor (1981: 6) calls an incommunicable quality, which differentiates between a sentence and a proverb. The bedrock for the concept of proverb and the proverb genre should lie in everyday life (emic), not in academic research (etic). As Ben-Amos (1992: 25) has stressed, the basis for the concept of the proverb lies in everyday life in the context where the proverb is used.

### *Changes in Contexts and Proverbs*

Traditional and modern proverbs relate to contemporary lifestyle and everyday communication. The meaning of the concept “proverb” has changed because of all the changes that have occurred both in the use of proverbs and in the context of everyday life. Firstly, traditional proverbs seek out new forms, as in example (5), and they appear in combinations, as seen

in example (6). They are found in all kinds of contexts, in which they may gain extraordinary connections when compared with the assumed standard proverbial interpretation and from the etic point of view, as in example (7). Moreover, new proverbs are created by using existing ones and traditional proverbs are transformed into new ones, sometimes as parodies of the old tradition, as in example (8). The most common terms are “antiproverb” and “proverb parody” (Grzybek 2012: 140). When looking for proverbs in speech and in colloquial written texts, we seek for proverbs, shortened proverbs, and references and allusions to proverbs. This is related to the fact that traditional proverbs seek out new forms, proverbs are combined with other existing proverbs and modern proverbs are created by using the traditional ones. They have been called “proverb blendings” or “spliced proverbs” (Grzybek 2012: 141). Traditional proverbs are also found in new connections, and old proverbs are transformed into parodies of the old tradition, as in the example (9). This does not always gain the acceptance of the audience, as is seen in the example (10), which is feedback for the previous example. The genre of proverb may be in need of reassessment.

(5) Traditional proverbs seek out new forms.

Oli se vaan aika takero poliisi kun uukkarii tehdes ojaan ajo. Tosin inhimillistä tämäkin. – kaikille sattuu, jotka jotain viel yrittävät tehdä. (SSS, sent 5.9.2006.)

What a clumsy policeman, who tried to make a turn in his car and ended up in a ditch. This is really human. – Accidents will happen to all who still try to do something.

The expression *kaikille sattuu* [‘accidents will happen’] refers to the proverb *Tekevälle sattuu* [‘Accidents will happen to one who does something’] especially as the sentence goes on with *yrittävät tehdä* [‘try to do something’]. Anyhow, the one used in the text is not a fixed form but a situation-related application.

(6) Traditional and/or new expressions /proverbs are combined, or proverb blending.

Suhteellisuudentaju hukassa, viikkotolkulla kohkataan tekstiviesteistä ja kivien heittäjiä piisaa! Nimimerkki: Heittäjätkö pulmusia? (SSS, sent 28.3.2008.)

The sense of proportion is lost. Week after week people fuss about SMS-messages and stones are thrown! – Pseudonym: The throwers are snow buntings?

The proverb in this SMS-message is from the Bible: *Se, joka on synnitön, heittäköön ensimmäisen kiven* [‘Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone’] and it is combined with a well-known phrase in Finnish, *Puhdas kuin pulmunen* [‘Clean as a snow bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)’]. The phrase in itself refers to the image of the bird (white and clean), not to its real colour (black and white).

(7) Traditional proverbs are to be found in new connections.

Miksi lähettää suomalaisjoukkoja muihin maihin, jos ministeri itse katsoo paremmaksi pysyä hotellissa vain poltettavien renkaiden takia – oma koti kullaa kallis. (SSS, sent 23.1.2007.)

Why send Finnish troops to other countries, if a minister finds it better to stay in a hotel just because of burning tyres – one's own home is worth gold.

This message is a comment on a situation when a Finnish minister was in a war zone and stayed in a hotel. It is unclear here what the “home” is – Finland or the hotel.

(8) New proverbs are created by using traditional ones.

Salossa on kiitettävästi keräyspisteitä jätöpaperille, joten ei pitäisi eikä saisi heittää taloyhtiön roskikseen. – Jotakin tolkkua. (SSS, sent 30.1.2008.)

In [the town] Salo, we have many recycling points for collecting paper, so that it should not and must not be thrown in the housing association rubbish bins – Some moderation.

*Jotakin tolkkua* points to the traditional proverb, *Kohtuus kaikessa* [‘Moderation in all things’]. The modern version would be *Kohtuus kaikessa, pullo päivässä* [‘Moderation in all things, just a bottle a day’].

(9) Traditional proverbs are transformed, sometimes as parodies of the old tradition.

Kiittämätön, tiesitkö, että kissa kiittämättä elää, viisas koirakin oppii kiittämään. Ottakaamme siis oppia koirasta! Lahjan antajalle jää kiitoksesta hyvä mieli. Jep (SSS, sent 15.1.2008.)

Ungrateful, did you know that a cat lives without thanks, a wise dog learns to thank. Let us learn from the dog! The one who gives a present gets a good feeling. – Yeah.

He or she got an answer immediately:

(10) Kiittämätön. Kissa elää kiitoksella, koira pään silityksellä! JEPJEP (SSS, sent 24.1.2008.)

Ungrateful. A cat lives on thanks, a dog by someone stroking its head! – Yeah, yeah.

Secondly, everyday Finnish communication is no longer the same as it was when the study of proverbs began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>15</sup> Everyday communication no longer uses only the spoken language. A significant part of the interaction between people takes place in written form. Since the seventeenth century in sermons in Finnish, and since the late nineteenth century also in political speeches, proverbs have been primarily part of spoken rather than written discourse, even when sermons and political speeches were first written for oral delivery.

Proverbs occur individually only in dictionaries and in proverb lists. In other circumstances a proverb hardly appears alone. A proverb is always combined with something that is happening at the same time.<sup>16</sup> This involves both oral use and written texts in colloquial style. It is difficult to imagine a pure proverb performance, either in an oral or in colloquial written form. Proverbs are as a rule used in discussion and are not isolated from the rest of the speech context except by some introductory comment or verb, a proverb marker. In Honko's (1989: 26) diagram of the distribution of narrative genres along axes of factual–fabulated and profane–sacred, proverbs can easily appear in any part of the table. Following the folkloristic genre division based on action (Abrahams 1976), it is obvious that proverbs are situated in the conversational genre. Nowadays proverbs also appear in an urban context using modern media (such as legends: see Koski, this volume). In contemporary proverbs, context discussion can substitute for storytelling, fantasy literature for making the invisible believable, popular songs for folk songs, aphorisms for folk poems (*kansanruno*) and cartoons for anecdotes and jokes. Proverbs can be found in all of these connections. They can also occur in public communicative functions, for example in street art and advertisements. We can think of situations in which a legend, song or ritual is presented as an independent performance programme, or as a chapter in a book. With proverbs this is not possible; the vernacular use of a proverb needs some sort of framework.

Thirdly, people who use the proverbs are rather approached as a group than a folk. The mysterious Finnish folk, a notion that arose in the time of Finnish Romanticism and national romantic ideas in the nineteenth century, does not exist any more – it may never have existed. Nowadays a folkloristic group can be defined by social status, profession, ethnic background, language, domicile or whatever connects people, so it is possible to talk about some kind of membership. (Honko 1998: 1; Harris-Lopez 2003: 105.) Today we have to decide how to adapt to the issue of internet communities and if these communities can be counted as “folk”. We have to consider if people communicating via reading newspapers and writing letters meant to be published constitute a group. Forms of communication have changed and are still changing.

Fourthly, it is not clear what can be expected to survive when the environment changes, but the content of speech stays unchanged. The environment and the technology used to transmit folkloristic traditions, such as proverbs, have been changing. Radio and television have had their impact on the folklore genre, and the photocopier is an example of technology that made the beginning of Xerox-lore possible. Personal computers and e-mail as well as the internet have recreated the proverb genre. Modern cameras, mobile phone cameras and video equipment have inspired recordings of folkloristic items such as proverbs in graffiti. Virtual reality is a possible world for folklore. (Harris-Lopez 2003: 109–114.) This has also awakened doubts about the origin of tradition, and already by the early 1980s the idea of computer-generated proverbs had arisen (Grzybek 1987: 73). However, folklorists themselves have adapted many of these technological advances such as the tape recorder and photographs as the first wave of technological

applications and videos and computers as the second one. These are used in order to collect material more easily, quickly and effectively than before (Harris-Lopez 2003: 112). This is something that has been easy to accept. The change of the forms of tradition and the way it is transmitted has not been as easy to notice and to adapt to.

Finally, genres as well as typological systems and classifications have been and in many cases still are dominant within paremiologic studies. They have provided frameworks for both the study of folkloristic paremiology and for organizing proverb collections in various archives, and they have been built in order to take into account all that may be of interest to paremiologists. The typologies and classification systems focusing on proverbs and proverbial expressions have mostly been considered as givens, even in the twentieth century. (Bauman 1992: 53–56.) In most folkloristic sectors this is no longer topical. However, in paremiology the proverb genre with its sub-genres has been taken as a classificatory category or, alternatively, it has been brought into discourse as a permanent phenomenon (Kapaló 2011: 80). The classifications cannot be bypassed without any attention if the focus is on proverbs. In etic use, genres serve a dual purpose: to provide a system of classification and to give a conceptual framework for articulating the characteristics of components within a classification.

Proverbs as utterances can be relevant for hundreds of years. It is, for example, possible to trace some Finnish proverbs back to the time when they were used only in speech. The proverb *Sitä kuusta kuuleminen, jonka juurella asunto* [‘You have to listen to the advice given by the spruce you live next to’] is one of the oldest known Finnish proverbs (Haavio 1947). The proverb is still in use and the proverb has remained unchanged but the meaning has become different. Two examples of interpretations of this proverb in narratives are presented in examples 11.i–ii (PE85, archive material). The proverb received new interpretations and meanings, of which three examples from 2000 are presented in examples (11.iii–v) (Granbom-Herranen 2013a: 381–382), and in 2009, the proverb was found in the contemporary material (SSS):

(11) (i) [...] monia vanhoja ihmisiä -30 luvulla jotka, kun yhteen sattuiivat, muistelivat omaa lapsuuttaan ja nuoruuttaan ja ennenkaikkea sitä, kuinka kasvatus oli kovaa enimmäkseen. Vanhempien sana oli laki eikä sitä pyritty kumoamaan ja kuka siihen rohkeni ruveta, sai kuulla, sitä kuusta kuuleminen, jonka juurella asunto. (PE85, woman, born 1922.)

In the 1930s, many elderly people, when they got together, would recall their childhood and youth and, in particular, how hard was the upbringing for most. The parents’ word was law and wasn’t argued against, and whoever was brave enough to start doing so would hear, you have to listen to the advice given by the spruce you live next to.

(ii) Kun työtä tehtiin se täytyi silloin tehdä hyvin että. Sitä sitten Sai vastakin tehtäväksi. Ja sehän se oli Että työtä kun teki niin eli. [...] Raamattuun Kirjojen kirjaan vetoamalla siinä ohje-nuoraa kaikissa elämän vaiheissa Vetoamalla Vanhoihin sanontoihin. Sitä Kuusta Kuuleminen jonka Juurella asunto. (PE85, man, born 1937.)

Work had to be done so well that you'd get more later. You'd only earn your living when working. [...] The Bible, the book of books, offers that advice; so do old sayings such as You have to listen to the advice given by the spruce you live next to.

(iii) Jos on töissä, niin täytyy pitää työnantajan puolta. (Q-2000, man, born 1938.)

If you're a worker, you are to side with your employer.

(iv) Tämä on muistutus siitä, että meillä kaikilla on juuremme jossakin, eikä niitä tulisi unohtaa. (Q-2000, woman, born 1952.)

It's a reminder. We all have roots somewhere and they shouldn't be forgotten.

(v) Jos aikoo säilyttää työnsä ja tulonsa, on parasta olla ääneen puhuessaan samaa mieltä: Kenen leipää syöt, sen lauluja laulat. (Q-2000, woman, born 1955.)

If you want to keep a job and income, it's better when speaking to have the same opinion as one's employer: Whose bread you eat, his or her songs you sing.

(vi) Puolueiden tukeminen on väärin. Ehkä ei juridisesti, mutta moraalisesti, samalla tavalla kuin muikin lahjonta. – Sitä kuusta kuuleminen [...] (SSS sent 16.6.2009.)

It is wrong to support political parties, perhaps not in a juridical sense but in a moral sense, as similarly, all bribery is wrong. – You have to listen to the advice given by the spruce [...]

The infinity and inexhaustibility of the proverb is, on the one hand, connected with its meaning. In a new place and time the proverb can gain new interpretations. On the one hand, the proverb genre is very constricted, while on the other hand, it is boundless, as the boundlessness of proverbs is linked with the capability to transform. Nevertheless, despite many changes in culture, proverbs are still used; they have rhetorical power and they can be used in argumentation. The use of the proverb is linked up to worldview and the present situation.

### *Conclusions*

In Finnish paremiology, the etic concept “proverb” has been a stable and unchangeable element, unlike the proverb genre itself, which has never been untouchable. When considering the genre, paremiologists have for a couple of centuries created classifications, typologies and groupings, which break apart the proverb genre and then piece it back together in a new order. All this has been done in order to clarify the etic concept of proverb and the proverb genre. Proverb definitions are built into the classifications, as the need to organize proverbs sets requirements on proverb definitions. Some classification systems are needed to study proverbs as well as to organize proverb corpuses into databases and to manage materials in archives. The etic classifications are relevant to specifying the genre that, for its part, is necessary for two reasons. The research has to be able to identify the focus of the work and classifications are essential for managing archives. However, proverbs are used in emic surroundings for communication and in spite of

the genre definitions in etic format, people live, use and are allowed to use proverbs as they see fit. In the emic context the proverb genre of the twenty-first century cannot be the same as it was in the nineteenth century.

It does not matter whether definition is necessary; the conclusion is the same: it is difficult to do it perfectly. It has not been possible to create one common and universal definition for the concept of “proverb” or for the genre of the proverb to be applied to both oral and written usages as well as to all other disciplines. The contemporary proverb genre should not be simply a matter of introducing some new parts into an old system, but rather changing the limits of the genre and perhaps compiling some new features to look for when approaching the phenomenon from a novel point of view. Neither genres nor concepts need to cover everything everywhere. To conclude, in paremiology there exists a need for two kinds of etic definitions of the proverb: folkloristic and linguistic. If genre is a restricted phenomenon, it can also be controlled. As circumstances and lifestyles are changing more and more rapidly, the emic concepts such as proverbs, including their meanings, cannot be the everlasting elements either for academic use or for ordinary people in everyday life. Genres are cultural products in a time-and-space society and as time wears on, new concepts as well as genres and subgenres may be needed.

If the changes in etic definitions of both the proverb and the proverb genre are seen as developmental steps towards emic definitions, it is possible to state without any hesitation that the proverb genre is very much alive. It can be concluded that modern proverbs are a part of living tradition and proverbs are alive as long as they are used or referred to in everyday communication. Proverbs, both traditional and modern ones, still have their place in urban surroundings and new technology. Traditional proverbs are changing, they are being reconstructed and reevaluated. At the same time, modern proverbs are constructed or some of them just spring up. Many of the modern proverbs will become traditional after some decades, but we do not know which ones. The modern proverb is often created by somebody, by an unknown or a well-known person. If we have regimented demands for frequency, distribution and anonymity of origin, it may be noticed that only traditional proverbs exist and the part of the proverb genre that deals with modern proverbs is more like an empty folder.

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## NOTES

- 1 Paremiology is the study of proverbs and proverbial expressions, which focuses on the definition, form, structure, style, content, function, meaning and value of proverbs. Paremiography focuses on the collecting and classifying of proverbs. (Mieder 2004: xii.)
- 2 In this article “concept” is understood to express an idea or abstract principle which is the conjunction of all the characteristic features of something. Here the “idea” is an opinion or belief about something is or should be. The “term” is a more restricted designation, meaning a word or an expression. As a concept “proverb” is an artefact, including the end product and the process behind it.
- 3 Otherwise in the text the concept “traditional” is to be understood in the meaning of typical and usual either in the past or present. (“Finnish traditional proverbs” in end note 9).
- 4 The discussion of culture specifies concepts of proverbs; see Hakamies, this volume.
- 5 Examples of the most recent Finnish academic writings using proverbs can be found in Granbom-Herranen 2010b: 216. The Finnish folkloristic dissertations focusing on paremiology up to 2012 are in Granbom-Herranen 2012: 180.
- 6 Traditionality is still seen as a notary fact; it is a well-known fact that both academics and the public are supposed to know.
- 7 Up to World War II, Finnish proverbs were collected and their distribution was mapped within the framework of the Historical-Geographic Method (also known as the Finnish Method). Most of the traditional Finnish proverb types are included in published collections edited by R. E. Nirvi and Lauri Hakulinen (1948), Matti Kuusi (1953) and Kari Laukkanen and Pekka Hakamies (1978). The concept of the proverb in Finland has primarily been advanced to coincide with the types and structures presented in the aforementioned publications.
- 8 Literally, “I drink now coffee”.
- 9 The history of Finland has left coffee with a special status in Finnish everyday life. Coffee breaks are mentioned even in the Law for Occupational Safety (law 23.8.2002/738), and in field-specific instructions (*Työturvallisuuslaki* 31§); see also Nieminen & Puustinen 2014.
- 10 This is especially associated with journalists. It was only some years before (1984) when President Mauno Koivisto clashed with the media and called journalists lemmings (*Lemmus Lemmus*) (Kansallisbibliografia).
- 11 Texts in examples are translated literally by the author. The proverb parallels are not used.
- 12 E.g. Mattinykanen.net; Wikisitaatit (fi.wikiquote.org); Kuuluisa.fi; Angelfire.com.
- 13 However, there are always listeners and readers who are incapable of understanding and/or interpreting proverbs (Ferretti *et al.* 2007; Granbom-Herranen 2008: 184).
- 14 A foundational meaning is a culturally bound standard proverbial interpretation (SPI) that is understood as the universal, “correct” interpretation (Norrick 1985: 109–117). The SPI presupposes universality and is often seen as a “correct” interpretation when cultural prejudices are involved. According to Hilary Putnam (1975), universality of features among languages means universal structures, not universal meanings. Also, similarity in intention, at a micro level, does not mean similarity in extension, at a macro level.
- 15 Proverbs have been collected from much earlier times. In Finnish the first collections date from the time when written Finnish was recorded in the sixteenth century (Granbom-Herranen 2012).
- 16 Galit Hasan-Rockem (1982) uses the term “behavioral context”.

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## 13. Major Generic Forms of Dogri *lok gathas*

Since the coining of the term “folklore”, the concept has travelled a long way. A broad definition of folklore includes the way people learn, how they share knowledge and form their identity. It is, as Dan Ben-Amos’s influential delineation abstracts it, “artistic communication in small groups” (Ben Amos 1971: 13). In the course of its development, scholars have attempted to define folklore in many ways, variously according to its components and according to theories that help us understand how it works. Such definitions of folklore do not always name the material that constitutes folklore in specific terms. Folklorists have developed labels that organise and categorise types of folklore into genres (Sims & Stephens 2005: 12).

The present paper will briefly outline an approach to genre and apply this to study and analyse varieties of Dogri *lok gathas*, narrative folksongs of the Jammu region of India that have frequently been described as “ballads”.<sup>1</sup> It highlights that the *lok gatha* is an important generic form existing in the region and surveys its numerous subgenres. The approach taken here will be placed in relation to other approaches to *lok gathas*. This leads to a proposal concerning the direction of future research of *lok gatha* traditions in order for them to offer a unique window into understanding the people, art, expression and communication in the Jammu region.

### *A Dynamic View of Genre*

In common language, “genre” is a tool for classification. Any kind of category based on a criterion or a set of criteria can be called a genre. The different kinds of cultural production are distinguished from each other based on certain methods or distinguishing features. The term “genre” has been used to address a variety of media, such as literature, oral folklore, cinema, music, dance, craft and painting. Genre can either refer to an abstract category coined by researchers or can be the abstracted perception of a given cultural form of expression (Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume). There are many reasons to use the concept of genre as a classificatory tool:

Just as doctors do not talk about the body without knowing all principal parts, just as a linguist cannot talk about language without a vocabulary of terms that describe words, sounds, and meaning, so folklorist does not discuss folklore without a sound knowledge of its genres [...]. Without a generic terminology, we would have little hope of understanding each other. (Toelken 1996: 183.)

As folklorists study new and evolving folklore, they need to have ways to talk about the folklore's new varieties. The loose classifications of genres provide a foundation for identifying, discussing and analysing the qualities of various folklore items. When a folklorist focuses his or her career on the study of one particular type of folklore, genre labels help to locate relevant material, offer a frame of reference when communicating with other researchers, and can play a key role in connecting with specialists working with similar kinds of folklore. Moreover, having a name or label offers us a place to start in understanding an artist's and performer's work. Perhaps most significant is that genre terms give us a common language so that we can share and discuss ideas and interpretations. (Sims & Stephens 2005: 12.)

In folklore, generic labelling is based on the particular characteristics that an item exhibits and/or how it is expressed (see also Frog, this volume). As I see it, various forms of folklore can be divided into three broad categories or super-genres – verbal folklore, material folklore and social customs. Within these super-genres, there are numerous types and subtypes of lore.

Verbal folklore includes all kinds of lore involving words. It may be organised in a sequential narrative form, or simply label an activity or express a belief through a word or phrase. Among the most recognisable forms of verbal lore studied by folklorists are folksongs, myths, folktales and other narrative genres including contemporary or urban legends. Such traditions of verbal lore may be set to music and accompanied by embodied performance or may emerge much more subtly within a continuous flow of everyday discourse. Verbal folklore also includes jokes, jump-rope rhymes, proverbs and riddles, all of which may be associated to varying degrees with particular behaviours, intentions, activities or recurrent situations. Even individuals' stories about their own lives – their personal narratives – are considered to be folklore. All these variant forms of verbal lore link to beliefs and values of the society in which they exist. They often function as a medium to educate members of the community within which the tradition is performed.

Material folklore manifests a variety of forms. Some of these are physically enduring, such as architectural structures, functional tools and pottery. Some are ephemeral, such as food, body painting and paper ornaments. Although material folklore is most often approached through objects and artefacts, the folklore aspect corresponds to techniques, skills, recipes and formulas transmitted across the generations. Such folklore is subject to the same forces of conservative tradition and individual variation as verbal art.

Between verbal and material culture lie areas of traditional life that extend in many directions, of which a broad area can be described as social customs as folklore. Here the emphasis is on group interaction rather than on individual skills and performances. (Dorson 1982: 2.) Such folklore



includes rituals, festivals and celebrations, music, dance, modes of worship outside of an institutionalized church, folk religion and folk medicine. Nevertheless, such customs are not necessarily practiced without words or material counterparts: they quite often interface with varieties of verbal and material folklore to form coherent traditions of expression.

It cannot be stressed enough that the super-genres of verbal folklore, material folklore and social customs are not watertight compartments and that they do not exist in isolation from one another. For example, marriage celebrations often include folklore from each of these super-genres and frequently the complementary forms of verbal, material and customary texts express important group values and beliefs. Thus marriage celebrations not only include verbal texts but also the playing of traditional music and instruments, which may be emblematic of specific phases of the event (like the wedding march so strongly identified with the walk of the bride in the West) or more generally connote the solemn, celebratory or playful character of accompanying activities. Brides, grooms and their families often rely on a variety of customary practices that reflect or manifest beliefs about the social institution of marriage and its implications for individuals, families and their relationships. The performance of significant and perhaps symbolic texts of vows may be accompanied by material counterparts in performance that may be referred to and have their significance explicated in the text of the vows themselves. Within such a ritualized celebration, the verbal, material and customary aspects may not only occur together but also develop their traditional meanings, social significance and associations in relation to one another.

Most folklorists currently feel that manifestations of folklore in practice actually bridge many categories of expression, linking them and even combining them in both conventional and unconventional ways (see e.g. Tarkka, this volume). As a consequence, the whole idea of genre can be considered relative. This leads to the problem of whether there is such a thing as an ideal genre (see further the discussions in this volume of Frog, Kokkonen & Koskinen, and Hakamies). The genre we choose to place an item of folklore into may depend on which elements we emphasise in analysis. Especially complex customs such as those surrounding marriage in a particular group can lead researchers to categorize the ritual or its constitutive parts and develop descriptive definitions of the genre or genres in different ways according to their particular research interests. Whether we want to study ritual acts, uses of music, verbal art or the symbolic content of vows will shape views of genre and how we categorize the ritual or its parts. (Sims & Stephens 2005: 17.)

The relativizing of genres has led folklorists to look beyond genre classification and give increasing attention to folklore as complex, multimodal communication. As such, the “text” and “context” of an item of folklore become the focus of research in order to approach its situational use, meanings and significance. Within the present discussion, it is worth returning to the etymology of the term “text”, which ultimately derives from a verb meaning “to weave”. This origin suggests that text is like a cloth, a material object, woven of many different threads that are united to create

a coherent whole. (Sims & Stephens 2005: 19.) Rather than restricting this concept to words alone, “text” is here considered to refer to any and all features forming an organized arrangement in expression (see Frog, this volume), and in this sense it extends to the multimodality of verbal performances, the combinations of features that make material folklore recognizable, as well as the complex and dynamic arrangements of rituals approachable as “texts”. This approach to text places words, objects, ideas, behaviour and the content of a particular item of folklore on equal footing in terms of their relative significance. The approach taken here treats the context of performance as including physical settings and social situations in which members of folk groups share folklore. This use of context extends to the relationships among audience members and performers. Within this approach, the coordinated analysis of the text and context of a folklore item can help us to understand folklore as “artistic communication” of those groups (Ben Amos 1971: 13).

### *Dogri and the Jammu Region*

Dogri is an Indo-Aryan language which is spoken chiefly in the Jammu region in northern India. The Jammu region is a geographical entity which has been identified as a tract lying between the Jhelum and the Ravi Rivers, that is, between the Plains of Punjab and the ascending hills of the Pir Panjal Range of the Inner Himalayan region. In ancient times, the Jammu region was known by the name *Darvabhisara* or *Darva-Abhisara*.<sup>2</sup> It also remained a part of the *Madradesh* [‘Land of the Madra Tribe’] in Vedic times.<sup>3</sup> The region is further divided into sub-regions of the Eastern Plains, the Eastern Hills, the Western Plains and the Western Hills (Census Report of India 1911: 201). Presently, the region forms a part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the northern most state of India. However, some parts of it, including Bhimbar, Khari-Kharyali and Mirpur, now lie in Pakistan.

In addition to Dogri, other languages with many local dialects are spoken in the Jammu region, including Gojri, Pahari, Bhaderwahi, Kishtwari, and Poonchi. However, the distribution of these languages is much more geographically limited in contrast to Dogri. Gojri is spoken by the Gujjars, the major nomadic tribe of the region; a dialect of Pahari is spoken by people living in the higher reaches of the Jammu hills whereas Bhaderwahi is spoken only in the area of the region known as Bhaderwaha, Kishtwari in the Kishtwar region, and Poonchi in the Poonch region. In comparison to these, Dogri is spoken across a much larger area. This spread has been largely due to the spread of language in connection with the extension of the Dogra culture throughout the historical period from the nucleus centres of Basholi, Jasrota and Bhillawar to other areas. Moreover, for the last two centuries, and especially from the time of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857–1885 A.D.), efforts were made for the promotion and development of the Dogri language. A result of these efforts is that Dogri has been enriched and achieved the status of a language from that of a simple dialect. In 2003, it was recognised as one of the major languages of India through its incorporation in the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution.<sup>4</sup> Dogra culture is now the

main culture prevailing in the Jammu region. Other smaller cultures of the region have gradually been subsumed or encompassed by it and Dogri has become main language.

The struggle for recognition of Dogri as one of the major languages of India not simply affected the development of the language. It has also led to the documentation and publication of Dogri folk literature. In this regard, the Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy has played a pivotal role in collecting and publishing Dogri folklore.<sup>5</sup> Many volumes of verbal lore have now been published, including folksongs, folktales, proverbs and idioms. Dogri Sanstha is another organisation involved in the documentation and publication of folk literature along with modern Dogri literature. The Department of Dogri Language of the University of Jammu has also been actively engaged in this area of research. Moreover, the individual initiative of the scholars like Prof. Ramnath Shastri, Sh. Om Goswami, Sh. Shiv Nirmohi, Dr. Asoka Jerath and many others cannot be overlooked. As a result, a rich treasure of Dogri oral folk narratives has come to light in their variant forms. This body of collected folklore includes *lok gathas*, especially those connected with martyr deities, which have been documented in large numbers and resulted in a number of published collections (e.g. Gandalgai 1976; Shastri 1981; Nirmohi *et al.* 1982; Goswami 1990; Sharma *et al.* 1990).

### *Dogri lok gathas*

This term “*lok gatha*” was first used by Dr. Krishandev Upadhyay, a noted Hindi writer, to designate those narratives which tell a story in the form of a song. The term is a combination of two words: *lok* means “folk” and *gatha* refers to a narrative or story, and thus *lok gatha* literally means “a narrative of the folk”. More specifically, a *lok gatha* is usually a long narrative song organised into stanzas and performed to the accompaniment of music. The tradition of *lok gathas* is prevalent in different regional languages of India where they are called as *pavade* in Garwal (a region in Uttarakhand), *parmar* in Brij, *pavado* in Malwa, *pavara* in Madhya, *pradesh* and *uttarpradesh* and *pavada* in Maharashtra.

In *lok gathas*, the protagonist is usually a folk deity, folk hero, or a martyr who has sacrificed his life for a common cause. The *gatha* narrates the life story and main events connected with its hero. The aim of its formation is to highlight the deeds of the hero and to create a halo effect around the protagonist. Krishandev Upadhyaya (1960: 492) has delineated following characteristics which a narrative has to possess in order to qualify as a *lok gatha*. They are:

- The composer is unknown
- Oral composition
- Lack of an authoritative written text; performance is not based on a written text
- Narration is poetic and sung, incorporating a mixture of dance and music
- Performance does not include preaching

- Impact from the local culture is discernible in the text
- An absence of formal rhetoric
- The text is long
- Repetition of *tek pad* (sentences) in performance

Many of the narrative songs in Dogri possess the above-mentioned characteristics and fall within the broad genre of *lok gathas* as described here. The generic forms of Dogri *lok gathas* differ from one another centrally in terms of subject matter, which in turn may be associated with differences in contexts of performance, who performs them, or performance style. In the following sections, generic forms of *Dogri lok gathas* are reviewed with consideration of their purpose of composition and the singing community connected with their performance. The vernacular terms that are used to designate the generic forms belong to the local tradition and practice.

#### KARAK GATHAS [‘SACRED NARRATIVE SONGS’]

*Karaks* are sacred narratives sung in honour of Brahmanical gods and folk deities of the region. They are performed only by a designated person at the shrine of deity and on particular occasions. The word *karak* derives from the Sanskrit word *karika* which means “*shalok*”, or special sacred song or something sacred said in few words. (Nirmohi 1982: 17.) The term *karak* appears to have initially been limited to songs sung in honour of Vedic and Puranic deities. Later on, this term was adopted by the folk singers for the *gathas* of the local deities. It is said that probably *karak* singing was initiated by *Nath jogis*<sup>6</sup> who would sing in the honour of *Sidda Nath*, but later on the same type of singing was adopted by folk singers to honour local folk deities like *gramdevtas* [‘village deities’] and *kul devtas* [‘family deities’]. *Kariks* are sung in a particular folk *raag* – i.e. one of the melodic modes used in Indian classical music which also has a folk version.

Regarding the formation of the *karak*, a *karak* stanza ends in /e/, which receives stress, and it is sung in *alap*.<sup>7</sup> *Karaks* are sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument known as a *dhol*.<sup>8</sup> The aim of forming a *karak* is, on the one hand, to bestow the status of a deity on the designated person, especially in a case where a person has achieved martyrdom or has followed the path of renunciation and, on the other hand, also to honour this deity.

A *karak* is performed at the time of rituals and festivals held in honour of the deities. These festivals are annual congregations (*males*) and the first offering of the harvest to the deity (*kharkas*) at their shrines. Thousands of devotees participate and become part of the performance. Through *karak* singing, a deity is invoked to receive favours in the form of agricultural prosperity, wealth, progeny and protection from natural calamities.

In course of a *karak* performance, once a deity gets invoked, it communicates through a (designated) medium called a *dowala*. He is a religious professional capable of having direct communication with the deity and through him the deity communicates its wishes to the audience. This performance is called a *jatra*. In the course of a *jatra*, the deity also suggests corrective measures to alleviate the sufferings of afflicted persons who attend the ritual.

*Karaks* can be sung only by traditional singers called *gardis* and *jogis*.<sup>9</sup> These are the people belonging to the lowest strata of the society, namely people of the Megh or Dums sub-castes.<sup>10</sup> *Karaks* form two sub-groups: (a) those dealing with Brahmanic gods and goddesses customarily called “Puranic”, and (b) *gathas* of local deities and family deities.

Puranic *lok gathas* largely centre around the stories of Shiva and Parvati, their marriage, and magical rituals associated with Lord Shiva.<sup>11</sup> Of these, the *Shiva vivah gatha* [‘*Gatha* of Shiva’s Marriage’] and *Shiva khelan jadia gatha* [‘*Gatha* of Shiva Performing Magic’] are very popular. The *Shiva vivah gatha* reflects local marriage customs and rituals. The *Shiva khelan jadia* is a narrative which explains magical folk rituals: the singers have connected the narrative with Shiva although it is not referenced in any of the Brahmanical literature.<sup>12</sup> The *gathas* connected with Shiva–Parvati are sung by singers called *jangams*.<sup>13</sup>

*Gathas* of folk deities include those of *kul devtas* [‘male family / clan deities’] and *kul devis* [‘female family / clan deities’], *naga devtas* [‘serpent deities’], and *gram devtas* [‘male village deities’] and *gram devis* [‘female village deities’] that have achieved the status of folk deities over a period of time, such as Raja Mandleek, Baba Kali Beer and Baba Narsingh Dev. On the other hand, *gathas* connected with family deities include the narratives of Baba Jitto,<sup>14</sup> Bua Kauri,<sup>15</sup> Baba Ranpat,<sup>16</sup> and Bua Banga.<sup>17</sup> Family deities include both *shaheed devtas* [‘male martyr deities’] and *satis*<sup>18</sup> (*devis*) [‘female martyr deities’]. These were often common people who were either killed or sacrificed for a humanitarian cause, although they could also be elevated to this status for various other reasons. Once the victim died, the guilty person or community would begin to revere him or her in order to appease the deceased and escape the consequences of his or her wrath and anger. This is the reason that the majority of *shaheed devtas* have come into being. The study of these deities shows that primary causes for their martyrdom were connected to atrocities and injustices committed by feudal lords, being killed in land and boundary disputes, being victims of human sacrifice, being killed through the practice of *parha pratha* (self immolation),<sup>19</sup> and untimely an unnatural death.

*Karaks*, connected with deities are still a part of the living tradition. No ritual or ceremony is performed without having first venerated the deities and an essential part of their veneration involves the performance of *karaks* by the *gardis*. The deity cannot be invoked without the performance of the relevant *karak*. These narrative songs therefore form an essential part of the living religious heritage of the region. Even though *karaks* appear to have originally emerged specifically to honour Vedic and Puranic deities, the fact that these *gathas* are largely devoted to local deities – *kul devtas* and *kul devis* – indicates that the worship of local deities has predominated in the religious practices of the region and continues to do so, in spite of the fact that most of the region has now been Brahmanised. In fact, every ritual begins with an initial offering being made to the *kul devtas* and *kul devis*, to whom Brahmanic gods appear second in importance, and no ritual or religious ceremony is considered complete without reverence to these deities. When viewed within the broader context of religious life in

the region, the local and regional practices appear to have been upheld and functioned to maintain a distinctive religious identity in a harmonious co-existence with the greater traditions of Brahmanic religion.

The *karak*s are narratives created and maintained through the oral culture of the local people. As such, they not only present information about the local religion and beliefs: the narratives have been shaped in relation to the communities that use them along with their understandings of the social and natural (and supernatural) worlds, including their rituals, traditions and social concerns (Honko 1998: 72–75). The accounts of peasant resistance, atrocities of feudal lords, cattle raids and other kinds of social conflict in society that are represented in the narratives are simultaneously reflections of the sorts of conflicts and hardships that were of social concern. The narratives also present information about rituals connected with childbirth and marriage. The narratives connected with female deities suggest that girls were usually married before puberty whereas, boys were married at a slightly more advanced age. For example, the *gatha* of Bua Makhna and Bua Bukhi, two *sati* deities, tell us that they were married off before attaining puberty (Nirmohi 1982: 104–105). Similarly a number of features connected with marriage rituals are found, especially in those dealing with marriage of Shiva and Parvati. This narrative exists in both Dogri and in Bhaderwahi (spoken in Jammu and in the Bhaderwah district of the Jammu region). A comparative study of the *lok gathas* across these languages offers indications of regional variation in marriage customs and rituals. The relationship between such variation observed in the oral poetry and current and historical variation in actual practices has not yet been thoroughly investigated and has the potential to yield valuable new information about the workings of these traditions in society.

#### BAR GATHAS [‘HEROIC GATHAS’]

Another major form of *gatha* prevalent in the region is called *bar*. The word *bar* is a corruption of the Hindi term *vir* [‘brave; chivalrous’]. These *gathas* are called *bars* because they deal with themes of heroic prowess and adventure. They extol the bravery of warriors who at some point showed their military prowess and chivalry. *Bars* were sung at battles and in the courts of Dogra rulers in order to inspire a sense of bravery among the soldiers. They were sung by traditional singers called *dareas*. *Dareas* were courtiers of the Dogra feudal lords and were respected as court poets. In comparison to *karak gathas*, *bars* can be considered secular in nature. The *dareas* were in fact followers of Islam rather than of Brahmanic or local vernacular religion and the singing of *bars* was not a sacred act.

The singing of *bars* appears associated with a particular social and political milieu. The specialized *dareas* poets were valued by Dogra lords and presumably associated with the lords’ prestige: they always asked these bards to accompany them, especially during battles. However, the narratives of these *gathas* have only been documented concerning events from the seventeenth century onward. If *bars* were performed prior to this, they have been lost to posterity. The documented *bars* include tales of warriors like Mian Dido,<sup>20</sup> Raja Ranjit Dev,<sup>21</sup> Baj Singh,<sup>22</sup> and so on. The changes in the



political situation that brought an end to the royal houses and royalty also had consequences for the social roles and economic situation of the court poets, with the outcome that *bars* are no longer sung except when, for example, they are showcased as part of local heritage on certain special occasions.

The specialist court poets who performed *bars* were, in their time, masters of words who attended closely to the unfolding of events. They were to watch keenly what happened on the battlefield and gather facts that could later be woven into rhymed song – with, of course, the singer's own touch. These bards are said to have produced their *gathas* instantaneously (see Harvilahti 2004: 5), they also sang praises of their lords, and the thunderous rhythm of their voices are said to have inspired soldiers on the battlefield (Jerath 1998: 66). *Dareas* accompanied the rhythm of their singing on a stringed instrument popularly called *chakara* or *thumbha*, which has now almost disappeared. The *chakara* was an instrument that had a structure like that of the one-stringed instrument called an *ektara*<sup>23</sup> and had a bow with small jingling objects attached to it. *Dareas* were imagined to play the *chakara* with such skill that their audience would be overwhelmed and enchanted by the rhythm, inspiring them to enter a battle.

#### YOGI GATHAS [‘GATHAS OF THE YOGIS’]

Like *karak gathas*, *yogi gathas* are also sacred in nature: they are sung in the honour of Nathpanth saints who became *yogis* (i.e. masters of the supreme *yoga*). *Nathpanth* is a spiritual heterodox tradition within the Hindu cult.<sup>24</sup> These *yogis* came from all walks of life – rulers, royal persons and common folk people like Brithri, Raja Gopichand, Baba Pir Charangnath and Raja Hodi, who each went on the path of renunciation, leaving behind worldly pleasures. Their *gathas* are also sung on special occasions at their shrines by their disciples, also called *yogis*. It is pertinent to mention here that the *yogi* cult arrived in Jammu region from outside. As such, these *gathas* do not originally belong to this region although they have been adapted to the local cultural milieu. Alongside *bar gathas*, the *yogi gathas* provide a rich area to explore the evolution of Dogri *gatha* traditions and their relationships to different social practices and historical situations.

#### PRANYA GATHAS [‘LOVE GATHAS’]

*Pranya gathas* are narratives of love and include a variety of stories (Jerath 1998: 65). For example, *Kunju-chanchlo* tells of a soldier (*kunju*) killed on the battlefield and of his beloved (*chanchlo*). *Sunni-Bhukhuis* named for two lovers who belonged to *Gaddi* tribe who each died on receiving false news of the other's death. *Chann Plasar* is the story of two lovers from different castes: the boy (*Chann*) was from the Brahmin (priestly) caste and his beloved was from the *Harijan* [‘Beloved of Hari (God)’] community,<sup>25</sup> or the untouchables. In this *gatha*, the boy chose to become *Harijan* for the sake of his love in response to social opposition to the romance. *Raja Hosn* is a story of prince who had won his bride in the *swayamvara*,<sup>26</sup> and, when the bride's brother refused to acknowledge the marriage, he had to fight a hard battle with the bride's family. *Mira-Julahi* is again a tragic love story about a lady and her warrior. The eminent folklore collector Asoka Jerath also refers



to a number of other *pranya gathas*, including *Phulmu–Ranjhu*, *Pirithi Sing*, *Inder Dei*, *Mian Te Maine*, *Nand Lal*, *Hemraj*, and so on (Jerath 1998: 62–64). Such *gathas* are also referred to by the folklore collector Siva Nirmohi (1982: 155–162), who proposes that the narratives of *Kunju–Chanchlo* and *Sunni–Bhukhu* have been adapted into folk songs from another narrative form (Nirmohi 1982: 162–163).

These *gathas* seem to have been secular and primarily for the entertainment of local communities. They were performed, for instance, on days when there was no formally organized source of entertainment. No complete text has been documented for some of the *pranya gathas* and these have potentially been lost as their content has been shortened and adapted into other genres of songs. Many scholars have therefore refused to accept these as *gathas*. In addition, many of the narratives of *pranya gathas* are not of local origin: they appear to have been borrowed from outside and adapted to the milieu of their new environment.

#### CHETTRI GATHAS OR DHOLRU GATHAS AND BAR SAWARE (SECULAR SEASONAL GATHAS)

*Dholru gathas* fall into the group of seasonal narratives as they are sung and performed in particular seasons of the year. They are sung in the Hindu months of Phagun and Chetr: Phagun is the eleventh month of the Hindu calendar, from the middle of February to the middle of March; Chetr is the twelfth month of the Hindu calendar, from the middle of March to the middle of April (Goswami 1990: 6). Because of their performance during the month of Chetr, these *gathas* are also known as *Chettri gathas*. Their theme revolves around the birth of Lord Ram (hero of the epic *Ramayana*), his marriage with Sita, and his exile, all of which are told through the lens of the local culture.<sup>27</sup>

They are sung by the traditional folk singers called *dholru* singers. The *dholru* singers of the Ramnagar, Basholi, Duggi Dhar, Bhaddu, and Bhillawar areas are well known for their skills. *Dholru* narrative singing in particular months correlates with the time when the harvest is ripe and was viewed centrally as a time when farmers enjoyed performances of these *gathas* as entertainment. *Dholru* singers normally perform in a group of two or three and use a *dholki*<sup>28</sup> as a musical instrument. However, very few of *dholru* narratives have been documented. Those that have been recorded include, for example, *Sita ka baiya* [‘The Marriage of Sita’] and *Mhena de na* [‘The Names of the Months’]. As such, not much more can be said about the structure of these narratives than that they are organized in stanzas of four to six lines, each stanza ends with salute to Lord Ram, and the whole narrative is usually completed in fifteen to twenty stanzas. However, the singers of *Chettri gathas* are also known as having knowledge of astrology, rains and agricultural operations that they shared with village folk. They were therefore highly respected in a village community.

*Bar saware* also fall into the group of seasonal *gathas* sung by traditional bards to the accompaniment of local musical instrument called a *dhaka*. They are performed during the Hindu months of Assu and Ketah: Assu is the sixth month of the Hindu calendar, from the middle of September to the

middle of October; *Ketah* is the seventh month of the Hindu calendar, from the middle of October to the middle of November. These were months in which peasant communities had more free time as the crop would already be in the fields and *bar saware* were for the entertainment of local village communities during this time. Especially the *gatha* called *Sarban Geet (Shravan)* is sung during this time. This *gatha* tells the story of an obedient son called Sharvan Kumar, whose parents were blind. When he was accidentally killed by King Dasrath of Ayodhy (known from the *Ramayana*), Sharvan Kumar's parents cursed King Dasrath to die longing for his own son as well. The story does not originally belong to the Jammu region but has arrived from outside and become incorporated into the local traditions.

#### SEASONAL RITUAL GATHAS (GUSTEN GATHAS)

In addition to seasonal *gathas* that seem to be performed primarily as an entertainment for local communities, there are also *gathas* that are connected to rituals that are organized seasonally. The songs called *masades* are sung during the performance of rituals like the *gusten* and are thus also called *gusten gathas* and fall into the genre of seasonal ritual *gathas*. *Masades* or *gusten gathas* are sung by the traditional bards called *gurahiyas*, and thus they are also known as *gujris*. These *gathas* are performed to the accompaniment of the musical instruments known as a *sarangi*, *dhol* and *kaesayia*.

*Gusten* rituals are performed as the first offering of the new harvest to the family deity in order to invoke the blessings of that deity for prosperity. As such, *gusten gathas* are sung when the new crop is ready for harvest in the months of *Katah* and *Magr* (the eighth month of the Hindu calendar, from middle of November to the middle of December). These *gathas* are also sung in the months of *Magh*, *Phagun* and *Chetr*, when the winter harvest is ready and is to be offered to the deity. (Goswami 1990: 7.)

A noteworthy feature of these *gathas* is their lexicon: the meanings of the words in documented *masades* are not clear, and even scholars working on the documentation of these songs have been left helpless with regard to the meanings of their vocabulary. One view is that the tradition of *gurahiyas* is disappearing – most of the specialist performers have died – and the more recent generation of performers has acquired this singing without clear knowledge of the exact meanings of the words. The language of these *gathas* warrants more detailed investigation regarding the background of its distinctive vocabulary and whether there may be some connection between the obscurity of its semantics and the ritual functions for which the diction is used in performance.

#### ANJALIYAS

Four narrative songs published in *Dogri lok gathan* (Goswami 1990)<sup>29</sup> have been identified as *anjaliyas*. These *gathas* narrate the stories of the Pandava brothers known from the *Mahabharata* epic and from traditions of the marriage of Shiva and Parvati. Unlike generic forms of *gathas* thus far reviewed here, *anjaliyas* are not connected with singing under particular ritual or secular circumstances or during a particular period. They seem instead to be performed more freely for the entertainment of local

communities by the singers. The *anjaliya* performance of the Shiva–Parvati marriage is different from its form as a *karak gatha*. The performance of the *karak gatha* is a sacred act to be performed only by a *karak* singer whereas the *anjaliya* can be performed by any professional singer.

#### CHIJI

The word *chijj* refers to high volume noise and is used for a special type of narrative song. They receive this name because they are sung in a high pitch accompanied by musical instruments played at a fast tempo. *Chijji* songs are mainly devotional songs (*bhajans*) dedicated to the Mother Goddess Durga. *Chijji* songs are also sung in honour of the main presiding deity of the Jammu region, Mata Vaishno Devi, whose shrine is situated at Katra and has emerged as one of the main *Shatki*<sup>30</sup> shrines in India. Some *bar gathas*, like those of Bir Jodh, Chaudhari Kima and Prithvi Raj Chauhan, were also sung as *chijji* (Goswami 1990: 8). The traditional singers used to perform in groups of three or four people, but *chijji* performance has now been taken over by professional singers. Today, people invite these singers to sing *chijj bhajans* at their homes on auspicious occasions.

#### *The Composition and Re-Composition of lok gathas*

When *lok gathas* are oral poetry, questions of how they are composed and the relationship of composition to performance are raised, or how to understand the composition of *gathas* in light of their process of creation and recurrent recreation. This topic requires at least brief address here. Owing to their organization into stanzas, the *gathas* are perhaps less comparable to the theories of composition in performance developed for long epics traditions (Lord 1960; Honko 1998) and instead can be better compared with theories regarding ballad composition, to which *lok gathas* are formally more similar.

Ballad composition has been discussed in Western scholarship for over a century. The fact that ballads were sung by whole singing communities led to an early theory that their creation was an equally communal effort. This line of thinking about composition was led by G. L. Kittredge (1904) and Francis Gummere (1907), who believed that ballads were composed collectively: folksongs were products of communal creation. However, the principle of communal creation has long been discarded and has been replaced by the “communal recreation” theory put forward by the American collector Phillips Barry (1914) and the scholar G. H. Gerould (1923). According to this theory, the ballad is conceded to be an individual composition originally, but a ballad does not become a ballad until it has been accepted by the folk community and been remoulded by the inevitable variations of tradition into a communal product. In other words, the ballad as an individual creation passes into a subsequent process of continuous reshaping through its recreation with each new performance by other singers. This process first advances the song from an individual’s song to a song of the social repertoire of singers in the community, and is subsequently essential to the process of the song’s spread from community

to community and from generation to generation. Verbal art can be seen as the sum total of creation of a whole community over time (Ben-Amos 1971: 7). Variations in each performance may make the resulting text unique and it may be possible to find performers who adapt or reformulate a traditional song in unconventional ways. Nevertheless, “[o]nly within the context of collectivity is the individual version of a ballad possible” (Catarella 1994: 475), and singers recognize that even when they sing a particular ballad as an individual, each singer is also serving as “the deputy of the public voice” (Friedman 2014). It is this interrelation of the individual and the social in situated performance that makes tradition.

This is the basic model is here considered most appropriate when considering *lok gathas*. However, not all *lok gathas* are sung by everyone in a community: most genres of *lok gathas* are performed by specialist singers who form authoritative sub-communities in upholding and communicating the tradition. The process of composition and “communal recreation” of *karak gathas* would be centrally within the communities of *gardis*, that of *bar gathas* would be in communities of *dareas*, and so forth, because other singers did not perform these *gathas* (Frog 2013a: 111). Of course, this would not happen in isolation. For example, *karaks* would be the responsibility of the *gardis*, but the *gardis* were also assessed by and responsible to the priest of the shrine of the ritual performance as well as to the community participating in the ritual. Similarly, heroic *bars* might be initially composed on the battlefield by a *darea*, but they were also shaped by the aims and interests of the lord who was the *darea*’s patron as well as by the warrior community that was a central audience: such *gathas* were presumably recreated again and again after their initial composition in a dialectic with these audiences and only developed a conventional form as a process. Attention has not yet been turned to questions of how performances in one lord’s court as opposed to another or across historical changes in political situations may have shaped the recomposition of *bars* in different times. The model of the ongoing recreation of ballads in performance offers a valuable frame of reference for considering *lok gathas* as oral poetry.

Of course, no tradition is static. Some *lok gathas* such as *karaks* are still being performed today, and the process of recreation in the situation of each performance can still be directly observed. In other cases, such as that of *bars*, the tradition has broken down or is gradually disappearing under changing social and historical circumstances. At the same time, those same changes are also introducing new technologies like television and the internet that have had a profound impact on how people communicate. The traditions of *lok gathas* and the stories they tell have been picked up and transformed in these processes as well. The process of documenting, editing and publishing *lok gathas* has simultaneously decontextualized them from their traditional contexts, converted them into consumable heritage, and also returned published examples to the public in a way that simultaneously affirms the interest in and value of this poetry. *Bar gathas* are now performed not in the courts of feudal lords but as displays of local heritage, transforming their social functions and meanings in society. The potential to present and transmit folklore view new media has led the traditions to adapt to

transmission in new forms, to be recontextualized and combined with other things so that *lok gathas* can now be found on YouTube. New forms and adaptations of folklore are continuously emerging, being recreated in different types of social networks, and the process of tradition goes on.

### Karak gathas as Illustrative of the Traditional Structuring of lok gathas

Among the *lok gathas*, *karaks* are the best documented. The performance of *karak gathas* is an essential part of religious rituals and they have been preserved by families revering the deities celebrated in the *gathas*. Through *karaks*, *lok gathas* connected with martyr deities have come to light in large numbers to provide a rich corpus for further analysis. The structural organization of these songs will here be briefly introduced in order to illustrate the traditional structuring of *lok gathas* as narratives of a particular type. For reasons of space, it is not possible to offer such descriptions of all genres of *lok gathas*.

*Karaks* of martyr deities exhibit a more or less similar structural form with three main parts: (a) the birth of the martyr-deity; (b) the main story, presenting the background of the causes and circumstances of the martyr's death; and (c) the death leading to deification. A pre-narrative special song called a *barnoli* may constitute a fourth part sung before the narrative proper, but this is mainly presented for *karaks* of important martyr deities or deities who have attained the status of folk deities. The *barnoli* is sung to invoke the concerned deity and contains details regarding the deity, the deity's *durbar* ['court'], the deity's *shakti* ['power'], as well as its main shrines.<sup>31</sup> The *karak* proper begins with the birth of the deity with emphasis on the holiness surrounding the birth. For example, in the *gatha* of Bua Tript, a *sati* (*devi*) ['female martyr deity'], the birth is described as follows:

In Ramgarh You were born! You came from Heaven!  
When You were five days old, You were given a ritual bath!  
When You were of twelve days old, a birth ceremony took place!  
The moon became your cradle, which had golden nails.  
(Goswami 1990: 92–95.)

The stories of birth of other female deities also follow more or less same pattern (e.g. the *gathas* of Bua Sheelawati, Bua Satyawati, Bua Bhukhi). *Gathas* of *shaheed devtas* ['male martyr deities'] also follow more or less the same arrangement as in the narrative of Data Ranpat (a martyr deity):

The moon was Your cradle with a silken blanket!  
A ritual bath on your fifth day! On the twentieth day was the birth ceremony!  
(Sharma & Madhukar 1990: 37–47.)

This part of a *karak* also contains lullabies, which have now become a part of daily life: mothers usually sing them to their babies. It will also contain

information about the early childhood, education and the marriage of these deities as well as the rituals connected to these different stages of life.

The second part of the *karak* proper is the narration of those (normally tragic) causes and circumstances which lead to the death of the *sati* or *shaheed devta*. At the same time, this portion of the narrative comments on social, political and economic situations from a perspective that presumes to align with social values and thus simultaneously asserts and communicates those values. For example, the *gatha* of Bua Banga presents the story of an enlightened lady who rebelled against the imposition of new, excessive taxes implemented by the feudal lord of the area. Bua Banga organized the people of her area and asked them not to pay these unjust taxes. When the soldiers of the feudal lord came to arrest her, she declares:

Tax I will not pay! I will kill myself!  
Kutalas has done a bad thing!  
(Goswami 1990: 96–97.)

Rather than succumbing to the will of the lord or the potential force of his soldiers, Bua Banga determined to immolate herself as the last course of resistance left open to her.

The third part of the narrative concerns the death and deification of the martyr, in which the *sati* or *shaheed* dies:

Injured *Bua Banga* came home, into the courtyard!  
Inside the house she bolted the door! Sat on the floor!  
She took onto her lap, her only daughter! Set the house on fire!  
Burnt herself to death! Made no cries!  
(Goswami 1990: 96.)

This act comments on situations of oppression with a model of how to stand up to them through what can be considered a model or “identity representation” (Honko 1998: 20–29) of personal quality and strength, for example burning oneself alive without ever crying out.

While dying, the *sati* or *shaheed* gives blessing to her or his supporters and brings a curse on those responsible for her or his death. Sometimes martyrs will also give instructions regarding their subsequent worship and place restrictions on relations with the clans that made them suffer. Such restrictions are sufficiently established that they are known in Dogri by a special term: *chinna*.

At other times, martyrs are known to have made their wishes known through a *jogi*, a person whose body is visited by the deity. This type of event is found in the *gatha* of Bua Banga:

Centre of Thera Galwal build my shrine!  
Only then the Raja would be absolved of his sin!  
Wish as this! Jogi conveyed to Raja Bhadwal!  
(Goswami 1990: 97.)



Communication through a medium within the *lok gatha* parallels the *jatra* performance connected with *karaks* mentioned above, in which a medium called a *dowala* opens direct communication with the deity and embodies a channel of communication between the deity and the audience. Thus beliefs about the ability of the deity to speak through special individuals is found both within the text of the *lok gatha* and also in the ritual environment in which the *karak* is performed.

After death, the *sati* or *shaheed* goes to heaven and receives powers from the God and come back to earth to destroy the persons responsible for his or her death.

Reached Heaven, Bua Banga! Kutales will not be spared!  
 Spared Kutales will not be! Raja Bhadwal has gone mad!  
 Guilty of murder, Raja Bhadwal! Bua Banga will not spare them!  
 Raja begs for Pardon! Bua will not accept!  
 (Goswami 1990: 97.)

The curse on the responsible persons is reflected in the *karaks* by various bad omens such as rice turning into worms and vegetables turning into blood, horses dying, the burning of clothes and the house, disease and death in the family of the killers, and otherworldly problems. Then, on the basis of knowledge provided by a *jogi*, the family under the curse then begins worshipping the dead person as its family deity in order to escape the martyr's wrath and they build shrine in his or her honour. The dead person then becomes the *sati devi* or *shaheed devta* and gets defied within the community.

The narrative pattern of these *lok gathas* follows a basic, predictable structure. At the same time, the formal structure of narration is bound up with value systems and ideology that it both reflects and supports in the community. The model for action presented by the martyr is unambiguously valorized when its ultimate outcome is deification, and its ritual significance implicitly validates the model that it presents along with the value systems embedded in the conflicts in the plot. At the same time, the plot is also embedded with cultural information such as social and economic structures. This cultural information may, however, reflect conditions and the material culture that in the case of the *gatha* of Bua Banga is historically removed from the present, describing instead the feudal society in which the martyrdom reportedly occurred. Although the general structure on which *karak* narratives are built is elastic and common across them, the distinct plots of individual *karaks* are built on more specific situations, social conflicts and relations that are embedded with information that reflect conditions of society, perhaps in the past, perhaps in the present. On top of this, the information about rituals, beliefs and practices represented in the *gatha* may parallel or at least resonate with events and activities in the society of the performances, from the deity's communication through a medium to births and marriages in the living community. As a consequence, the martyr not only provides a model for identity and behaviour that can inform the meaning of individuals' lives and actions, but also events and activities in



the community may take on additional layers of meaningfulness in relation to their parallels in the *gathas*.

### *The lok gatha Genre Debate*

Scholars working on the different aspects of regional oral narratives do not entirely agree on the generic forms of Dogri *lok gathas* and a variety of models have been put forward.

The distinguished folklore collector Siva Nirmohi recognises only two major forms in Dogri *gathas*: *karaks* and *bars*. *Karaks* are viewed as a single large category of *gathas* of deities, which include *gathas* of village deities, of family deities, and of Puranic *gathas* – i.e. *gathas* about gods belonging to the Brahmanic pantheon. He considers *bars* as a large category encompasses not only the historical/heroic *gathas* addressed as *bar gathas* above, but also *yogi gathas* and *pranya gathas* or love *gathas*. (Nirmohi 1982: 22–23). This broader use of *bar* is based on a broader definition of *bar* that, in addition to the heroic element, extends to themes of sacrifice and surrender evident in *yogi* and *pranya gathas*. Nirmohi's two major forms of *lok gathas* may therefore be described as *gathas* of deities (*karaks*) and *gathas* of heroism and sacrifice (*bars*).

Archana Kesar of the Department of Dogri, University of Jammu, similarly recognises only two major forms in Dogri *lok gathas*: *karaks* and *bars*.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, she also highlights another form of narrative songs called *ghatna prasang*. She has collected thirty-five such songs, which may be described as episodic narrative songs that refer to a particular episode in the life of the hero rather than that individual's broader life history. She refers to the story of a lame man (who lived in the Chambh-Joria area in Akhnur, on the India-Pakistan border) who robbed rich people to help the poor and needy like Robin Hood. Within the *ghatna prasang*, the various robberies committed by the hero have become the subject of the narrative episodes. However, this poetic form requires further detailed analysis, which Kesar is currently in the process of doing. In the same department of the University of Jammu, Shashi Pathania (n.d.) makes a three-fold division of generic forms of *lok gathas* – *karaks*, *bars*, and *pranya gathas* (not seeing *pranya gathas* as a sub-variety of *bars*).

Ramnath Shastri, founder of Dogri Sanstha and associated with the documentation process of Dogri oral literature, was the first scholar who put forward the use of the term *lok gatha* for folk narrative songs<sup>33</sup> as a higher order genre instead of dividing *karaks* and *bars* into independent categories (Sastri n.d.: n.31). In fact, he claims that it is incorrect to use the terms *karak* and *bar* for the narratives folk songs, which he considers equivalent to expressing ignorance of *lok gathas*' natural forms. In doing so, he also re-evaluated the types of *lok gathas* more comprehensively, proposing a sevenfold classification (Shastri n.d.: 17):

- (a) Narratives of principal martyr deities according to which martyr deities include both *shaheed devtas* ['male martyr deities'] and *silabantis*<sup>34</sup> ['female martyr deities'], such as *gathas* of Baba Jitto, Data Ranpat
- (b) Heroic narratives, such as those of Mian Dido, Ramsingh Pathania
- (c) Legendary narratives, such as those of Raja Mandlikh, Baba Suraj
- (d) Mythical narratives, such as those of Raja Hosn, which is a love story, and Baba Sidh Ghoria, honouring a Nathpanth *yogi*
- (e) Puranic narratives, such as *gathas* of Baba Surgal, Baba Bhair, both of which are major *naga* ['serpent'] deities that have achieved the status of regional deities
- (f) Narratives of *yogis* such as *gathas* of Brihatri<sup>35</sup> and of Raja Gopichand<sup>36</sup>, the stories of whom appear to have originated outside of Jammu
- (g) *Majlum* ['oppressed'] narratives, which include *gathas* of all of the martyr deities of the Marh area who died owing to some atrocity

Shastri does not refer to major or minor forms of *lok gathas* or to genres and sub-genres: he puts all of these types on equal footing. His classification is based on the thematic content of the *lok gathas*, with the exception of (g) *Majlum* narratives, which are defined according to a combination of thematic content and the social-geographical space of the Marh area. Marh is an area within the Jammu district that is about fifteen kilometres from the city of Jammu. The *gathas* of martyrs are particularly rich in Marh and can be considered to form a distinct tradition area: in each village of this area, there are several deities who sacrificed their lives or were killed in atrocities (see further Gadgal 1976; Atrey 2008). The weakness of Shastri's typology is that it does not account for all *lok gathas*, such as those of the main deities like Vaishno Devi (a major Shakti goddess of India) or Mata Mal Bhawani (the main regional goddesses of the Jammu region whose *lok gathas* are very popular).

Om Goswami, who headed up the documentation process of Dogri folk literature in the State Cultural Academy, observes that the earlier acknowledgement of only two forms – *karaks* and *bars* – was the result of the lack of research that had been done on these poetry traditions. The documentation process brought to light a more sophisticated view of forms of *lok gathas*, for which he proposed an eight-fold typology (Goswami 1990: 2):

- (a) *Karaks*
- (b) *Anjaliyas*
- (c) *Masade*
- (d) *Chettri*
- (e) Sati *lok gathas*, subdivided into:
  - (i) The main narrative
  - (ii) Lullabies
- (f) Narratives of martyr deities
- (g) *Chijji*
- (h) *Bars*

This typology in large part builds from vernacular terms and categories. Goswami observes that further research is required with regard to the structure of some of these types of *lok gathas*, and he also proposes a thematic arrangement, such as *gathas* of *naga* [‘serpent’] deities, of the Pandavas (known from the *Mahabharata*), and of folk deities. (Goswami 1990: 2.)

Asoka Jerath has used the word “ballad” for *lok gatha* when writing in English and divided them into seven categories, although these differ from the categories proposed by either Shastri or Goswami (Jerath 1998: 61–67):

- (a) *Karaks*: those which are sung in the praise of family deities and which only *gardis* can sing
- (b) *Bars*
- (c) Ballads of gods and goddesses, including *gathas* of Shiva, of Shakti and *naga gathas*
- (d) *Yogi gathas*
- (e) Love ballads
- (f) Legendary ballads
- (g) Ballads of chivalry

This typology is in part according to the thematic content of the stories and in part by association with specialist performers. It also does not necessarily include all of the songs covered by Goswami’s categories, such as *chijji* songs and *anjaliyas*. In addition, Jerath occasionally places the same *lok gathas* under both *bars* (b) and ballads of chivalry (g), which indicates that his system is not exclusive and some of the categories he describes are overlapping.

This review shows that scholars disagree over the inclusion of some forms as Dogri *lok gathas* but none of them is a rejection of any of the major forms completely. Goswami is exceptional for his inclusion of *anjaliyas*, which are not found in the typologies put forward by other scholars, but few songs of this type have been documented and documented examples have only been published in Goswami’s own work. At least from the perspective of research, *anjaliyas* can be considered a peripheral or minor form of *lok gathas*. Nevertheless, all scholars accept *karaks* and *bars*, which are the two basic categories into which *lok gathas* were initially grouped, going back to the early stages of research on these traditions. *Yogi gathas* and *pranya gathas* also appear to have become generally acknowledged. If Jerath’s overlapping categories are resolved and minor categories of *gathas* addressed by Goswami are included, Dogri *lok gathas* can be said to include following generic forms from the view of the current state of research:

- (a) *Karak gathas*: narratives of the deities
- (b) *Bar gathas*: heroic narratives
- (c) *Yogi gathas*: narratives of the *yogis*
- (d) *Pranya gathas*: love narratives
- (e) Seasonal secular narratives: *Chettri gathas*, *dholru gathas* and *bar saware*
- (f) Seasonal ritual narratives: *masades* or *gujris*
- (g) *Anjaliyas*: assorted narratives, poorly attested
- (h) *Chijji*: assorted narratives, performed in a distinctive mode

This list of forms should be considered only tentative and conditional on the data available. The documentation process of Dogri oral traditions is ongoing, thanks to support from the government. As the preceding review suggests, genre classifications tend to change with the availability of new information or the advance of new interpretations. As new data is collected, new perspectives will emerge and our understandings of the genres of *lok gathas* will be compelled to evolve. In addition, the *lok gatha* traditions are not static and also continue to develop. New narratives like *Ghatan prasang* now find their way into the genre of *gathas*, and it may soon become necessary to consider types of performance on electronic media as distinct genres. As increasing numbers of *lok gathas* circulate in printed forms and invariable recordings, it may also be necessary to reassess relationships of orality, writing and audio-visual recording in this tradition through further research on how texts circulate and vary in the wake of technological changes.

### *Dogri lok gathas and Folklore Research*

As stated at the beginning of this article, genre classification is a useful tool for looking at folklore. Having a name or label gives us a place to start in understanding artists' and performers' work. However, there has been a significant development in folklore scholarship where the primary focus has shifted from "products" or the texts that are an outcome of performance to a focus on the performance of texts in context. Scholars look increasingly at the interaction between and among those involved in acts of performance as communication, as well as at the occasions and settings in which those acts take place. Looking at interactions between performers and audiences has encouraged folklorists to see that performance is an artistic act. (Sims & Stephens 2005: 26.)

Dogri *lok gathas* also need to be viewed in that framework. Methodology and the tools developed in Western research can be very helpful in this approach. Many of the narratives of the *gathas* and even whole genres of *gathas* are not indigenous to the region: they have been introduced from outside and acculturated to the local milieu. The Historical-Geographical Method emerged for the comparison and analysis of the ways performed texts and stories have evolved over time and through their spread across geographical and cultural space (Frog 2013b). These comparative methods have evolved considerably as understandings of folklore and folklore transmission have increased (Frog 2013a). Such methods can be used to study the migration of narratives that manifest as *yogi gathas* and *pranya gathas* into the Jammu region. Some of the individuals that have attained the status of regional deities, such as Baba Kailbeer, Raja Mandlik and Baba Narsingh Dev, have also come from outside the Jammu region with tribal migration. The *gathas* of these deities can be investigated with comparative methods in order to help us to understand the process of transmission and evolution of these stories in their new cultural environment. Such approaches can also be utilized to consider whether, for example, *bar gathas* as a genre

may have emerged on a foreign model in connection with contact networks and changes in society, or the background of *chijji* singing in relation to other genres of *gathas*.

At the same time, understanding these traditions to the fullest degree demands enriched perspectives on their social functions, variation and potential for meanings in situated use. This opens onto a new arena where methodological innovation becomes possible and even necessary. It is essential to be open to new paradigms, models, tools, and theories that might emerge in the course of working with local data and the specific social conditions of its use. This might involve adding to and/or modifying already existing theoretical approaches. Dogri *lok gathas* provide a rich laboratory for folklore research, but this research will become meaningful only when local scholars involve themselves in comparative study with other regions, not only within India but outside as well.

## NOTES

- 1 *Lok gathas* including those of Dogri have been grouped into the genre of folk ballads by many scholars. This is due to the fact that the ballad is also a narrative set to music, most often with a stanzaic structure, and the international recognisability of the term makes it accessible. However, the term “ballad” has emerged and been understood through distinctively Western secular singing traditions. Applying the Western definition of the ballad genre will certainly not be precisely applicable to folklore in India, where quite different traditions have developed. Use of “ballad” to refer to *lok gathas* requires a larger debate at both the pan-Indian level and also internationally than is possible here. Nevertheless, this term will not be used as a synonym or translation of *lok gatha* in this article because the Western term is potentially misleading regarding the form, singing styles and use of Indian traditions to which it is applied.
- 2 This name refers to two ancient tribes, the Darva and the Abhisara, which are said to have dwelt in eponymous regions in Pre-Maayan times. Darva was the region lying between the Chenab and Ravi Rivers and can be identified with the present-day Jammu and Billawar areas known as *Duggar Ilaqa* [‘Land Of the Dogras’]. Abhisara was the area between the Chenab and Jehlum Rivers. Its ruler, also Abhisara (*Abisares* in Greek sources) is said to have entered into a diplomatic alliance with Alexander the Great and thereby saved the region from destruction. The area is presently called Chibhal and includes the areas of Rajouri, Poonch and Bhimber. Since Darva and Abhisara were adjacent to one another, the whole region between the Jehlum and Ravi Rivers came to be called Darvabhasara.
- 3 The Madra were an important tribe in Vedic times which had carved out a state in Punjab and the adjoining region, as well as extending onto the plains areas of Jammu. At one time in the historical period, Jammu was therefore part of Madradesh.
- 4 The Eighth Schedule to the Indian Constitution contains a list of scheduled languages. These were originally 14 but have since expanded to 22. At the time the Constitution was enacted, inclusion in this list meant that the language was entitled to representation on the Official Languages Commission, and that the language would be one of the bases that would be drawn upon to enrich Hindi, the official language of the Union. The list has since, however, acquired an additional

- significance. The Government of India is now under an obligation to take measures for the development of these languages, such that they grow rapidly in richness and become effective means of communicating modern knowledge.
- 5 Jammu and Kashmir Cultural Academy has been doing documentation work on oral literary forms in collaboration with various government departments. The Academy was established for the promotion of art and culture of the different regions and tribes of the state.
  - 6 Here, *Jogi* is a colloquial term for a “yogi”, or someone who practices yoga as part of his or her daily rituals. The *Yogis* are followers of yoga and worshippers of the Lord Shiva. *Gorakshanath* is credited with the systemization and categorization of the practice of yoga. The *Yogis* who are followers of *Gorak Nath* are called as *Nathyogis*. They are further divided into many sub-sects. The word *Jogi* also refers to low caste person connected with worship of folk deity
  - 7 The *alap* is the opening section of a typical North Indian classical performance. It is a form of melodic improvisation that introduces and develops a *raga*. In *dhrupad* singing, the *alap* is unmetred, improvised (within the *raga*) and unaccompanied, and started at a slow tempo.
  - 8 The term *dhol* refers to any of a number of similar types of double-headed drum widely used, with regional variations, throughout the Indian subcontinent.
  - 9 Here *jogi* is not a *Nathyogi* (attainer of Supreme *yoga* of Nathpanth) but he is associated with the worship of a particular folk deity and communicates with it. His powers are limited to that particular deity. *Jogis* are not the priests of the temple but only designated for communication with deity and belong to lowest strata of orthodox Hindu social hierarchy. Therefore, *jogi* is used both for follower of Nathpanth and a person connected with ritual performance for a folk deity.
  - 10 In the Hindu Social structure, there are four main traditional *varnas* or types of people: *Brahamans*, the priestly class, *Kshtriyas*, the warrior class, *Vaisyas*, the traders, peasants and artisans, and *Sudras*, those who serve the other three *varnas*. Dums belong to the *Sudras*, but in the Jammu region they do not do menial jobs because they are associated with worship of local deities. Their association with the performance of rituals at the shrines of local deities has given birth to a legend in which their origin is traced to Shiva and Parvati.
  - 11 Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, is considered the daughter of the land and Shiva is considered the son-in-law of the region. Their marriage is said to have been performed at Sudh-Mahadev (about hundred kilometres away from Jammu City). Most of the local gods and goddesses are now considered incarnations of Lord Shiva and Parvati.
  - 12 Shiva, one of the main gods of the Hindu pantheon, is considered to be the source of all magical knowledge.
  - 13 The *jangam* or *jangama* are a Saivite order of wandering religious mendicants. The *jangams* are the priests or gurus of the Saivite sect. The word *jangam* is derived from a movable emblem (*linga*) of Lord Shiva.
  - 14 Baba Jitto committed *parha* (self immolation; see note 19 below). He resented that a feudal lord wanted to carry away most of his harvest as tax. He has emerged as a central peasant deity of the area.
  - 15 Bua Kauri was the nine-year-old daughter of Baba Jitto, who died along with him.
  - 16 Baba Ranapat was a Brahman who was killed in the resolution of a boundary dispute.
  - 17 Bua Banga was a lady who rebelled against an unjust taxation policy of a feudal lord and killed herself to protect her honour.
  - 18 Performance of *sati* was a religious funeral practice among some Indian communities in which a recently widowed woman would immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre. The term is derived from the original name of the goddess Sati, also known as Dakshayani, who immolated herself because she was unable



to bear her father Daksha's humiliation over her (living) husband Shiva. However, in the Jammu region, there are cases of *sati* not only connected to the death of a husband, but a woman could also commit *sati* also at the death of a brother, father, fiancé or son.

- 19 *Parha pratha* was a kind of passive resistance or self-torture sometimes culminating in suicide by self-immolation. Many of the narratives refer to the practice of *parha pratha* by Brahmins. Brahmin was highest caste in the classic division of the Hindu society: the Brahmin has always been looked upon with respect as a learned, peaceful and just person, and simple folk usually looked to him for guidance and protection. Narrative traditions of the Jammu region suggest that Brahmins were felt to have lived up to their duty also here: a Brahmin would practice *parha pratha* to take a stand against the injustice of rulers and, if he was unable to receive justice, would sacrifice himself. In this way, the Brahmins were seen as acting as a check against the misdeeds of rulers. *Parha pratha* could, however, also be practiced against any individual wrongdoer who created a problem in society.
- 20 Mian Dido was a local Dogra chief who refused to accept Sikh Suzerainty (Raja Ranjit Singh of Punjab, 1780–1839), unlike Gulab Singh, another local chief who later became Maharaja Gulab Singh. Mian Dido wanted to expel Sikh power from the region. He put up a brave effort but ultimately was killed in the Trikuta Hills.
- 21 Raja Ranjit Dev ruled over the Jammu Principality from 1728–1780. He is considered the most enlightened ruler who put a ban on *sati* (the immolation of the wife at the death of her husband; see note 18 above).
- 22 Baj Singh was a general of the army of Maharaja Pratap Singh (1885–1925) who quelled the revolts in Gilgit and Chitral (in Ladakh).
- 23 An *ektara* is a one-stringed instrument plucked with one finger. It was originally a common instrument of wandering bards and minstrels from India. The head of an *ektara* is usually made of dried pumpkin/gourd, wood or coconut covered with animal skin and its single string is stretched on a split neck of wood or bamboo. Pressing the two halves of the neck together loosens the string, thus lowering its pitch. The modulation of the tone with each slight flexing of the neck gives the *ektara* its distinctive sound. There are no markings or measurements to indicate what pressure will produce what note, so the pressure is adjusted by ear.
- 24 According to the *Nath* tradition, it is said that *yoga* was first expounded by Lord Shiva to his wife Parvati, where Matsyender acquired it by assuming the form of a fish. Later on, Matsyender gave it to his disciple Goraknath, who established the Nathpanth sect. In the Nathpanth sect, the aim of human life is achievement of Salvation through *yoga*.
- 25 In India, the Harijan are communities that are at the bottom of or outside of the Hindu caste system. They were traditionally sweepers, washers of clothes, leatherworkers, and those whose occupation it was to kill animals. The term is also sometimes applied to the hill tribes of India, who are considered unclean by some because they eat beef. Originally called untouchables or pariahs, they were given the name Harijans by Mahatma Gandhi, who worked for many years to improve their lives. Many of them now refer to themselves as *Dalits* [‘broken ones’] to indicate their oppressed position in Hindu society.
- 26 In ancient India, *swayamvara* was a practice of choosing a husband from among a list of suitors by a girl of marriageable age. *Swayam* in Sanskrit means “self” and *vara* means “choice, desire” and is also synonymous with “bridegroom”.
- 27 Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu (of the trinity gods Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh in Hinduism), ruler of Ayodhya.
- 28 A *dholki* is a two-headed hand-drum. It may have traditional cotton rope lacing, screw-turnbuckle tensioning or both combined. In the first case, steel rings are used for tuning or pegs are twisted inside the laces. It is mainly a folk instrument.



- 29 The State Cultural Academy has been doing the work of documentation of oral tradition, of which *Dogri lok gathan* edited by Om Goswami is a result.
- 30 *Shakti* is the dynamic force or personified embodiment of divine feminine creative power. *Shakti* most prominently manifests in the world through female embodiment and fertility, though it is also latently present in males. In Hinduism, *Shakti* as a dynamic force and being is considered responsible for creation and the agent of all change, may be referred to as “the Great Divine Mother” and even worshipped as the Supreme Being in some sects.
- 31 A number of *barnoli* poems can be found in *Dogri lok gathye* (Goswami 1990: 3).
- 32 The author interviewed and discussed Dogri folk narratives with Professor Archana Kesar, Post-Graduate Department of Dogri, University of Jammu.
- 33 As Krishanadev Upadhyay has done with regard to Hindi.
- 34 *Silabanti* is a Dogri equivalent of the word *sati*.
- 35 Brihatri was a king who, in order to check the faithfulness of his queen, sent false news about his death. The queen became *sati* and the king became a *yogi* out of remorse.
- 36 The *gatha* of Raja Gopichand probably came from Bengal and it is known in Bengali as well. Raja Gopichand became a *yogi* after his mother made him realise that his physical body is temporary and will be destroyed, and therefore he should become a perfect *yogi*, overcome death, and be free from cycle of death and rebirth.

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## 14. Manifestations of Humor in Serbian Folklore Material

### The Example of *šala*

When talking about the concept of *jokes* in Serbia's socio-cultural context, it is not clear which form of humor we are referring to: is it a joke as a *humorous narrative* or a joke as a *humorous utterance* and a *humorous deed*. The English term *joke* encompasses all of these, whereas Serbian makes a conspicuous distinction between them, marking the narrative form with the term *vic* (which is directly taken from German *Witz*), and the other two with the native term *šala* (pronounced *shala*). In other words, these would be two separate humorous forms in Serbian folklore, which means that the terms denoting them are culturally bound and hence challenging to describe and translate, as discussed below. It is the second form of humor that will be discussed in this paper, namely its definition, its difference from related manifestations of humor and the problem of its classification within folklore material.

By being ascribed a distinctive name (*šala*), humorous utterances or acts are recognized as a special category of communication in the Serbian context, which makes them identifiable and discrete from other forms of social interaction and other similar folklore creations. In that sense, *šala* could be thought of as a vernacular category which could also be observed as a universal phenomenon and used as an analytical tool (see Ben-Amos 1976; Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume). Its universality and reality derive from a universal mechanism that is based on the characteristics that humans usually share, which is laughter and a need for humor (see Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume).

I argue that this particular manifestation of humor is not adequately defined and recognized in Serbian folklore studies and that it is mistakenly equated with similar humorous genres. As Frog notes, the designation of a genre with a vernacular term does not necessarily indicate a formalized awareness of how that genre should be distinguished from others (see Frog, this volume). That being said, in this paper I intend to offer an appropriate definition of *šala* based on its form, usage, characteristics and significance in contemporary Serbian society. What makes *šala* a unique humorous creation will be demonstrated by comparing it with the folklore forms that it is usually confused with. In order to fully understand this manifestation of humor, the question of its formation and function will be addressed as

well. Last but not least, I consider ways in which *šala* can evolve from an ephemeral and individual creation into a durable and shared story, again not to be mistaken with a certain similar folklore form.

Although this paper deals exclusively with folklore genres that exist and obtain their meaning within the bounds of Serbian culture, it may also provide starting points for studying similar humorous material in other cultural contexts. As already noted, despite the fact that *šala* is a Serbian term that denotes a special kind of humor which is a part of this cultural context, it could likewise be said that this is a ubiquitous humorous creation. Its definition and formation could be thought of as universal and therefore this paper provides a basis for comparison and analysis of this type of humor in other cultural settings.

### *Defining šala*

Depending on whether we are talking about a humorous utterance or a humorous act, I define *šala* as a speech act, or a deed, with a primarily entertaining function and spontaneous, ephemeral character. Its origin is strictly individual and it should be thought of as an idiosyncratic creation. The objects of *šala* could be so diverse and manifold as to make them practically impossible to predict and number. The characteristics of this form of humor, namely its spontaneity, individual origin and ephemerality, make collecting and presenting of the material a difficult enterprise. In addition to these characteristics, the immediate context of a situation in which *šala* is made is also an important part of its success and comprehension, which may also be the cause of the *šala*'s elusive nature when it comes to collection and presentation. Once a situation no longer exists, it may be hard to explain the *šala* made in that situation and to produce the same entertaining effect that it had in the first place. This usually causes the *šala* to be forgotten, even though it represents a widespread form of humor in everyday life and thus has a significant place in interpersonal communication.

However, in some cases this form of humor may be so successful that it is remembered, retold and preserved, mostly within various social groups. I shall discuss these cases later in this article. For now, this reveals one more important aspect of this form of humor, namely that it is usually made among those who share social relations, for example within family circles, or among friends or colleagues at work. The *šala* could be thought of as an "artistic communication in small groups" (Ben-Amos 1971) or a form of verbal art with a strongly emphasized performative aspect (Bauman 1975). This means that the *šala* requires a certain common knowledge and interests that also ensure its success, and that it is mostly comprehensible within confined groups that might be based on various social relationships. As Holmes noted, the statements which produce a notable humorous effect among colleagues at work are often not understandable and seem foolish to someone who does not belong to this group (Holmes 2000: 159).

A good example of this would be the use of a quotation from some form of popular culture among those who are fans of a particular movie,

TV show, cartoon or comic book, for the purpose of generating humor. Thus, for someone who is not familiar with, for example, the movie *Chasing Amy*<sup>1</sup> a quotation like “What’s a Nubian?” does not have any meaning. On the other hand, for those who have eagerly watched this movie several times, this quotation evokes a particular scene<sup>2</sup> which automatically causes laughter. These kinds of quotation are usually uttered in specific, real-life situations which are recognized as somehow similar to the one presented in the movie, and could be marked as a *šala* among those who are familiar with it.<sup>3</sup> In these situations the quotation itself is enough to produce laughter, which means that it stands in a metonymic relation to the particular movie scene, and implies certain knowledge which enables its interpretation in a humorous vein. In Serbian society this kind of joking is quite common, especially when it is related to domestic comedy movies.

This does not imply that the *šala* is exclusively used in confined social circles and it should also be noted that its nature depends on both the type of social relationship between those who engage in this kind of humor, and on the immediate context in which it is made. Thus, it could be said that the more distant the social relationship or the more formal the situation, the more restrained the type of *šala* will be. In other words, it is bound by the conventions of behavioral and performative expression, and the patterns of actual practice (see also Frog, this volume). For instance it will not include language or action that would be considered inappropriate. This is a common feature that the *šala* shares with similar forms of humor, such as jokes (see e.g. Dundes 1980: 27). But first and foremost, the complexity of the *šala*’s nature is best reflected in the fact that, as already highlighted, it represents a special manifestation of a curious phenomenon called humor.

### *What Is Humor, Actually?*

The ubiquity of humor in human life has usually been taken as a triviality, which often allows this phenomenon to be treated as the complete opposite to “truly important things”. Social sciences and humanities today unanimously recognize the significance of humor at the individual and socio-cultural level. However, when it comes to the very definition of humor, this unity vanishes and is replaced by disagreements, polemics, dilemmas and disputes. Despite the numerous intellectual efforts to fathom, explicate and define the notion of humor, it has never been fully and definitely defined.

Contemporary delineations perceive humor as something that exists in our minds, as a mental experience of discovering and relishing funny and ludicrously incongruous ideas, events and situations, as a psychological state apt to produce laughter, and, consequently, they do not identify humor as an emotion, nor as a type of behavior (McGhee 1979; Veatch 1998). On the other hand, although it is hard to explain humor and say what it is exactly, it is easy to recognize it and especially to connect it with the stimulus that produces it, as well as with the response to this stimulus, which is most often expressed in the form of laughter. Between these two elements, which figure as important in the general conceptualizations of humor, special and crucial

significance is attributed to the cognitive and intellectual activity which is accountable for the perception and evaluation of the potential stimuli and which leads to the experience of humor (Apte 1985: 13). This would, at the same time, be one of the significant differences between the lay and professional deliberations of humor, in that people mostly think that humor is associated with a situation and not derived from some process of thinking and drawing conclusions.

Theories about the potential stimuli for humor have also started an avalanche of polemics and controversies by trying to answer the seemingly simple question: "Why do we laugh?" Three dominant and recurring theories relate to incongruity, aggression and superiority. Thus, according to philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer (McGhee 1979: 9), the essence of the *šala*, as a humorous experience, is incongruity, that is something which is unexpected, out of context, improper, illogical or excessive. It can, however, be observed that many absurd and incongruous occurrences are simply not funny. Besides, when it comes to the *šala*, it has already been noted that this form of humor is highly context-bound, and that its aim is not usually to cross the lines of propriety.

Humor, however, is such that it also allows for things that would otherwise be considered inappropriate to be brought to the fore. This is tightly related to the psychoanalytical approach, according to which humor is, in essence, disguised aggression, whose nature is most often sexual and which would not be socially tolerated in another form (Veatch 1998: 192–193). On the other hand, the *šala* as a manifestation of humor can often be non-aggressive in its form and function. It sometimes has an alleviating effect in certain social and psychological situations, as opposed to aggression, which can be destructive and produce negative consequences in such situations (*ibid.*: 187).

Finally, according to the theory of superiority, and its famous advocate Thomas Hobbes, humor often deals with the faults of others, and not the faults of the observer, thus creating a sense of superiority (Berger 1993: 2). And indeed, the *šala* is frequently directed towards others, which could provide opportunity for and give impetus to the sense of superiority. However, no less frequent are the situations in which an individual makes a *šala* at his own expense, and laughs at himself, which makes it difficult to ascertain who is superior to whom in such cases (Veatch 1998: 188).<sup>4</sup>

Owing to such quandaries that go with the attempts at defining humor and the problem of identifying the trigger for it, many authors have turned towards other, not so "eternal" questions, such as those pertaining to different forms of humor. This movement has been led especially by folklorists, who have taken a great interest in jokes with a wide variety of subjects, from racial and ethnic stereotypes (Ben-Amos 1973; Dégh 1982; Eben Sackett 1987) and sexist humor (Mitchell 1977; Lynn Preston 1994; Thomas 1997) to catastrophes and forms of black humor (Dundes 1979; Smyth 1986; Oring 1987; Ellis 2001).<sup>5</sup> Also, jokes have proved to be a very inspiring field of research not just for folklorists, so different theoretical frameworks for their interpretation have been developed, the most prominent being the General

Theory of Verbal Humor by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo (Raskin *et al.* 1991; Attardo *et al.* 2002).<sup>6</sup>

Regarding anthropology, the phenomenon which has always attracted attention in this discipline is known as the joking relationship. From the pioneering study by Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, the interest in this notion, which is directly linked to humor or, even more precisely to situational joking which the *šala* basically is, has remained unabated. According to Radcliffe-Brown, it is a relationship between two persons in which one of them is allowed, and in some cases required, by custom, to tease or ridicule the other person, in which process this other person must not be offended (Radcliffe-Brown 1982: 126). The subject under discussion here is primarily the institutionalized, structured behavior between persons with family ties or in some other specific social relationship which is characteristic of so-called primitive societies.

However, similar interactions take place in complex, industrial environments as well, as noted by Radcliffe-Brown himself, although he was of the opinion that, in keeping with the former research division between primitive and developed societies, these informal codes of conduct should be left to sociology.<sup>7</sup> In such significantly different contexts, we can also find the crucial differences regarding joking relations. In primitive societies, these relations, which are primarily oriented towards family ties, are, as has been noted, formalized, compulsory and shaped by strict rules, while in developed societies they are oriented towards an individual; they are voluntary and spontaneous, and unfold in the environment in which social relations are not rigidly determined (Apte 1985: 31).

Both forms of relationship have deservedly captured the attention of anthropologists, but what has remained the biggest weakness in their past research, from the perspective of the anthropology of humor, is the fact that emphasis has always been laid upon the significance of joking relations for the social structure, and almost never upon the phenomenon of joking itself (*ibid.*). As noted by Mary Douglas, anthropologists did not debate the joke itself, while joking as one form of expression is yet to be interpreted in its over-all relationship to other forms of communication (Douglas 1968: 361). Nonetheless, some anthropologists have provided detailed information on the verbal and physical manifestations of joking in certain social contexts which are quite similar to the *šala* in the Serbian context, emphasizing thereby the behavioral aspect of these activities (see Handelman *et al.* 1972).

The interest in manifestations of humor in Serbian anthropology has been expressed through works analysing in relation to the ancient roots of black humor reflected in humorous epigrams and epigraphs from ancient Greece (Stevanović 2007; 2009), then specific forms of urban humor (Banović 2008), or domestic television series predominantly based upon ethnic humor (Krstić 2009). The humoristic folklore material which has attracted the attention of researchers is most frequently in the form of jokes (Kleut 1993; Ljuboja 2001; Trifunović 2009),<sup>8</sup> as well as funny stories and anecdotes (Latković 1967; Ljubinković 1976; Milošević-Đorđević *et al.*



1984; Nikolić 1997; Pešić *et al.* 1997; Samardžija 2006; Zlatković 2007). These folklore creations were practically impossible to neglect or ignore in scientific debates, given how widespread they are and how significant they once were or still are in the social life of Serbia.

However, the *šala* seems to be an all-pervasive form of humor which is left out or shoved to the back, as if it does not deserve a serious analysis. As noted by some authors, spontaneous conversations constitute the object of much research in linguistics and sociology, while humor research has tended to lag behind with its traditional focus on humorous text (Norrick *et al.* 2009). The lack of academic texts dealing with the *šala*, and all the current inadequate definitions of the *šala* in Serbian folklore studies, have inspired me in this paper to focus on its existence, usage, form and significance in the context of contemporary Serbian society, with the aim of discerning its place among related folklore creations, with which it is often confused.

### So, *What about the Ordinary šala?*

The *šala* appears to be a simple and everyday form of humor, yet it is used and defined in so many different ways. Here, I refer primarily to the academic literature in Serbia, from the field of anthropology and folklore. Thus the anthropologist and folklorist Gordana Ljuboja speaks about the genres, forms and types of the *šala*, formulating this concept as an umbrella concept under which she groups such creations as the joke, anecdote and funny story: “Within the formally undifferentiated, content-related category of the *šala*, numerous varieties, different genre forms, are concentrated, each of which is conditioned by the structure of its own form and its own style of expression” (Ljuboja 2001: 242). This line of thinking neglects the fact that the *šala* is a specific manifestation of humor, just as jokes or funny stories are, and that it should not be merely taken as a synonym for humor and thus treated as a general category that encompasses such creations.

Serbian dictionaries of literary terms, on the other hand, recognize the *šala* as a separate form of humor, defining it as “oral story or short story formed in such a way as to produce laughter, primarily by means of entertaining, humorous and funny twists and denouement, but with no complex content or pretensions” (*Rečnik književnih termina* 1985; *Rečnik književnih termina* 1992). What generally unites the numerous definitions of the *šala*, including those mentioned, is the fact that it is primarily perceived as a narrative and is subsumed within the frameworks of folk rhetoric, verbal art and conversational genres. Under *šala*, dictionaries also refer to *vic* and *dosteka*<sup>9</sup> as similar and related forms of it, but the definition given of *šala* obscures the clear demarcation line between these three forms of humor, which gives rise to a debate on the differences among them.

First, it is important to draw attention to the terminological problems and differences which exist, primarily, between Serbian and English, and which are specifically related to the notion of the *šala*. As noted at the beginning of this text, unlike Serbian, which precisely distinguishes and separates

*šala* from *vic*, English has one noun, *joke*, for both of these notions. This has been the reason for translating this word into Serbian as *vic*, but also as *šala*, depending upon the form in which it is used. On the other hand, English designates types of jokes and draws a distinction between them depending on their expression. This is not the case in Serbian language, in which manifestations of verbal and physical humor are exclusively referred to with the term *šala*. One should, therefore, bear in mind this distinction between Serbian and English because what is called *šala* in Serbian is wider in meaning than the word *joke*, encompassing certain other notions such as *prank* or *practical joke*. In Serbian folklore, we could say that *vic* denotes exclusively a short humoristic narrative which belongs to the domain of verbal communication and contains a punchline whose main purpose is to produce a comic effect and entertainment. I use the term “joke” for *vic*. In terms of its form and expression, it can be defined as a contemporary and current form of immaterial creation. In Serbian folklore, a joke is characterized by an abundance of motives, as well as by predominantly conventional structure created by the actions of characters or what they speak about, with the epilogue in the punchline by which the expectations previously settled by narration are breached in an unexpected manner, which produces laughter. The contents of domestic jokes convey social, political, economic and cultural relations and problems, making fun of faults and shortcomings, poking fun at individuals or ethnic groups; one may also note joke cycles such as those about blondes, policemen or the character generally known as *mali Perica* [‘little Perica’]. One can find here universal jokes, that is the kind of jokes referring to universal human experience and universal perception of social phenomena, as well as ones specific to the context of Serbian society, and comprehensible only to members of this society (see Davies 2005).

Universal jokes, and all the more so those that are specific and comprehensible only in a certain social context, are based upon certain codes which must be explicit and known to the listener. The immediate context often plays a decisive role in understanding them. Especially indicative of this is a specific phrase which introduced the telling of certain jokes during the 1970s and 1980s in Serbia: “Do you want me to tell you a joke for a seven-years stretch?” In order for the listener to understand the meaning of this phrase and the joke that followed it, he had to have the proper knowledge. In the first place, he had to recognize the wordplay that was at work here, and which actually implied seven years in prison, while in order to fully understand the joke, he had to be acquainted with the sociopolitical circumstances of this period in Serbian history and the fact that jokes treating certain subjects were not looked upon with favor in those days. Finally, the listener had to know all this in advance in order for the joke to work, without somebody else disclosing all this to him (Berger 1976: 113).

Moreover, the joke in the context of Serbian society possesses numerous functions. Thus one can notice in it a critical attitude towards society, a collective contemplation of life and an attitude and relationship to it, and the joke is often the medium for conveying a wide variety of social messages. Like

any folklore material, the joke once told spreads very fast, is transformed and assumes various forms in comparison to the originally told version. Social interest in this form of humor is great and is reflected in a significant number of humoristic publications, which have a long publishing tradition in this society, and in which jokes occupy a significant place. This is also confirmed by the fact that many researchers have turned to the press as the main source for this material, since jokes are primarily conveyed in spontaneous and informal communication, so the opportunity for hearing and writing down enough of them for a satisfactory analysis is significantly reduced.

Undoubtedly, some of the characteristics of the joke make it quite similar to the *šala*, such as the spontaneity and informality of the situation in which they are conveyed, the need for proper knowledge in order to understand their meaning and their function of criticizing and communicating opinions and social messages. It is possible that these are the main reasons why the two forms of humor are often confused and why the characteristics which undoubtedly separate them are often neglected. Lack of recognition of a clear distinction between *šala* and joke, therefore, is, in my opinion, to be attributed mostly to the perception of *šala* as a narrative with some kind of plot.

To define the *šala* is to point to the forms and meanings in which it exists in everyday communication, as well as to the sense which this notion displays in general social usage. The *šala* cannot be comprehended through the prism of narrative: neither can it be simply reduced to a story, nor is it a story that has a determined structure and plot, as is the case with a joke. Bearing in mind the form of the *šala* in everyday communication, along with, on this occasion, its verbal expression, I have already noted that the *šala* should be defined as a type of speech act, with primarily entertaining and humorous function and spontaneous, ephemeral character. I have opted for the sociolinguistic category of speech act because it emphasizes the use of language, while it in itself denotes an utterance within a speech event, that is within a cluster of communication activities. Apart from this, "It can be an utterance with a formal grammatical status of a sentence, or even a cluster of sentences, but it does not have to be that, meaning that the speech act can be presented through separate words or word groups with the function of sentence equivalent" (Radovanović 2003: 160). This gives the necessary breadth to the definition of verbal *šala*, which, consequently, can be stretched from an utterance in words, to word groups, to entire sentences and conversations, but never crossing the line which separates it from a clearly structured narrative because it entails a situational component of interaction rather than being a self-contained text. In keeping with this, and for the sake of making a precise distinction between the *šala* and similar humoristic forms, I suggest that this type of humor in its verbal version should be translated into English as "humorous utterance".

Having defined *šala* in this manner, we can address the problem of drawing a line between *šala* and *dosetka* ['repartee; witticism']. If it is to be judged according to the linguistic expression, these two are very similar, if not the same. Both of them, therefore, can be defined as verbal acts, so that the distinction between them is to be sought primarily in their

function. Thus, witticism in a Serbian context is usually determined as a sharp, humorous remark, judgement or conclusion (*Rečnik srpskohrvatskog književnog, narodnog jezika*, 1966), which implies that the *šala*'s purpose is exclusively that of providing enjoyment through humor, while witticism is always tendentious, as Sigmund Freud noted in his study of wit and its relation to the unconscious (Frojd 1979). However, such strict a distinction between *šala* and witticism does not exist in the general conceptualizations expressed in Serbian. This is supported by the saying *U svakoj šali ima malo istine* ['There is a grain of truth in every *šala*'; cf. 'Many a true word is spoken in jest'], which attributes to *šala* the function of communicating something with sense and meaning and perceives it as a specific way of saying or conveying something in an indirect, but effective manner. Therefore, in order to draw as clear as possible a line in meaning between *šala* and witticism, another definition of *šala* in the contemporary Serbian context should be offered, a definition which sharply distinguishes between *šala* and other exclusively verbal forms of humor, such as jokes and witticisms. The point is that this term in general application is also used, as already noted, to denote an action, that is something done in order to produce the effect of humor. Therefore, unlike witticisms and jokes, which are always verbal, *šala* is not necessarily so, which means that apart from perceiving it as a *humorous utterance*, it should not be forgotten that it can refer to a *humorous act* as well.

In this sense, *šala* in the domestic meaning encompasses also the notions, already mentioned, referred to in English as prank, horseplay, practical joke, gag or antic. These terms can be translated into Serbian as *šala*, although there are other terms for the literal translation of them that have a negative connotation. Hence I am of the opinion that translation in this case to a great extent depends upon the perception or success of the *šala*. The *šala* in everyday use can cross the line of what is allowed, used at an improper moment; it can be said or done in an inadequate manner, or be misinterpreted, which produces the opposite effect to what is expected.

Sensitivity to the *šala* is not an unusual phenomenon, although we are expressly talking about mild, benign derision or a prank which, as a rule, is not taken seriously and not intended to insult. In cases where the *šala* "crosses the line", a usual response of the person at whom it was aimed is anger, but only on rare occasions would this have more extreme consequences. These cases may occur when this form of humor is aimed at the weaknesses of the victims, such as old habits, fears, obsessions or anything else which is important to the victim (McEntire 2002: 146). A typical gag (or a humorous act) is opening the cover of a saltcellar but leaving it on the top, so that the person who wants to salt his food spills the whole content onto his plate. I was told once about a situation when the victim of this prank was so annoyed, because he was hungry and had ruined his food, that he spilled the content of an ashtray into the plate of his friend who pulled the prank. Interestingly, this caused even more laughter, which means that the one who falls for the *šala* is generally expected either to react in good humor or to pull an even better prank, even more so since this form of humor usually takes place in smaller groups and among people known to each other.

### *But How Does the šala Function?*

To define the *šala* and precisely determine everything that is meant by this notion in the Serbian social context is to pass only half way towards understanding it. If we accept that this form of humor does not have its special morphology and structure, such as that characteristic of the joke or funny story, there remains the issue of its formation and function. What, therefore, is inherent in an action or speech act, apart from its entertaining and humorous purpose, which makes us call it a *šala*? A similar question was posed by Freud, deliberating on witticism, and his answer was the concept of technique which is used in this humoristic form in order to produce a suitable effect. In the exclusively verbal expression of witticism, the techniques identified by Freud refer to the specific use of language which produces the effect of humor (Frojd 1979: 15–118). Although Freud did not offer the precise definition of the technique itself, he did provide a good starting point for the understanding of the *šala*, regardless of the fact that apart from the verbal form it has a physical form as well. On the other hand, we had to wait for the study *An Anatomy of Humor* by Arthur Asa Berger to obtain not only the definition of the technique, in the sense similar to that used by Freud, but also an exhaustive list of techniques which we can find in a wide variety of humoristic forms.

As opposed to some authors who contemplated the phenomenon of humor by posing the question *why* we laugh, Berger posed the question *what* starts up humor. In this manner he arrived at the technique of humor as the mechanism whose main purpose is to produce laughter, which entails the means for the analysis of any example of humor, created at any time, belonging to any genre and expressed through any medium (Berger 1993: 15). As Berger pointed out himself, his glossary is very similar to Vladimir Propp's "functions" which are at the heart of all narratives. Berger's assumption is that humor has a process aspect to it which can be separated into various parts and analysed:

Any example of humor "shields" various techniques that generate the humor, and something is funny or humorous, in the final analysis, not because of the subject matter or theme but because of the techniques employed by whomever created the humor. (Berger 1993: 17.)

In his study we find four basic categories under which all the techniques are subsumed:

1. Language. The humor is verbal. In humor involving language, it is wordplay and other attributes of language that are basic.
2. Logic. The humor is ideational. In humor involving logic, the humor involves ideas and the problems we face in making sense of the world.
3. Identity. The humor is existential. Identity humor is, in essence, existential and deals with problems we have with our identities.
4. Action. The humor is physical or nonverbal.<sup>10</sup> (Berger 1993: 17.)

These categories are useful in that they give us a sense of what kind of humor is being produced, but the techniques are essential to consider in analysing humor.

My objection to Berger, however, is the use of the words technique and mechanism alongside each other, without distinguishing between these notions. Some of his techniques refer to so-called accidental humor, when a combination of circumstances and situation are perceived as comic, with no intentional and conscious interference by an individual. This is, for instance, the case with the technique of *slapstick*, which refers to different kinds of physical gaffes and clumsiness which amuse us, such as slipping on banana peel, or the technique of coincidence referring to lapses or slips of the tongue. On such occasions, I am of the opinion that it is advisable to talk about the mechanism of humor. On the other hand, the word technique is useful in that it gives us the opportunity to differentiate the *šala* from these kinds of accidental humor, since it suggests a conscious and intentional choice of the appropriate means to produce laughter, which the *šala* basically does (Trifunović 2009: 36). Therefore, I would separate mechanisms of humor, which are not relevant in relation to the *šala*, from the techniques that are deliberately employed to produce humor: these are significant for understanding the function of the *šala* and provide methodological means for analysing this form of humor.

First and foremost, it is exactly the use of the techniques of humor which makes a speech act or an action a *šala*. The technique of humor is, consequently, the basic characteristic of the verbal and physical form of the *šala*, whose main purpose is to produce laughter, an aim which differentiates *šala* from other types of actions and speech acts. In addition to this, the usage of a particular technique of humor in a humorous utterance or act points to their function in a certain context. Consider, for instance, the following example in which the basic characteristic of the *šala* is sarcasm: A traffic policeman pulls over a speeding car, and when the driver naively asks if he was driving too fast, the policeman answers: “No, sir, you were flying too low.”

The function of this particular *šala* is to deliver an effective remark about somebody’s problematic conduct. This again shows the importance of an immediate context of a situated humorous utterance without which the function of that utterance and its humor cannot be understood. However, as Berger himself noted: “Sarcasm may generate some humor, but it tends to be a costly kind of humor” (Beger 1993: 49). Hence, by means of similar techniques such as ridicule, irony, insults, caricature, imitation or parody, the *šala* may test the elasticity of social conventions, assess the boundaries of tradition, good taste or etiquette, switch the professional and social order and investigate the boundaries of permitted personal humiliation (McEntire 2002: 147). To put it briefly, through the *šala* we learn about ourselves as well as about those around us, especially when this form of humor is used between those who assume different social positions and statuses. In these terms, the *šala* represents a means of testing and negotiating conventions about appropriate and inappropriate expressive behavior (see also Frog, this volume).

*Šale* (plural of *šala*), as already mentioned, circulate and are exchanged especially within narrower social groups formed by persons with similar



interests and hobbies with friendly relationships or within shared a business environment. This type of humor plays an important social role of maintaining solidarity and a sense of belonging, setting the boundary between the group members and outsiders, facilitating communication within the group and controlling the behavior of its members (Fine *et al.* 2005: 7). The *šala* then represents a portion of the expressive culture of such groups, whose members share specific knowledge which enables them to interpret and understand the *šala* in a specific manner.

Similarly, while a *šala* is situational, its subject in these cases is often predictable and it mainly pertains to what captures the attention of the given group or prompts worries inside it. The best description of this is given by Gary Alan Fine, who studied the culture of joking activity among mycologists, which yields insight into their worry over the effects that this hobby may produce, as well as a specific contradiction regarding this worry, so that jokes are mostly made on the subject of dying from eating certain mushrooms, but also at the expense of those who are afraid of tasting those mushrooms (Fine 1988: 193). The *šala* is here, therefore, a folklore way of treating subjects which figure as important to a certain group, while the technique of humor used in it, be it sarcasm, caricature, allusion, comparison or the like, is an even more precise indicator of the relations which exist in the group towards the given subject.

### *Retelling of šale*

So far some features of the *šala* have been presented which could be observed within the parameters of texture, context and text (Dundes 1980). The *šala*'s specific quality at the level of texture is, as has already been said, the technique of humor, which separates it from other types of communication. The conventions concerning context – time, place, social environment – also exist regarding the use and recounting of *šale*. Finally, at the level of text, the *šala* in its verbal form is not characterized by a fixed structure like riddles, tongue twisters, proverbs and a wide variety of prose narratives which belong to the category of verbal art. It is spontaneous, contextualized, made on the spur of the moment, and it is practically impossible to foresee what the target of it will be. The *šala* also has a known, individual origin; the community does not participate in its creation and formation. In short, it is the ephemeral, idiosyncratic creation and formulation of an individual. But as such, it represents a folklore form which has the potential to be a convenient cultural resource for the creation of playful or amusing scenes in everyday life (see Leary 1980).

In the contemporary Serbian context, the *šala* is widely used in everyday interpersonal communication, and its purpose in those common situations usually comes down to the creation of an amusing atmosphere. A friend of mine provided me with detailed information about such an occasion in which he himself took part. He walked into a store, wanting to buy underpants for the coming winter. An older woman was working there, whom he had never met before; the first impression he had of this saleswoman upon addressing



her was that she was a serious and experienced worker. They started talking about different kinds of underpants and the woman asked him if he needed them for skiing, to which he jokingly replied: “No, I need them for waiting for a bus”, which induced laughter between them. This reply could be thought of as a typical example of an individual, ephemeral, idiosyncratic *šala*, used in a specific context and with a specific purpose.

First of all, my friend’s objective in this situation was to make someone who gave the impression of being a serious person smile. He did that by creating an amusing atmosphere in a spontaneous way, that is, by using a *šala* with a specific technique of humor known as reversal. According to Berger, this technique involves a resolution of some action that turns out to be the opposite of what is expected, and also offers insights that are amusing and sometimes profound (Berger 1993: 47). In this case it was used wittily to refer to the common experience that people in Belgrade had with bad public transport. In addition, by saying that he needed the underpants for waiting for a bus instead of skiing, my friend also latently referred to the economic crisis which this society has been enduring for quite a while now. In that way he managed to identify with this saleswoman as someone who was probably troubled by the same issues. In short, they laughed at the problems that they both faced, which tacitly levelled their social status (even though they did not know each other) and provided a basis for more relaxed communication and possibly further joking. These kinds of humorous utterances, that are directed towards social, political or economic problems, are common in contemporary Serbia, and therefore represent a form of folklore which is manifested in everyday communication.

This, however, does not mean that the *šala* cannot also be developed from the ephemeral and individual into something durable and shared. As is emphasized by Jakobson and Bogatirjov: “The existence of a folklore creation as such begins only when a certain community has accepted it, and from this creation exists only that which the community has adopted” (Jakobson *et al.* 1971: 18). These authors also promulgate the idea that folklore retains only those forms which have proved its functionality for the given community (*ibid.*: 19). Therefore, I believe that the *šala* can become durable and shared if, as a result of the specific function that it has, it remains remembered in the community in a manner which incorporates it into a shorter narrative which will lay emphasis on it. In such cases it can freely be said that the subject under discussion is some kind of “story about a *šala*”. This is especially illustrated in the study by Branko Banović *Urbani humor Pljevalja* [‘Urban humor of Pljevlja’], in which the author analyses the contents which he termed humorous episodes, and which are exchanged in everyday interaction and are transferred from generation to generation in different interactive contexts (Banović 2008: 18).

Banović used the term “humorous episode” to designate a short narrative whose core presents a *šala* or witticism and which, thanks to its specific function in the setting or because of the individual who created it, has come to be remembered. *Šale* that seem to have taken place many years ago have, through further retelling, grown into urban stories with humorous content whose protagonists are the inhabitants of Pljevlja and whose setting is the

town of Pljevlja.<sup>11</sup> They have to the present day continued to circulate in oral communication among the inhabitants of Pljevlja. “Seemingly naive, banal and taken frivolously, these stories had a certain role in the social life of the town of Pljevlja, as well as their protagonists who also had a significant role in the social life of the town” (Banović 2008: 17). On this occasion, I shall cite two examples from the study by Banović in order to present the phenomenon of transforming individual *šale* into folklore material as clearly as possible:

Хусеин Куновац је важио за изузетно духовитог и образованог човека чије су се шале дуго препричавале и остајале у сећању Пљевљана. Једна од њих је следећа:

Назове Хусеин Куновац потпредседника Среза Ахма Селмановића, представљајући се да је дежурни на хидрофору. Камуфлираним и потпуно званичним гласом обавестио га је да је Брезница пресушила и да “Водовод” има нерешив проблем. Ахмо је насео и отрчао према хидрофору. Кад је сав уплахирен дошао до хидрофора, позвао је дежурног радника говорећи му да је Брезница пресушила. На то је дежурни радник збуњено гледао показујући на воду која је шикљала јаким млазом на све стране. Тада су и један и други схватили да је реч о нечијој смицалици и почели да се смеју. Оно што је у целокупној епизоди најсмешније је да је Ахмо сигурно 700–800 метара трчао поред корита Брезнице, јер је једини начин да се дође до хидрофора дуж корита, а да није приметио да вода тече несмањеним интензитетом.” (Banović 2008: 38.)

Husein Kunovac was highly reputable as an exceptionally witty and educated man whose stories were retold for a very long time and stayed in the memory of the inhabitants of Pljevlja. One of them is the following:

Husein Kunovac phoned the county vice-chairman Ahmo Selmanović, presenting himself as the duty worker on the water pump. In a camouflaged and entirely official voice, he informed him that the Breznica<sup>12</sup> had run dry and that the “Vodovod” [‘Water Company’] had an insoluble problem. Ahmo took the bait and ran to the water pump. When, highly agitated, he came to the water pump, he called the duty worker and told him that the Breznica had run dry. The duty worker looked at him in confusion showing him the water which gushed forth. Then both of them realized that it was a trick and started laughing. The funniest thing in this entire episode is the fact that Ahmo must have run for a whole 700–800 metres along the river channel, for this is the only way to get to the water pump, without noticing the water flowing with unabated intensity.

The next story is one of the many humorous episodes pertaining to the great friendship between the priest Krezo and Ljubo Stojkanović, which were gleefully retold in the town:

Поп Крезо и Љубо Стојаковић су били комшије. Уколико би ишао у центар Љубо је морао проћи поред куће попа Креза. Једном приликом Љуба заустави попадајца: “Бога ти, Љубо пошто је прота отишао у град, а заборавио штап, молим те, понеси му га.” Љубо је био у чаршији па на

пијаци и кад се враћао свратио је у кројачку радњу Ивана Голубовића у којој су често седели. Знајући да поп Крезо воли штапове, Љубо с врата рече: “Био сам на пијаци и купио јефтино овај штап, али пошто ми не треба продаћу га.” Поп Крезо се почео распитивати о цени и на крају купи овај штап. Кад је поп дошао кући, са врата се похвалио супрузи како је јефтино купио добар штап. На то му је она одговорила: “Е бога ми, прото, то ти је Љубо продао твој штап. Ја сам му дала да ти га понесе, пошто си га ти јутрос заборавио.” Након тога поп неколико дана није хтео да прича са Љубом. Наравно, то није била озбиљна љутња. (Вановић 2008: 48.)

Fr Krezo and Ljubo Stojaković were neighbors. When going to the centre of the town, Ljubo had to pass by the house of Fr Krezo. On one occasion, Ljubo was stopped by the priest's wife: 'Ljubo, since the priest went to town forgetting his staff, would you, please, bring it to him?' Ljubo went to the bazaar, then to the market-place, and on his way back home, he dropped by the tailor's shop of Ivan Golubović, in which they often sat. Knowing that Fr Krezo liked staffs, Ljubo said on the doorstep: "I have been at the market and bought this staff cheap, but since I do not need it, I will sell it." Fr Krezo started asking about the price and bought the staff in the end. When the priest came home, he mentioned with pride to his wife, at the very doorstep, that he had bought a good staff cheaply. To this she replied: "For heaven's sake, Krezo, Ljubo sold you your own staff. I gave it to him to bring it to you, because you had forgotten it this morning." After this the priest would not speak to Ljubo for several days. Of course, this was not a genuine fury.

These humorous episodes are telling examples of anecdotal events being received as memorable and taken over by the community to form *šale*, as well as offering an illustration of how folklore material is formed out of an otherwise ephemeral creation. The passive listener or social environment in this case are of special importance, for it is precisely to producing enjoyment in others – one of the important functions of the *šala* – that these forms owe their persistence.

Also, such “stories about *šale*” should not be confused with the *šaljiva priča* [‘funny story’], a narrative predominantly based upon the humor of the situation and wordplay. The funny story once had a significant place in Serbian folklore and is closest to the type of story that is marked in Aarne–Thompson index as *Schwank* (Aarne & Thompson 1961). A frequent motif in the Serbian funny story is a funny combination of circumstances into which one falls owing to ignorance and such characteristics as stupidity, slyness, greed, sagacity, resourcefulness, cunning or quick wit, along with behavior not in keeping with the principles of the setting or the clash of different norms and worlds, which results in a misunderstanding as a consequence of the use of unknown words, homonyms, localisms and literal comprehension. As we could see in the texts above, similar motifs can be found in the “stories about *šale*” as well. However, there are certain characteristics which clearly separate funny stories from these “humorous episodes” in the Serbian context.

Judging by the multitude of details from rural life, the greatest portion of funny stories emerged from or resumed their final shapes in the rural Serbian environment. Although the setting of some of them is the town, consulting room, courthouse, barber's shop or classroom, funny stories predominantly

deal with the topics related to life and circumstances in the countryside and relations in the family, so that the frequent characters are priest, monk, qadi (i.e. a judge that rules in accordance with Islamic law), village headman, serf, mother-in-law, son-in-law, parents and children, etc. The protagonists of the funny story are, therefore, predominantly anonymous characters, although the actions can be attributed to named individuals such as Era, to whom an entire cycle of funny folklore stories in domestic folklore is dedicated. This character, on the other hand, is a stereotypical, quick-witted protagonist, whose actions are mainly targeted at the social strata hostile to the peasantry, such as the *aga* (a type of landowner), but also priests, monks, etc.

Funny stories may thus indirectly treat social problems and be used as an instrument of agitation in the struggles between social groups, being based more upon social than upon national contrasts. In general, their subjects are diverse and can refer to a wide variety of social moments, with the function of social criticism and self-criticism. They include observations on people, human relations and everyday events that indirectly tie them to everyday life (Pešić *et al.* 1997; Samardžija 2006). Today, however, it can be ascertained that the funny story is not that current in Serbia any longer. In the contemporary period it has been replaced by comparable forms such as the anecdote or joke, which in view of new social circumstances such as urbanization but also in terms of motifs and themes more effectively accommodate themselves into everyday and direct communication. On the other hand, “stories about *šale*”, as has been shown, are still very alive as a humoristic form and have not lost their role in Serbian social life.

## Conclusion

How ironic, then, that this seemingly trivial, inconsequential, common thing we know as humor is so enigmatic and plays so vital a role in our psychic lives and society.

A. A. Berger

Based upon everything that has been said so far, it seems that the notion of “humor” in this quotation could freely be replaced by the notion of the *šala*, even more so given that everyday humor most frequently appears in this form throughout many cultures. In other words, the *šala* is an indicator and a proof of the ubiquity of humor in everyday life. It has always had its place in interpersonal communication and it can almost certainly be said that it is a humoristic form which will always be used and will never become obsolete.

While it is true that in colloquial speech the term *šala* sometimes refers to any humorous activity or creation, it also has a specific meaning which has not yet been considered in Serbian folklore studies. By using the technique of humor, as well as by the special name which is used to denote this humoristic form in Serbian, *šala* is culturally recognized as a special communication category so that it gains an identification trait which differentiates it from other forms of social interaction, all of which indicate the existence of the cultural awareness of its specific character

and functions (Ben-Amos 1971: 10). Hence it should not be equated with the joke or witticism, nor treated as a mere synonym of humor or as a classification category for humorous folklore creations. Regarding its form and use in the contemporary Serbian context, I argue that it is a special manifestation of humor in the form of utterances and acts and it is not to be confused with narratives. On the other side, its form, content, practical application and function indicate that this type of humor can be found in other cultures as well (see also Frog, this volume).

This everyday and seemingly simple humoristic form is also quite complex in its nature, which ranges from its elusiveness when it comes to collection and presentation, to the importance of the immediate context and special knowledge for its success and understanding. Closely related to this are various functions that the *šala* as a special form of communication may have. As demonstrated, depending on the particular technique used, it may serve as the confirmation of a shared identity among the members of a certain group, as the means of testing or reassessing social norms and relations or of communicating something with sense and meaning in an indirect, but effective manner. Its strictly individual origin and ephemerality did not prevent the *šala* from becoming durable and shared, for there are cases when it remains in the community's memory or use owing to its specific function in a given setting.

Given its universal nature, the *šala* could be thought of as a ubiquitous folklore way of treating topics, with a specific technique as an indicator of the relationship with the subject. All of the special functions that this humorous creation may have, and its potential for providing an interesting insight into some aspects of a culture, are just one of many reasons why the *šala* should be acknowledged as a separate folklore form.

The main aim of this paper has been to define as precisely as possible this manifestation of humor, to determine the principles of its formation and function, and to delineate its particularity in relation to similar folklore creations. In Serbian anthropology and folklore studies, the concept of the *šala* has usually been avoided owing to its imprecise meaning (see Banović 2008: 20). It is exactly this fact that has inspired this paper and stressed the need for understanding of the *šala* in order to inaugurate its use as an analytical concept.

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## NOTES

- 1 Directed by Kevin Smith, see IMDb, Chasing Amy: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118842/>.
- 2 The scene in question can be watched on YouTube under the name of “What’s a Nubian?”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHLJfxfXHBg>
- 3 The phenomenon of using quotations from popular culture in everyday life is complex and deserves more research. Here it is only mentioned as an illustrative example of the form which the *šala* may take within a certain group. A good starting point in studying this phenomenon could be observing it as a riddle of genre (see Frog, this volume).
- 4 For further information about these, as well as other theories which deal with the problem of putting humor in motion, see Veatch (1998). On theoretical developments and uses of humor in society and professional relationships, see Chapman *et al.* (1996).
- 5 Folklorists have also posed questions about the nature of humor itself, for instance how it works or why it is employed; see e.g. Oring (2003).
- 6 This theory was developed for treating exclusively verbally formulated and expressed humor or humorous texts, and was produced by revising Raskin’s Semantic Script Theory of Humor.
- 7 On the anthropological and sociological contribution to the study of humor, see Finnegan 1981; Davis 1995.
- 8 For thematic collected works on *vic*, see Rad XXXVII kongresa SUFJ (The Work of XXXVII Congress SUFJ), Zagreb 1990.
- 9 These two Serbian words are discussed further below. *Vic* could be translated simply as “joke”, while *dosetka* could be translated as “witticism, sally, jest, repartee”.
- 10 For a clear understanding of these techniques and the ways they function Berger’s study *An Anatomy of Humor* (1993) should be consulted.
- 11 Pljevlja is a small town in the north of Montenegro.
- 12 Breznica is a river that flows through the town of Pljevlja.

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# The Politics of Meaning-Making V



## 15. Genre as Ideology-Shaping Form

### Storytelling and Parading in Northern Ireland

Since the early days of folklore studies, genre has been a core but slippery concept demanding revisions and refinements to serve folklorists' needs in research, in defining the discipline, and in dialogue with practitioners of allied fields of study (Ben-Amos 1976; Harris-Lopez 2003; Bauman 2006). Four decades ago, during the build up to the New Perspectives moment in American folklore studies (see Parés & Bauman 1972), a significant and still resonant shift in thinking reanimated deliberations on the nature of genre. The story of this shift may be familiar, but it is worth rehearsing to pinpoint a line of inquiry that deserves further exploration in the ongoing discussion, namely the relationship between genre and ideology,<sup>1</sup> a relationship relevant to investigations of folklore and worldview.

Before the late 1960s folklorists conceived of genres as typological categories useful in the project of classifying a wide range of verbal folklore texts and repertoires. Following the rise of performance studies and productive exchange with sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, however, the concept of genre was redrafted to offer perspectives on language practices as they vary from one cultural group to the next. Performance-oriented scholars eventually reconceived genres, in Richard Bauman's words, as "conventionalized, orienting frameworks for the production and reception of discourse" (2004: 3; see also Bauman 1992: 53). Bauman continues, "More specifically a genre is a speech style oriented to the production and reception of a particular kind of text" (2004: 3–4).

At first performance-oriented folklorists shifted attention from the typical thematic domains and defining elements of different genres to the typical form-function-meaning interrelationships of different genres. Being especially attentive to the situational contexts of verbal performance, performance-oriented folklorists began to investigate the potential social uses of genres as communicative resources. Paralleling, J. L. Austin's formulation that people "do things with words" (1997 [1962]), we have recognized that people do things with genres, accomplishing a range of different tasks through different genres. As Peter Seitel recently observed, any given speech genre is "a collective memory for how to do important, recurring things with language" (1999: 15). From this perspective, different genres provide rhetorical resources for accomplishing different forms of

social work – such as, healing, conferring status, or entertaining. Genres, then, comprise a large part of the rhetorical resources Kenneth Burke refers to as “equipment for living” (1973 [1941]).

This shift in thinking about genre applies to both verbal and nonverbal texts, as we shall see. The terms “text”, “genre”, “performance”, and “discourse” are not bound to language but extend to any system of signification – food, dress, music, bodily movement, and so on. In this vein, Dell Hymes observed: “In short, any recurring activity of life may become an occasion of structured expectation of the sort which in its ‘what’ we can identify as ‘genre’ and in its ‘how’ as stylized, expressive performance” (1975: 351).

From these new perspectives on genre emerged one line of inquiry that has been announced but less often explored ethnographically: the claim that generic form and ideology are inextricably linked. The proposition is that genres not only accomplish different social tasks; they also accommodate and perhaps inculcate different ideological positions. Along these lines, Bauman has more recently elaborated on his earlier definitions to characterize genre as “a routinized vehicle for encoding and expressing particular orders of knowledge and experience” and “certain orientations to the world” (2004: 6). A given genre, then, may serve “the expressive enactment of subjectivity”, and different genres “implicate different subject positions and formations” (2004: 6).

Here, I wish to develop and extend this proposition about the integration of genre and ideology. Along the way we should consider whether genre is not only a “form-shaping ideology” (Moreson & Emerson 1990: 282) but also an ideology-shaping form. In order to engage this question, I will demonstrate how different genres of verbal and non-verbal folklore popular in Northern Ireland implicate, encode, and express different orientations toward the conceptions of community, belonging, and identity.

In particular, I will investigate the local character anecdote as a verbal genre that may not only express but also instill explicitly non-sectarian ideology. Commonly told in mixed Catholic-Protestant company at wakes and ceilis (nighttime visits among neighbors), local character anecdotes reckon belonging in terms of local identity and affiliations shared by Catholic and Protestant members of the same social networks, despite their religious, ethnic, and political differences. Local character anecdotes, then, serve as a rhetorical resource for imagining and enacting local community.

This non-sectarian ideology stands in contrast to and potentially undermines the sectarian worldview replicated by other genres such as political ballads, street murals, and commemorative parades. Unlike local character anecdotes, these other genres are exploited in segregated social contexts, and they serve to cast Catholic vs. Protestant sectarian identities as mutually exclusive, natural, and inevitable.<sup>2</sup>

My overall argument here is that the formal features, conventions, and exigencies of these different genres drive at and encode opposing sectarian vs. non-sectarian ideological positions. These two orientations to the world may be characterized in Mikhail Bakhtin’s terms as monologic vs. dialogic, and the prospect that these monologic sectarian vs. dialogic non-sectarian orientations are genre-driven suggests that folklore not only reflects but also

has a hand in shaping social reality. While this does not deny Franz Boas's suggestion that folklore may serve as a mirror to culture (1970 [1916]), my argument here is more in line with Bronislaw Malinowski's early contentions that both custom and language are forms of social action and that, by extension, folklore enacts rather than merely reflects culture (1959 [1923]).

### *Form and Ideology: The Twelfth Parade*

Before investigating local character anecdotes, I want to establish proper context and contrast by investigating first a sectarian genre. The annual commemorative parade, a genre employed by both Catholic-only and Protestant-only voluntary organizations, offers rich material. For the sake of specificity I will focus on one particular parade celebrated by Protestants: the Twelfth of July parade, also known simply as the Twelfth.<sup>3</sup>

Organized each year by the Loyal Orange Order, Twelfth parades are held annually in eighteen fixed and rotating locations in parts of the Republic of Ireland but mostly in Northern Ireland or Ulster, as Protestants refer to it. These parades commemorate the Battle of the Boyne where in 1690 James II was defeated by William of Orange, later crowned William III, also known affectionately by Ulster Protestants as King Billy. Ending an English civil war on Irish soil, this battle also guaranteed local Protestant dominance in a predominately Catholic Ireland that would remain under British control for centuries to come. Today Twelfth parades are yearly celebrations of Ulster Protestant unity and a collective reaffirmation of loyalty to Britain. In fact, the Twelfth serves as the single most important public display event in the ongoing process of expressing, maintaining, and negotiating Ulster Protestant collective identity and memory. I should briefly describe important formal features and characteristics of the parade as ritual before returning to the issue of genre.

Any given Twelfth parade is made up of several local lodges of the Orange Order who march a circuit through a given town or city. One lodge after another marches, and each lodge musters its members in the same order. In front march the lodge officers, and behind them come the standard bearers carrying the lodge's painted silk banner. These banners tend to depict scenes from Ulster Protestant political history (such as William of Orange at the Boyne), scenes from wider Protestant religious history (such as Martin Luther posting his ninety-five theses in Wittenberg), or depictions of Old Testament events that allegorically cast Catholics as Philistines and Canaanites, Protestants as God's chosen people, and Ulster as the promised land. After the standard bearers, come the rest of the lodge members in two parallel lines, and after them comes a band that the lodge has sponsored. The band, dressed in military-style uniforms, play martial music usually on fifes or bagpipes and drums. Directly after the band march the officers of the next Orange lodge. The parade, then, continues with one lodge and band after another until the circuit is complete.

If for Ulster Protestants the Twelfth reasserts collective identity, the Twelfth may also serve for our purposes as an example of a complex



*Orangemen at the Twelfth, Castlederg, County Tyrone*

genre. While participants may understand the parade to be a single genre of ritual or festivity, it involves multiple expressive genres and multiple, simultaneous channels of communication. Constituent expressive elements include religious oratory and symbolic architecture (which I have not discussed here); militaristic music, costumes, and marching; and a plethora of allegorical, visual symbols depicting mytho-historical heroes and events. Generic layering and blending yields what Bakhtin has called a complex or secondary genre, a genre that “absorb[s] and digest[s] various primary (simple) genres” (1986: 62). This hybrid, complex genre becomes something greater than the sum of its parts.

I will not delineate here the effects of all the concurrent formal features of this complex genre, but a few observations about certain integrations of form and ideology should help. Active, habitual, bodily participation in the parade effectively encodes sectarian ideology in the individual. While participation integrates the individual into the larger social body, physically and imaginatively, exclusion of Catholics helps define the parameters of





*“No Surrender”, a drummer for a paramilitary-linked band, Castlederg*

that body, dividing the world along binary, sectarian lines. In addition to inclusion and exclusion, repetition is key to the power of the parade as ritual. Lodge after lodge, band after band, the repetition of sound, symbol, and step, helps create, “a sense of collective identity where before there was only a collection of individuals” (Jarman 1997: 10). In addition to repetition in the internal structure of the parade, annual repetition of the parade enhances the impression that both the ritual and the community imagined through the ritual have remained the same since time immemorial. Repetition of form grants a sense of belonging, a sense of order, and a sense of continuity between the individual and the group, and between the group and its past. Having said that, the parade does more than imply some vague continuity with past events: it explicitly links if not collapses past, present, and future (see also Jarman 1997: 9).

For example, as the banners pass the viewer, each scene depicts an episode that evokes a longer narrative. Yet scene after scene – evoked narrative after evoked narrative – come in no particular chronological

or syntagmatic order. The parade, then, offers a paratactic narrative – a narrative in which episodes are relatively complete in themselves, and in which there is no strong sequential thrust between one episode and the next. One effect of this generic form is that, as the episodes accrete, they are appreciated as thematically unified, equivalent in connotation. One after the other, the Old Testament Battle for Jericho, King Billy’s triumph at the Boyne, and the Great War’s devastating Battle of the Somme, all connect in the march of struggle and sacrifice for King, Country, and Creed. Monarchs, martyrs, and ministers – people from very different eras, with very different agendas – all are appropriated as mouthpieces for the quintessential unionist doctrine: Not an Inch, No Surrender. While each banner may be limited in its potential metaphoric and metonymic meanings, the images dissolve into a larger whole with constant variations on the themes of resistance, sacrifice, victory, and faith, endlessly reiterated and conflated (see also Jarman 1997: 17). So, by virtue of the genre of expression, Ulster Protestant identity and a sectarian orientation to the world come to seem natural, timeless, inevitable.

In terms of form, function, and meaning, the Twelfth Parade is a genre Bakhtin would characterize as markedly monologic. For Bakhtin, monologism is a reduction of manifold voices, orientations, and perspectives to a single vision of reality, and monologic genres include those that instill ideologies of binary opposition – Marxist or Hegelian dialectics, for example. More to the point, the binary sectarianism – maintained by the Twelfth and other genres that both establish and depend on a division between Catholic and Protestant – is inherently a monologic ideology.

### *Form and Ideology: Local Character Anecdotes*

With this perspective on the Twelfth as genre/ideology in mind, I want to turn now to the local character anecdote. This second genre is just as common in the north of Ireland, but it is associated more with informal social situations all year round, especially wakes and ceilis. Briefly put, local character anecdotes are short, usually humorous biographical sketches about noteworthy and often eccentric members of a given community, referred to locally as “characters”.<sup>4</sup>

The following, for example, is a local character anecdote told by Billy McGrath from the parish of Aghyaran, Co. Tyrone:

This is a true story. We were working down in Killybegs, 1973, and the fellah working along with me was the name of Joe Byrne, great working man, wild hard worker.

And, eh, he met his wife about England. And he came home and they settled down in Ardara... with his sister-in-law. She was the owner of the farm apparently.

They used to come into Killybegs every Friday evening to do their shopping, and Joe would have been working till going home, you see. But Joe was a great man to go to the pub on a Saturday evening for a drink – that was the only evening that he went out.

We were in with him, anyway – whole load of us boys from Aghyaran.  
 And, eh, the sister-in-law, she came in, anyway, this evening, and she says – she had a wee bit of a roast – she says, “Joe Byrne, are you going home?”  
 “Aye,” he says, “I’ll be out in a minute. Go you on and sit down, I’ll be out in a minute.”  
 Minute passed.  
 Five minutes passed.  
 Half an hour passed.  
 She came in again.  
 “Joe Byrne,” she says, “We’re not waiting no longer on you.”  
 He says, “I’ll be out in one minute.”  
 He had a wee drop of whiskey in the glass, and he put it up to his head. And the sister-in-law says to him, “You know this, Joe Byrne,” she says, “If I was married to you I would give you poison.”  
 And he put up the glass again, put it down, and he looked at her. “You know this, Susan, if I was married to you I would take it.”

This particular example illustrates well the feeling and rhythm of most anecdotes as they are told in Aghyaran. This example also reminds us that the exigencies of this genre preexist the actual individuals who are molded through narrative to fit already meaningful patterns and tropes. Note that the situation faced and the words uttered by Joe Byrne have also been attached in the wider world to Samuel Johnson, George Bernard Shaw, and Winston Churchill, among others (Barrick 1976).

Billy McGrath’s anecdote about Joe Byrne does not seem at first to have a direct bearing on Catholic vs. Protestant identity, but it does play a part in a much larger process of establishing and maintaining a sense of shared local identity in the parish of Aghyaran, countering folklore forms that promote binary, sectarian ideology. In the past, I have argued that local character anecdotes reflect a non-sectarian ideology by reckoning belonging and identity in local terms shared by Catholics and Protestants (Cashman 2006; 2008). I have supported this claim in two ways – first, by investigating the typical thematic contents of a large body of anecdotes and, second, by investigating how swapping anecdotes plays a role in the performance of hospitality and sociability between Catholics and Protestants interacting in mixed company. I should briefly summarize this argument before demonstrating how it may be expanded in light of the proposition that generic form helps shape ideology.

Looking only to anecdote contents and performance contexts, I have found that in the parish of Aghyaran a body of over one hundred often repeated local character anecdotes serves as a community study initiated by locals, long before any ethnographer arrived on the scene. It is important to note that these “stories people tell themselves about themselves” – as Clifford Geertz would characterize them (1973) – are most often told at sociable occasions that draw together neighborly networks of both Catholics and Protestants, rather than social networks based on sectarian affiliation alone.

Telling anecdotes in these contexts either begins or intensifies a transformation. Through anecdotes, over time, storytellers turn actual individuals into exemplars of certain, recurring character types, such as

the old-fashioned, rough-living bachelor or the nouveau riche capitalist drone. These recurring character types manifest certain dispositions and ideological stances that narrators and audiences find worthy of frequent contemplation. Moreover, these recurring character types delineate a range of potential personal identities considered by Catholics and Protestants alike as specific to, or at least distinctive of, their local community. These anecdotes and their recurring character types, then, serve as the building blocks for imagining local identity.

To be clear, though, anecdotes in Aghyaran do not appeal to a local identity based on some dubious uniformity amongst community members. Anecdotes in Aghyaran appeal to a local identity based on several potential, interdependent personal identities – the man of words, the silent brute, the trickster, the fool, the wily smuggler, the officious bureaucrat, the good mother, the gossip, and so on. Perhaps most importantly, this vision of local identity – comprising a wide range of personal identities – is simply and productively more complicated than sectarian identity, which allows for only Catholic or Protestant as meaningful categories.

Although I stand by this argument, it accounts for only part of the larger picture. As important as considerations of content and situational context are, attention to the formal features of the anecdote as a genre will expand my earlier claim that anecdotes reflect a non-sectarian ideology by suggesting that this genre may in fact inculcate this ideology. As a more dialogic genre than the parade, the local character anecdote encourages different, more open-ended definitions of identity, belonging, and community. In particular, the formal features of anecdotes encourage a contrarian orientation toward the world of monologic certitudes and existing hierarchies of value and power – from normative standards for respectable behavior to the authority of the centralized state to the divisive reiterations of sectarian bigotry.

In order to suggest how this genre encourages in a speech community the willingness to challenge a great deal of received wisdom, we should review typical formal features of the genre. Most anecdotes focus on the interaction of just two people, usually during a single episode. Dialogue often structures anecdotes, so reported and especially quoted speech is a common formal feature. In fact, most anecdotes conclude with a character's quotable remark, which serves as a punch line. If we were primarily interested in characterizing the anecdote as a dialogic rather than monologic genre we might concentrate on reported speech as a primary vehicle for heteroglossia and intertextuality (see Hanks 1987; Lucy 1993). Here, however, I want to emphasize the inherently subversive and reflexive formal feature of the punch line.

Consider another local character anecdote from Aghyaran as told by Danny Gallen. This anecdote depicts the confrontation between a middle-aged local farmer, Willie Dolan, and a younger, anonymous British soldier – an insider and an outsider – brought together at an army checkpoint. The initial conflict arises when the soldier notices that missing from the farmer's windshield is the round sticker that verifies that proper taxes have been paid. Understand as basic context that being interrogated at a checkpoint can be rather intimidating. As one soldier or policeman handles the interrogation

and determines whether or not to search your car and your person, other soldiers or policemen have their weapons trained on you. As such verbal sparring and general cheekiness are rare. With that in mind, here is Danny's account of Willie Dolan's checkpoint encounter.

Willie, he had a farm and he'd have been a sort of a cattle dealer, you know. He'd have been one of them blokes who started from scratch with very little, you know, and moved on up, with smuggling and one thing and another.

And he was stopped, one day, coming through the village of Killen, by the army. And, uh – he was a bloke who had a short temper anyway, you know – and he was probably held too long. I think there would have been a bit of nagging going on and probably he didn't want to be stopped for starters.

But anyway, they asked him something about the tax on the Land Rover, and Willie said, "Oh," he says, "this vehicle's taxed alright," he says, "I wouldn't be out on the road with a vehicle not taxed or insured."

And the soldier asked him where was the disk.

"Oh," he says, "there's three or four cubs about our house and some of them pulled the disk down just."

And the soldier says, he says, [in a high-pitched Northern Irish approximation of a Cockney accent] "Where I was reared, there was three or four of us lads, and my father wouldn't have allowed us to pull a disk down, anyway, off the windscreen."

And Willie just looked at him.

"Well," he says, "your father didn't think much about you when he let you over here with a gun in your hand."

Parsing this anecdote, we see that the narrative is ordered in such a way that builds up to Willie's retort. Danny, our storyteller, introduces the *dramatis personae*, sets the scene, and lets the story unfold in dialogue that is crucial to the outcome and point of his story. The anecdote climaxes in reported



*X marks the border for checkpoints and air surveillance*





*Danny Gallen*

speech: the farmer's reply that allows him to save face when he feels the soldier has crossed a line by questioning his competence as a father.

Looking to the dialogue, we find that Willie, challenged about the missing tax sticker, gives the soldier a chance to trust him as a man with commitment to responsibility: "I wouldn't be out on the road with a vehicle not taxed or insured." To that he adds an explanation for the appearance his negligence: "there's three or four cubs [boys] about our house and some of them pulled the disk down just." The soldier has a choice but refuses to treat him with empathy, man to man. Dismissing the farmer's explanation as a typical lame excuse, the soldier makes a personal attack, tapping into stereotypes of the Irish as lax and undisciplined. But Willie – as Danny conjures him – will have none of it, and he turns the attack on its head.

When the soldier says that he also grew up as one of "three or four lads", he sets up the comparison between his own father and Willie, and implicitly between himself and Willie's children. In a flash of wit, Danny's Willie Dolan uses that parallelism as an entry into counterattack, by treating the soldier as an unruly child talking back to his elder. Willie seizes the role of father and disciplinarian to assert that he cares more for his children than the soldier's father does for his. "Your father didn't think much about you when he let you over here with a gun in your hand." In effect, Willie argues that the father who wastes his energy ensuring impeccable behavior but allows his children to endanger themselves by meddling where they do not belong, has misplaced priorities. Serving as the punch line and climax of the anecdote, Willie's retort subverts the soldier's criticism, laying it back at his feet. Willie's response both dismisses the soldier's bureaucratic concerns and trivializes his authority as contingent upon merely having a weapon in his hand. Rendered a child out of his depth, the soldier is an outsider to a community that resents his intrusion for the political tensions it exacerbates.

Pushing beyond close reading to focus on formal structure, we should note how the punch line of this or any anecdote serves as a reflexive comic corrective. As Bauman observes, punch lines “loop back to reconstitute or rekey (Goffman 1974: 79–81) what has come before. In this process, the antecedent portion of the narrative, which has built up a context for the punch line, is itself recontextualized” (1986: 59). Inherently reflexive and subversive, punchlines effect an ironic, relativistic shift in our understanding of the situation previously described; punch lines appropriate what has come before to put forth an alternate perspective. As such, by virtue of their formal conventions, anecdotes, jokes, and any punchline-driven narratives are dialogic, heteroglossic, and perhaps contrarian by nature. More specifically, by virtue of revolving around punch lines, anecdotes are bound formally and structurally to challenge assumptions, to subvert received hierarchies of power and value.

What, then, if a given speech community puts the burden for imagining local identity squarely on local character anecdotes? What if the very process of imagining local identity attracts special ideological focus because it offers a challenge to the received wisdom that sectarian identities are the only relevant collective identities? This seems to be the case in Aghyaran. Although Aghyaran is a community within a society divided by sectarian ideology, it nonetheless regularly comes together in mixed company at recurring events where the main activity for social interaction is the exchange of funny, subversive, contrarian stories about fellow funny, subversive, and contrarian community members. Habitual participation in such events, telling such stories, has a welcome, complicating effect. It wakes and ceils the sectarian ideology and monologic certitudes of the Twelfth become untenable.

### *Genre, Ideology, and Pascal's Wager*

Counterposing two genres common in the vernacular expressive repertoire of Northern Ireland, we have learned that Twelfth parades are agonistic, oppositional statements of differential identity (Bauman 1971) exerting a centrifugal force throughout the north of Ireland. In contrast, local character anecdotes are socially solidary, transcending sectarian lines to exert a centripetal, unifying force within self-identified local communities. Paying close attention to form, we can appreciate how the relentlessly additive, synthetic construction of the parades marks them as authoritative, monologic, sectarian. By way of contrast, the rekeying punchlines and reported speech of the local character anecdote render them open-ended, dialogic, multi-voiced.

If one's primary interest is Ireland, this exercise of delineating different ideological orientations instilled by different genres might be enough. If nothing else, the exercise offers fair warning that one cannot appreciate culture in the north by attending only to public display events. The social work accomplished through other genres in less public, more intimate



communal contexts complicates the established journalistic image of a society hopelessly mired in sectarianism.<sup>5</sup>

Moving past the specifics of this case study, however, other big-picture questions remain. For example, we may have established that genre and ideology are interconnected on some sort of metaphorical two-way street, but what if the traffic is more one-way than the other? To be clear, I am not interested in addressing some chicken and egg question about whether genre precedes and shapes ideology, or ideology precedes and shapes genre. Searching for some point of origin and asserting ideology or genre as the root cause of the other will be futile, and by now we should be used to the move of saying “X mediates and is mediated by Y” or “X constitutes and is constituted by Y” (so for example, “text mediates and is mediated by context” or “ideology constitutes and is constituted by genre”). Yet I have to admit that the prospect that genre precedes and shapes ideology is more intriguing to me than the reverse. There may well be something to Pascal’s Wager: “Kneel first, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe.”

This quotation, often attributed to Blaise Pascal, is in fact Louis Althusser’s paraphrasing (1971: 158) of Pascal’s argument set forth in *Pensées* (1995 [1660]). Bringing philosophical pragmatism to Christian apologetics, Pascal contends that believing in God is a better “bet” than not believing because the anticipated benefits of belief (most important, salvation) outweigh the arguably minimal benefits of non-belief. Pascal further implies that engaging in external ritual is a step toward internal belief. In his paraphrase, Althusser extends Pascal’s logic to articulate the argument that belief is produced through acts of declaration, that ideology is formed through practices. Performances informed and guided by the exigencies of generic form – praying, marching, storytelling – certainly qualify as the sort of external practices Pascal via Althusser credits for shaping our internal beliefs. This inversion of a common sense view that belief leads to devotional acts may offer a productive parallel in our investigation of the relationship between genre and ideology.

To explain, folklorists have understood that people accomplish different social work through different genres. For example, jokes can be particularly good for commenting on delicate topics (Oring 1992; 2003; Smith & Saltzman 1995), supernatural legends for contemplating the nature of reality (Glassie 1982; 2005; Dégh 2001), personal experience narratives for presentations of the self in everyday life (Goffman 1974; Stahl 1983; 1989).<sup>6</sup> We might assume, then, that a person’s desire to assert a certain pre-existing ideological stance emerges in a given situation context, then that person employs a particular genre to express that stance. In other words, we might view different genres as specialized rhetorical tools, and speakers as pragmatically minded social actors who search through their toolkit of genres for the one communicative framework that is most appropriate to their needs in a given situational context. Perhaps this tool kit model of genres is accurate in many cases. It seems a reasonable hypothesis. I doubt, however, that anyone in Northern Ireland, or elsewhere, wakes up one day and thinks, “Begod, I’m feeling rather sectarian today... I know, let’s put on a parade!”

Looking beyond the toolkit model of genres we should be asking: “To what extent are we determined by our habitual communicative practices?”

To what extent do conventions for expression that pre-exist us as individuals determine our subjectivity, our orientations to the world, our ideology, perhaps even our faith or our lack of it?"

Key to answering these questions is performance-oriented analysis that is mindful of the power of genre, receptive to the significations of form and pattern. Conditioned and committed to doing such work, I have found that along the Irish border certain events invite certain genres that trigger certain ways of thinking. Note, however, I do not claim that genres determine peoples' ideologies. Parades do not make people sectarian nor do anecdotes told at wakes force people to challenge sectarianism while reckoning identity and belonging in local terms. Nevertheless, participating in either one of those recurring genre-driven events does put an individual through the motions of acting and thinking in two very different ways. By touting the power of genre, I am not looking for the return of some superorganic notion of culture, nor am I attacking the idea of individual agency. I am proposing, however, that in addition to individual agency there are extra-personal variables that shape ideology including, significantly, genre.

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### NOTES

- 1 Here I understand ideology to be a constellation of both conscious and unconscious ideas about how one's social world works or should work; ideology can be understood as a subset of worldview that is most often implicated in politics at the local to global and micro to macro levels. As I argue below, ideology can be shaped, perhaps even prefigured by everyday practices and expressive conventions. I am not taking a Marxian tack where ideology is understood as institutionalized dogma, a superstructure of society that advances ruling-class interests, as in Michel Vovelle's scheme (1990). What I refer to as ideology is something like what Vovelle refers to as "mentality", which he takes to be "attitudes, forms of behavior and unconscious collective representations" that arise from experience living in a given habitus (1990: 5). But I part company with him in identifying mentality only with subaltern classes, and I do not credit the "powerful inertia of mental structures" with the construction of non-elite mentalities out of old or dead ideologies (1990: 5). As I am using the term, everyone has ideology (or indeed multiple overlapping, even potentially contradictory ideologies), and through an investigation of genre the rest of this chapter considers how ideology might emerge or take shape.
- 2 The examples of storytelling and parading discussed here are drawn from extensive participant-observation fieldwork in Counties Fermanagh, Donegal, and particularly Tyrone, from August 1998 to August 1999 and during shorter stays in 2000, 2002, 2003, 2006, and 2007. A longer account of how I came to do fieldwork along the Northern Ireland's western border can be found in the Preface and first

chapter of my *Storytelling on the Northern Irish Border: Characters and Community* (2008). The second chapter offers additional historical and socio-economic context for this part of Ireland.

- 3 There is an extensive literature on Northern Irish Protestant and Catholic commemorative parades. For more detailed description and analysis of the Twelfth in particular, I highly recommend Walker 1996; Jarman 1997; Bryan 2000a; 2000b; Santino 2001.
- 4 Folkloristic investigation of local character anecdotes was perhaps slow in coming but has grown considerably over the last three decades. Benjamin Botkin (1949) and Laurits Bødker (1965) provide brief encyclopedic references, demonstrating folklorists' recognition of anecdotes in the mid twentieth century, but Archer Taylor correctly characterizes the state of folkloristic research into anecdotes up to 1970 in the title and argument of his "The Anecdote: A Neglected Genre". A few years later, Richard Dorson defined the anecdote as a comic type of personal legend and compiled a bibliography of sources for American anecdotes of local characters (1972). Ronald Baker (1982: 11–23) and Jan Brunvand (1986: 173–76) adopted similar understandings of the anecdote as a form of personal legend focusing on locally known figures. Sandra Stahl (now Dolby) refined folklorists' thinking on anecdotes by emphasizing their local orientation and their focus on the issue of character, hence her label "local character anecdote" rather than simply "anecdote" (1975). Later exemplary ethnographic investigations of the forms and functions of local character anecdotes include: Mullen 1988; Tye 1988; Peck 1992. Henry Glassie's investigations of exploits and bids in County Fermanagh (1982; 2005) cover generic and cultural territory similar to that discussed here. Finally, Richard Bauman's treatment of West Texas anecdotes is quite helpful in extending investigation beyond generic definition to the formal features and rhetorical devices common in anecdotes and their efficacy in storytelling contexts (1986: 54–77).
- 5 For comparison see Glassie (2005: 381–385) where he challenges the usual assumed public/private dichotomy, a misleading legacy of property law, by discussing the importance of the intervening communal realm. In this realm in Northern Ireland folklore forms, such as the local character anecdotes discussed here, serve to enact community and to balance the strident statements of political and religious identity made in public performances such as the Twelfth.
- 6 This is not to say that a given genre is suited for only one form of social work. Jokes, for example, can entertain or offend, welcome or threaten, include or exclude, challenge or confirm conventional wisdom, etc. Much depends on how a given joke is intended and received by particular individuals in a given situational context. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances the joke is better suited to the range of social work I mention than are other verbal genres such as the riddle or myth.

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## 16. The Use of Narrative Genres within Oral History Texts

### Past Representations of the Finnish Civil War (1918)

Usually the roots of the American approach to oral history are traced back to the recording of “great men”, an oral history project initiated in 1948 by the historian Allan Nevins. However, already during the 1930s in the New Deal Federal Writer’s Project over 10,000 ordinary Americans such as workers, poor rural people and ex-slaves were interviewed about their lives and life stories. (Heimo 2014b.) Oral history materials in the classical sense refer to oral testimonies that articulate the experiences of marginal groups. In Britain, the Scandinavian archival recordings of folk culture which were first initiated in the 1920s served as an encouraging example to scholars who sought to capture the voices of working-class people in the 1970s. (Thompson 1998: 167; Abrams 2010: 4.) During the last few decades, oral history practice, materials and research have broadened enormously. In Finland, oral history materials often refer to written archived collections stored in the Folklore Archives or in the National Board of Antiquities.<sup>1</sup> Despite the widespread interest in these materials, there is no consensus among Finnish folklorists (nor does there necessarily have to be) on the most apt generic term for the responses generated by the act of remembering. During the last few years, I have chosen to use the term *oral history texts* for many reasons that are connected to my research perspectives, materials and approach, as well as to the importance of methodological discussions in international oral history scholarship (see Latvala 2013a; Latvala & Laurén 2013). In fact, as scholars of oral history and life writings in Nordic-Baltic countries have noticed, relevant materials can appear in the form of oral recordings, written documents or visual representations such as documentary films, photographs or drawings; at the core, there is always an interplay between the past and the present. Today oral history research emerges as a multivocal, multidisciplinary and theoretically oriented discipline in its own right that is investigating various dimensions of memory, culture and history.

In this article, my objective is to explore what kind of genre “writing to an archive” is in Finland by analysing one of the 203 texts sent to the “Politics and Power Games” collection campaign of the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS KRA POL 2006–2007)<sup>2</sup>. I examine this from two analytic perspectives on genre. The first concerns how the classification and naming of oral history materials can be connected to



periods in the history of Finnish folklore research. The second concerns how oral history texts sent to the Folklore Archives can be studied as an independent yet multi-generic form – that is to say, made up of subgenres. Paying close attention to one case allows us to see how the narrator inherits the narratives of power and violence of his local milieu, the painful memories and how these narratives – as they are repeated and interpreted – come to form a part of the pool of cultural explanations for the consequences of the Civil War of 1918. Although there is only room for one case in this article, I hope that it will reflect the nature of archive writing as an inherently diverse expressive form.

For this article, I have found it congenial to consider genre in relation to the special traits that oral history texts acquire as memoirs in the context of collection campaigns. In the process of narration, the writers participating in the campaign draw upon conventions of history-telling, autobiography and folklore, a reflection of popular thought (e.g. genres as elements of linguistic habitus, Hanks 1987: 681). I understand genre as not only a tool to be used by the research community but also as “a speech style oriented to the production and reception of a particular kind of text” (Bauman 2000: 84) seen as an interpretive framework from the perspective of writing. When the researcher endeavours to analyse the materials that have accumulated on his/her desk, it pays off to take note of the creative use of culture-dependent genres (e.g. Ben-Amos 1992: 23, 26), for these ultimately open new vistas onto the ways in which a narrator structures the world around him/her (e.g. Portelli 1998). Alessandro Portelli’s oft-cited essay “Oral History as a Genre” (1998) underscores the testimonial aspect of oral history. He pinpoints an essential principle about oral history data: “It tells less about events than about their meanings” (Portelli 2006 [1998]: 36). In other words, even false statements contain psychological truth and value. Oral history celebrates subjectivity, memory’s inconsistencies and expressive narratives (Portelli 2001: 5; Grele 2007; Abrams 2010: 18–19, 31). When it comes to making generic classifications and analysis, oral history materials, which are replete with numerous levels of narrative features, present the researcher with a challenging task. Naming is one way for research communities to gain a command of the nature of the data, often by comparing it to other similar genres.

In the following, I will first summarise and contextualise a history of the ideas concerning the classification of oral history materials in written form in the Folklore Archives. Over the last fifty years, there has been a substantial change in the way oral history materials have been conceptualised and valued. Even before the international expansion in oral history research reached Finland, archivists and researchers had been coming across analogous types of materials in their work and had subsequently been placing them under classification in the Folklore Archives. I will next outline the main arguments in the post-war discussion and paradigms in Finnish folklore studies, with particular reference to questions of collecting policy in the Folklore Archives and its development, and then continue to reflect on the following decades up to the present day.



### *Early Classification of Collection Campaign Texts in Finland*

As a part of the performance-centred research, collecting individual narrators' stories by conducting fieldwork gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s among Finnish folklorists.<sup>3</sup> The Folklore Archives primarily concentrated on collecting so-called traditional folklore (which, in accordance with the spirit of the day, was easily classified by genre, as in the case of riddles and poetry) until the 1960s, when oral history materials began attracting more interest and attention. At that time, various groups were encouraged to write responses to campaigns. New and widespread collections on the Finnish Civil War in 1918 (1965–1969) and lumberjacks (1969) were organised. (See Peltonen 1996: 65–71; Harvilahti 2012: 404.)

From a historical vantage point, it is intriguing to observe how the folklore genre classification in the Folklore Archives for *muistitieto* (hence labelled “M”) [‘reminiscences/oral history’] has changed since the 1970s as well as what lies behind the change in term. As a part of the post-war interpretation, among other themes, the memoirs of lumberjacks were called *etnohistoriallinen muistitieto* [‘ethno-historical oral history’]. In 1975 oral history was actually a subgenre of the main genre “M”, which stood for reminiscences. In the 1980s, Matti Kuusi, who was the professor of Folklore Studies, named such recollections a surplus category. These materials appeared to him to defy the genre classification used in the Folklore Archives. Taking archival taxonomy as his point of departure, Kuusi sought to resolve the problem by making a distinction between recurrent generic features. He thus created the following system of types of chronicates:

- M1 personal/autobiographical chronicates (= emphasis on one person)
  - M2 relationship chronicates (= emphasis on two more equal characters or participants)
  - M3 community chronicates (= individuals in the context of a wider community)
  - M4 eco-chronicates (= memories related to the natural and cultural environment)
  - M5 techno-chronicates (= memories on traditions of using technical skills)
- (See further Kuusi 1980: 39–46.)

The background for this classification came from Lauri Honko's idea of distinguishing between memorates and chronicates, the former relating to supernatural experiences and the latter to non-supernatural experiences. This ideal genre classification, without attempting to take structure into account, sought to generalise memory data in order for it to apply to a wider body of rapidly evolving written data dealing with the recent past and day-to-day life. The genre classification was nevertheless not wholly without basis in reality, for especially the memories of one's own life and the life of the community were recollected in oral communication though the narrators did not recognise them as chronicates. In the traditional narrative field of genre concepts (folktale, myth, history and sacred history), chronicates, which fall into the section of history, like historical legends, reflect the experiential and profane world and are thus regarded as true. (Honko 1980: 23–24; 1988: 103–105.)

Although Kuusi dismissed their informational content as somewhat trivial, he did concede that future generations might be interested in authentic narratives recounting the processes of change in society (Kuusi 1980: 40–46). Although Kuusi's typological classification is no longer used in the Folklore Archives, we are still able to discern themes in the modern archival material that deal with relations between the narrator and his tangible or intangible environment, just as Kuusi proposed. This point of departure is relevant even today. In this chapter, I began with an overview of the research field's history. Alongside the developments in the archives, oral history research found its place, although marginal, in Finnish academia in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Following the trends in the international oral history movement and research, researchers began to turn their attention to popular history and the past of the working class.

### *In the 1980s and 1990s: Still on the Margins of Folklore Studies*

In the early days, the two most prominent lines of discussion can be seen in two separate research projects: the first, a fieldwork project launched in Eastern Finland to study the village of Sivakka; and the second, an oral history project in Western Finland to collect the history of the Finnish Paper Workers' Union with a focus on presenting one's own history (see Kalela 1983). As a result, both historians and folklorists began to pay greater attention to vernacular history (see Knuutila 1984).

At the same time, the discussion about ideal and actual genres prompted by Lauri Honko's publications on folklore genres and theory had touched on *folklore put into writing*, materials that had already started to accumulate in the Folklore Archives thanks to collection campaigns (Honko 1980: 1988). As a result, Satu Apo (1980) introduced the concept of *kirjoittava kertoja* ['a writing narrator'] (see also Apo 1995). And thus the connection between archived oral history texts and textual performance was launched. I will return to this theme in the analysis of the case study. All of this research reveals that writers who respond to oral history text campaigns organised by archives do have a certain model for their stories, but they use the narrative means they find most suitable to their agenda. The collection campaign should be regarded as an impetus for a genre that provides content for interpretation and the flexible production of a particular discourse.

If we return for a moment to Finland in the 1980s, the growing interest in vernacular history also inspired researchers to see the value of collecting life stories. The rise in sociological research on the life stories of ordinary people (see Roos 1987) had an immediate effect on the classification of the surplus category; indeed, the autobiographical aspect continues to feature in archived oral history texts. For example, when Leea Virtanen became professor of folklore studies at University of Helsinki (1982), she noticed that folklorists had only recently begun to find autobiographical recollections interesting. The reason behind this turn can be found in the dramatic socio-economic transformations that had taken place in post-war Finland. These changes spurred memorisation efforts. Ordinary citizens

wanted to reconstruct the past and write down their own life stories. Under the given circumstances, the questions of remembering and forgetting were considered important. (Virtanen 1982: 177.) As a result, in 1992 the Folklore Archives set biography and autobiography apart as independent subgenres from the main category of reminiscences.

The folklorist Ulla-Maija Peltonen (1985) took part in the early phase mentioned above by examining the collecting of written working-class oral history texts. Later, her dissertation (1996) on the working-class narrative tradition concerning the Finnish Civil War and especially her study on the politics of memory, silence and voice (2003) started a new era in Finnish oral history research. Another important dissertation and the first Finnish one that focused on interview materials was Taina Ukkonen's research on the role of reminiscing in the construction of history (2000). Surprisingly, even in 1996, oral history continued to occupy a marginal place in folklore studies. At that time, Peltonen wrote (1996: 427): "Oral history as information concerning the past, as recollected narration and as interpretation of one's own past, has received hardly any serious consideration from researchers." Her dissertation had a notable impact on the development of Finnish oral history research. Her research concurred with that of Portelli (1991: 48–49), who made the following point: "Oral historical sources are narrative sources. Therefore the analysis of oral history materials must avail itself of some of the general categories developed by narrative theory in literature and folklore."

Thereafter, in the 1990s, the collection campaigns of the Finnish Literature Society began to pay increased attention to personal experiences and memories. In addition to the fact that the archive collections included specific life story campaigns (for example, autobiographies focused on either men or women or a particular group/profession), the written answers consisted of phases situated in a life cycle. These collections reflecting personal experiences have been considered extremely interesting across disciplinary borders. I will next concentrate on the recent collections of oral history texts and elucidate the basis for producing oral history texts. The act of writing to the archive serves as an established arena for the individual to focus on interpreting his or her own culture – and as such it creates a context for a specific kind of creative discourse, a textual performance.

### *Since the 2000s: A Literate Branch of Oral History*

Today, the visitor to the website of the Folklore Archives is encouraged to send in recollections concerning folk traditions and oral history materials in the form of written manuscripts, photos and tape recordings.<sup>5</sup> As Lauri Harvilahti (2012: 404) states that the collections of the Folklore Archives contain about one million pages of oral history texts. The modern collections are vast and internationally well known. Over the decades, the work of international oral history researchers has had a tremendous impact on the development of the field of oral history. For example the intersections between performance theory and the art of the oral history interview are

explored by Lynn Abrams in her book *Oral History Theory* (2010). She offers critical discussion and a systematic overview of oral history, which has moved from being a marginal practice towards mainstream. She reminds readers that the task of research is *to understand the significance of people's memories*. In the analysis of oral and written data, some questions will be shared: in addition to what is said, it is important to pay attention to how it is said, why it is said and what it means (see Abrams 2010: 1). Signification, interpretation and meaning are today at the core in both cases – in the interview and in the archived text.

It is understandable that written oral history materials also have their own particular attributes. Despite the absence of face-to-face interaction or fieldwork in the data-collecting process, there is a particular dialogical dimension in the act of writing to an archive. To be sure, the main form of contact is realised through the instructions for writers. The call for written submissions and the instructions for writers with the themes and questions compiled by the archive can be viewed as a stimulus to participate. The writings housed in long-established memory institutions such as the Folklore Archives serve to promote the model for writing itself, which is at least on some level recognised by the members of the regular network of the archives. As I see it, the key characteristic of a response to a collection as a genre of *oral history text* is the narrator's freedom: he/she can choose the content and style as well as the length of the text. When constructing a narrative about a given theme, the writing narrator can provide memories of the most significant cultural or historic themes mentioned in the brochure and even follow its structure, but he/she can also choose to concentrate on entirely different themes, perspectives and orally transmitted narratives or even stories he/she finds relevant in local history books. The genre of oral history text characteristically tends to present opinions and understandings connected to the title of the collection, to describe events and to situate memories and their interpretation in different contexts specific to the agents, times and places. In fact, dozens of narrators who have taken part in collection campaigns take advantage of the collection response model already familiar to them. Generally, that model is based on an autobiographical sequence of events or a comparison between past and present. A modern autobiography is generally understood as a referential genre, an independent text type referring to a reality that can be verified by the readers (Kosonen 2009: 287). Instead of concentrating on its relationship to fact and fiction, it would be more accurate to point out the oral history texts' auto-referentiality and subjectivity, the meanings given to the narrator's experiences. Besides the regular respondents who repeatedly write to the archive, however, there are numerous other respondents sending one-time answers to collection campaigns concerning various phenomena of society. It is therefore worth noting that the regular respondents' network does not form a discursive community, a collection of individuals *communicating amongst themselves*. Instead, they communicate with the archive staff. Although we cannot dismiss the impact of the archive brochure with its themes and questions, its influence is not as pervasive as one might think (cf. Olsson 2011: 42). For one thing, the instructions for respondents do not place special emphasis

on the importance of precise memories and accurate narratives of the past. On the contrary, the instructions invite participants to share both individual and collective impressions and interpretations of the past. However, the respondents to the archive are not necessarily free from genre expectations (such as narratives, memoirs, life history, autobiography) as they look back on their lives or on collective beliefs in the frames of the past.

As a memory organisation, the Folklore Archives present an opportunity to contest, complement and offer another interpretation of the dominant version of the past. As I have described earlier (Latvala 2005), the contributing narrators adopt various respondent positions and may use several positions in one text: the rememberer, the speculator, the provider of basic knowledge, the enlightener and the tale-teller (see also Savolainen, this volume).<sup>6</sup> Each one underlines the different ways of presenting and debating chosen reflections for the archive. In the context of the Folklore Archives, the active respondents, those who belong to the network of regular respondents, tend to use the most diverse author positions within one response. In some cases, the writing narrator clearly states his/her intentions by announcing to the readers why the narrated experiences and times must be remembered, giving instructions or placing the memories in a particular context (such as women's history or changing models of masculinity).

Most of the new themes in the archive collection campaigns do not explicitly invite the respondent to formulate the answer as an autobiography. Nonetheless, almost all of them contain autobiographical potential: the person is recounting his/her version of the past by reflecting on his/her own life (e.g. Abrams 2010: 26). The most recent collection themes of the Folklore Archives include silence, parenthood, Parkinson's disease, food culture, disability, Roma ('gypsies'), former tape-recording formats (C-cassettes), computers, climate change and experiences of nature. Some of the instructions included in these collection campaigns underscore "memories", "stories and experiences", whereas others, such as those in collection campaigns on the Second World War, self-made-artists, politics or life at the border, even on several famous Finnish writers (the latest ones are organised by the Literary Archives of the Finnish Literature Society), emphasise "oral history". As Portelli states, oral history can be about anything; open-endedness is one of its distinctive characteristics. However, the search for a connection between individual experience and transformations in society resides at the core of it. (Portelli 1998: 25.) Researchers now tend to read the materials as evaluations of the past made in the present or as reflections about the future against the mirror of the past instead of serving only as a mirror to the past.<sup>7</sup>

It is crucial to note that texts sent to archive collection campaigns do not always have the same communicative goal, even if the respondents share the theme in question. The significance of narrating the past is therefore to pass on the history that has been experienced. For this reason, oral history texts are often built on the interpretation of memories and knowledge of oral communication. The case study analysis later in this article will reveal a striking genre-specific feature of written memoirs – namely, the writers' use of various narrative means to create new vistas on oral communication.

Written texts therefore deal with indirect quotations and direct citations of day-to-day speech, not to mention a wealth of general information about how people expressed their thoughts and feelings (meanings) during the historical period in question.

### *Case Study: Interpreting the Aftermath of the Civil War of 1918*

The following case study is based on one of the 203 texts sent in response to the “Politics and Power Games” collection campaign of the Folklore Archives. In the oral history texts of everyday political culture (Latvala 2013b), the salient historical theme was the Civil War of 1918. The brochure for the collection, however, made no mention of any wars. The representations of history culture through oral history, fiction, local history and the internet form an ongoing, controversial and boundless process concerning the year 1918 in Finland (see Heimo 2010; 2014a). Because especially war history, tends to foreground certain facts, dates of battles and victories, there is a need for counter-narratives and counter-knowledge, the stories concerned with human experiences and suffering. A counter-narrative can sometimes work as a shadow narrative – an optional history narrative based on *what if*. Such narratives delve into thoughts and emotions. Some of the narratives tell us how people in the past would have acted, if there had been other futures. These versions of the past welcome emotional narratives and explanations. (Juhila 2004: 20; Hänninen *et al.* 2005; Peltonen 2009: 17). An unspoken generic feature of memorising is an openness to options, other narratives and other truths.

In the oral history texts sent to the Folklore Archives, various genres are used to throw light on the time periods described and to ascribe significance to experiences. The example text characteristically consists of numerous interlocked narratives and stories with varying truth value. The attractiveness of the texts arises from the contents and use of narrative techniques. Do these embedded genres reflect the meaning of genres in actual oral communication or are they more likely to represent traces of the stylistic and structural features from oral performances? Richard Bauman (1992) emphasises that generic expectations may be mobilised in different ways to serve different communicative ends. The respondent writing to the archives actualises what Lauri Honko (1980: 25) has pointed out: the individuals who use the tradition are not interested in the genre itself *but its messages*. Honko’s notion highlights, as Lotte Tarkka argues, that folklore is a flexible communication system with certain genres suited to bearing certain messages. She demonstrates in her study on genres of oral poetry that various genres were used dialogically within one performance, although it is often difficult to determine whether or not the combinations of strategies were conscious or unconscious. However, they were perceived as meaningful parts of the whole. (Tarkka 2013: 93–102 *et passim*.) It goes without saying that today’s context differs significantly from the past poetic culture, but this common feature still deserves mention. The narrators may



find the folklore in question as a part of their communicative reality – or they may use it in order to convey cultural knowledge.

A performance, as Richard Bauman (1992: 41) puts it, is an “aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience”. Drawing on Bauman, Lynn Abrams asserts that all oral history interviews and life-history narratives are performances. Abrams also underscores the need for the analysis to convey the emotions that the respondents invest in recalling their pasts. (Abrams 2010: 132–152; see also Latvala & Laurén 2013.) Furthermore, it is not wrong to say either that the oral history texts have specific performance-related elements, especially linguistic techniques (such as the use of dialect, multiple languages, even slang), although they do not have a present audience (see Latvala 2005). Viewed from this perspective, it is obvious that its form is not fixed. The archive may receive answers in the form of a poem, a fictional narrative or a life story, or all these can be combined in the same text. The Finnish folklorist Jyrki Pöysä (2006: 232) has called attention to this feature by calling them “narratives made up of narratives”. Each narrator has his/her own style and competence to verbalise experiences and ideas for the Folklore Archives. Quoting Lynn Abrams (2010: 31), the narrative is a form used “to translate knowing into telling”.

In his written answer of seven pages, the narrator tells his father’s story about the aftermath of the Civil War of 1918. The respondent positions come close to the tale-teller and enlightener. The response represents in fact three different narratives, all of which are connected. In the first narrative, where the events are presented as true, the protagonist is the narrator’s mother (and the respondent himself, as yet unborn). The second narrative describes his father’s actual experiences. When he gets to the third narrative, however, there is no family present, and the style of the narration differs from the previous narratives. While today’s reader may respond to it as a piece of fiction, the story may well have been told to young children accustomed to hearing tales of terror and violence which were presented as true, thus acting to shape their sense of reality. In other words, the story functioned as a set of facts for understanding the world. The feature linking all of these narratives is a local man called Aaro. Since I pay attention to narration in the context of an archive, I do not specifically aim at narrative analysis here. Instead, I am interested in examining how the past is represented through the use of narrative genres within an oral history text – and how the respondent assumes the roles of his parents as narrators. In the first narrative, the tale-teller manages to create the feeling of the actual narrative situation by using lines spoken by his mother and the man who assaulted her.

(1) *Äite kerto* että kun tämä Aaro kavereittensa kanssa katseli punaisia ja kun ei löytänyt niin laittaa äiten leuvan alle pistoolin ja sanoi että “jos ny akka et ala tietään missä ne pirut piileksii niin lasken läpi.” *Äite kerto että hän sano että* kun ei tiedä ja ne ei ole mitään tehneetkään niin “ammu vain kun tapat nuo pienet kakaratkin.” Ei se Aaro sitten ampunut ja Äite pelastu ja niin sitten minäkin synnyin tähän matoseen maailmaan. (SKS KRA POL 1573. 2007.)



*Mother told me* that when this Aaro with his mates looked for the Reds and couldn't find them he put a pistol under mother's chin and said "if the woman doesn't say where the devils are hiding then I'll pull the trigger." *Mother told me that she said* that she didn't know and that they hadn't even done anything so "just go ahead and shoot but kill those little brats too." Aaro didn't shoot then and Mother was spared and so I too was born into this wormy world.

In this first narrative, the narration situation is stressed and we can actually notice references to three different layers of communication: the actual oral narration in real time (the mother – the son), the narrated event in narrated time (where the dialogue takes place between Aaro and the mother) and the memorising time (the writing narrator and the archive). By conducting a close reading of his research materials, Jyrki Pöysä has interpreted the temporal levels of these kinds of written memoirs and asked what the actual present moment of the response is. Is it the time when the events actually occurred, the time described by the recollection or the researcher's moment of reading (for more, see Pöysä 2011)? The narrator's attempt to bridge the temporal distance and construct the prevalent mood of the Civil War is aided by his use of oral narratives.

As the narrative reveals, the mother survives unharmed and the son is later born. Although this incident had taken place about twenty years before the narrator's birth, it had obviously been an important and oft-told family narrative. The narrator has considered the past events carefully and created a complete and structured narrative with lines of dialogue. The first narrative is quite short and can also be seen as a background story and sub-narrative of the father's fate. In its main theme, the narrative presents the fraught encounter between the mother and the armed men (especially Aaro) who are looking for the narrator's father. At the same time, the story works as a first screening of the narrator's life story. Interestingly, the story gives voice to both agents, the mother strong and bold and the violent Aaro careless and cavalier. Aaro's words are full of hatred and reveal his readiness to kill. The narrative introduces who said what; the scene of the events is set during the 1918 Civil War with an account of Whites searching homes for Reds in hiding. There is no mention of the Whites or of time, but as the listener knows the context, it is obvious that Aaro belonged to the opposite group, the Whites, and that the year was 1918. The mother is presented as a person withholding information.

In the second, somewhat longer narrative, the protagonists are the father and the violent neighbour. Here we can find the respondent position of enlightener conveying knowledge about the life of political prisoners in Tampere:

(2) Isä kerto että kun valkoiset pidätti heidän, vaskivedellä ja sieltä he marssivat Tampereelle ja *sattu vielä niin että se joka johti sitä vartiota oli saman kylän isäntä*. Tunsivat toisensa hyvin ja olivat muutenkin tuttuja. *Nyt ei kuitenkaan tuttuus auttanut mitään kun tämä naapurin isäntä olkoon nyt nimeltään Aaro*. Tämä Aaro alko ammuskeleen heitä jalkoihin ja koitti saada lähteen karkuun että olis voinut tappaa heidät. Isä kerto että oli se sellainen kahdeksankymmentä kilometriä elämässä *että ei ole toista ollut. Jos ei pysynyt matkassa niin tämä Aaro*

*kävi kavereittensa kanssa ampumassa päähän peloitukseksi toisille. Nämä vangit koottiin Aaltosen kenkätehtaaseen Tampereella. Ruokaa ei ollut. Joskus heittivät kuolleen koiran sinne että kyllä se oli elämää punaisilla vangeilla. Jos vilkuili lasista ulos tuli kuula kalloon ja sillä siisti. Toiset vangit heitti ruumiit lasista pihalle.* (SKS KRA POL 1573. 2007.)

Father told me that when the Whites arrested them, at Vaskivesi, and from there they marched to Tampere and *the leading guard happened to be a farmer from the same village*. Each was known to the other and they were well acquainted otherwise. *Anyway, now just knowing each other meant nothing when this neighbouring farmer, well let's call him Aaro. This Aaro started shooting at their feet and tried to make them run away so that he could kill them. The father said that the walk was eighty kilometres in his life unlike any other. If you didn't keep going, this Aaro and his mates would shoot you in the head just to scare the others.* These prisoners were herded into Aaltonen's Shoe Factory in Tampere. There was no food. Sometimes a dead dog was thrown in for them *so for sure it was quite a life for the Red prisoners. If you peeked out of the window you'd get a bullet in the skull and that was that. Other prisoners threw the bodies through the glass into the yard.*

The course of the narrative can be divided into the following themes: (1) The Whites arrest the father (and other suspected Reds) at Vaskivesi; (2) Escorted and guarded by the neighbor, Aaro, the prisoners march to Tampere; (3) Aaro's readiness to shoot the prisoners; (4) The experience of the father plus commentary; (5) The risk of being ruthlessly executed; (6) The shoe factory as a prison: the only available food is dead dog; (7) Prisoners' lives have no value. Of the seven points, the transportation of the Red prisoners to Tampere is a historical and verifiable fact: the Whites captured Tampere in the spring of 1918, and there were over 10,000 Red prisoners. The shoe factory mentioned in the narrative is most probably Aaltonen's Shoe Factory, known historically as a place where Red prisoners were confined.

The most striking feature here is the piece of information added to the narrative's chain of dramatic events: the respondent's father and the neighbour, the executioner for the Whites, lived in the same village for decades after the end of the war. Another dramatic feature of this narrative is the marriage of the respondent's brother to the executioner's daughter, a painful matter to the narrator's father. According to the narrator, the father found this marriage difficult to accept. Families divided by political hatred but united by marriage are a common narrative theme that can serve a dramatic function in the narrative tradition, thus capturing the attention of the listener. It can also be seen as a story with a moral message advising the older generation to reconcile with their enemies and allow the next generation to enjoy peaceful social relations.

Portelli (1998: 26) argues that war narratives are the most common narratives describing the relationship between the individual and society, at least among male narrators. War, he explains, embodies history: first-hand experience of the war is the most tangible claim for having taken part in history. In the above text, the experiences of the father, who took part in the war, can be seen as a personal, partly instructive, story of warning.

In this narrative, the plot functions to highlight individual and emotional experiences. In oral history narratives, the agents of the violent past are typically placed outside the narrator's own home region and community (see Heimo 2010: 246). Not only did the confrontation between the Reds and the Whites during the Civil War take place within the local environment but it also turned family and kin members against each other. This explains why the fear of violence and violence itself take shape as a crucial theme in the narration. He seeks to reconstruct, along with the narrative, his father's prison experiences, presenting them as true, even though the message may simply be a matter of narrative truth.

The man tells the archive about his father's plight under the close watch of the neighbouring farmer. At the beginning, he refers to the time before the conflict between the Reds and Whites, when the head guard (patrol leader) and the father had been on good terms. Used repeatedly, the formula "father told me that [...]" increases the sense of the bond between the listener and the narrator, not to mention the severity of the father's ordeal. Moreover, the story powerfully conveys the way in which historical circumstance turned the neighbourly relations between men into a dramatic conflict between assassin and victim – a story that had been passed on to later generations. Even though the narrator's father survived, the capriciousness of death in such a setting is underscored by its presentation as a routine event – a shot in the head for a trifle.

Tampere, a city ravaged by the Finnish Civil War, has a salient place in the narratives that circulated in the aftermath of the events of 1918. What happened in Tampere took root in the collective memory and thus emerges in cautionary and didactic tales as a part of political socialisation. The narrator's father used storytelling to pass on knowledge about the political conflicts to his son. The above story is not the only narrative set in 1918 told to the narrator by his father.

The writing narrator adopts in the third story the respondent positions of the rememberer, the speculator, the provider of basic knowledge, the enlightener and the tale-teller. He first refers to his own memory and childhood. The speculative part of the story comes forth in his thoughts concerning the emotions stirred by the events, especially hatred and its consequences. He also provides knowledge and enlightens the reader about the court's unethical action at those times. Most of all, however, the respondent weaves a tale around the theme of justice. The following narrative is presented as "historical narrative", placing the same neighbour and Horror-Heikki at the centre of the violence. The historical narrative typically refers to a particular and conspicuous local event, person or era: something perceived as true but needing explanation (see Lehtipuro 1982: 45–46). Here the narrative describes the local executioner in the context of the aftermath of the Civil War:

(3) *Tämä tapahtuma on kanssa niitä sisällissodan jälkiselvittelyjä, joita pikkupoikana kuuntelin. Se samainen Aaro joka niitä vankeja kuljetti ja teloitti Virtain Puttonharjuun hiekkamonttuun. Ja vaikutti siihen että pikatuomioistuimien tuomitsi syyttömiäkin eli sellaisia henkilöitä jotka koskaan ei ollut osallisena mihinkään*

poliittiseen toimintaan, eivät monet olleet silloin kahdeksantoista vuonna mettäkylällä tienneetkään mitä politiikka oli. Mutta kun kiihko oli kova, viha oli niin syvää että tappaa piti niin tapettiin jokainen mikä kiinni saatiin. Ja tämä Aaro oli niitä suurempia jahtaajia. Oli vielä suuri ja ruma mies, kaikki siinä miehessä sopi pirun kaveriksi ja jälki oli sitten kammottavaa, siellä oli kaverikin sellainen suurtaalollinen kuin itsekin oli. Sen kaveria sanottiin kauhu-Heikiksi. Sattu sellainen tapaus että tämä Aaro oli meidän tämä Aaro oli meidän kylän kahvilassa juopottelemassa ja kehuskeli, Eipä juurikaan ole vastusta löytynyt vaikka olen noita ihmisiä muiluttanut ja pistänyt mullan alla. Juovuksissaan leveili että "kyllä lapuan politiikka jyllää se on sellaista politiikkaa että ei meidän kylässä kommarit eikä vasemmistolaiset juhli. Laitetaan niin ahtaalle että vie viissattaa vuotta enen kun uskaltavat henkittäkkään Kunnolla saati sanoo että me ollaan vasemmistolaisia ja halutaan sitä ja tätä." Siinä samassa siitä kahvilan pöydästä nousi mies kuin salama ja tempas partaveitsen ja leikkas Aaron korvasta korvaan auki kurkun alta niin syvältä nahkan että ei kurkkutorvi katkennut ja samalla käänti sen nahan naamalle. Ja lähti käveleen ulos katosi syksyiseen pimeyteen kuin aave. Sen jälkeen ja sitä ennen ei kukaan ollut nähnyt miestä ja kukaan ei koskaan saanut tietää kuka tämä mies oli. Ja samana syksyisenä yönä Aaron kaveri se Kauhu-Heikki löyty riihen kiukaalta palaneena oli niin kuin pudonnut orsilta kun kuivatti rukiita. Vanha kansa puheli että se oli tuomion enkeli joka liikku jakoi vaan oikeutta. Aaro selvis siitä viiltelystä vuoden sairaana maattuaan ja lääkäri ompeli kiinni sen haavan joko oli todella suuri korvasta korvaan. Se oli näkyvässä Aaron kuolemaan asti ja jokainen näki sen kuoleman enkelin oikeuden haavan ja kun Aaro eli vanhaksi niin sitä neulomusta kerkis moni katseen ja *monesti siitä sitten alko poliittista ja yhteiskunnallista keskustelua*. Sellainen arpi *herätti ihmiset ajattelemaan* että tuollaista touhua *ei voida hyväksyä* on muuta tehtävä kuin tappaa toisiaan ja vihata niin syvästi kuin *ne kapinassa olleet* toisiaan vihasi kuolemaansa asti eivät koskaan antaneet anteeksi toisilleen... vaikka meidän *isä kyllä puheli* että niin kuin meidän lasten on hyväksyttävä *toisenlainen politiikka joka on temokraattinen ja tasapuolinen*. *Kuuntelin niitä juttuja pienenä poikana ja ajattelin että miksi ihmiset on noin julmia* en oikein ymmärtänyt mistä oli kysymys nyt kyllä ymmärrän, mutta monesti olen ajatellut että mitenkä ne ihmiset jakso sen sorron kauden elää ja pitää uskoa että huomina koittaa parempana sillä muuten kuin uskomalla parempaan *ei jaksais sellaista mitä sen kapinan jälkeen tapahtui*. (SKS KRA POL 1575. 2007.)

*This is another thing that took place in the aftermath of the Civil War that I heard as a young boy. That same fellow Aaro, who transported the prisoners to the sand pit and executed them. And it seemed that the kangaroo court condemned even the innocent, people who had never taken part in any kind of political activity, and in 1918 not many of those living in the forest villages even had any idea about politics. But when the mania was going strong, the hatred was so deep that they had to kill, and they killed everyone they could catch. And this fellow Aaro was one of the greatest pursuers. And he was a big ugly man, too. Everything about the man made him fit to be the devil's mate, and what he did was dreadful, and he also had a friend who was like him a well-off farmer. This fellow was called Horror-Heikki. And so it happened that Aaro was boozing it up at our village café and bragging, "There hasn't been much resistance even though I have forcibly removed those people and put them under the ground." In his drunken state he boasted that "surely the politics of the town of Lapua would prevail, that it's the kind of politics that neither the commies nor the leftists will be celebrating.*

We're gonna turn up the heat so much that it'll take five thousand years before they dare even to take a proper breath, never mind say that we're leftists and we want this and we want that." At that instant a man got up with lightning speed from one of the tables and pulled out his razor and slashed Aaro's throat from ear to ear deep into the flesh but without cutting the windpipe and at the same time pulled the skin to cover his face. And he sauntered out into the autumn night like a phantom. After that nobody ever saw him or found out who this man was. And on that same autumn night Aaro's friend, Horror-Heikki, was found burnt to a crisp on the drying house stove as though he'd fallen from the rafters while drying rye. Aaro recovered from the gash after a year in a hospital bed and the doctor sewed up the cut that was really huge from ear to ear. It was visible until Aaro's dying day and everyone could see the wound of justice inflicted by the angel of doom and by the time Aaro had become an old man many had had the chance to see the cut and seeing it *often prompted discussions about politics and society*. A scar like that *got people thinking* that that kind of *thing can't be accepted*, something else must be done instead of killing each other and hating so deeply that *those who had been in the uprising* hated each other until their dying day and never forgave each other, even though *our father certainly said* that we children have to accept *other political views, which is democratic and equal*. *I listened to those stories as a young boy and I wondered why people were so cruel*. I didn't really understand what it was all about though I do now, but I have often wondered how people had the strength to live through that oppression and keep believing that tomorrow would be better otherwise without believing in a better tomorrow *no one could have endured what took place after that revolt*.

At the beginning, the narrator introduces the cultural context of the historical narrative (the aftermath of the Civil War). After that, he refers to past deeds committed by the executor called Aaro. The narrator has already informed the reader that this man had been their neighbour and had taken the narrator's father to prison. Significantly, the description of the era, the events and the protagonists create categories that summon up impressions of good and evil, right and wrong, inclusion and exclusion. (See also Potter 1996: 111.) In this oral history text, it is possible to see Portelli's (1997) breakdown of narrative levels into concurrent and overlapping ones (*institutional, collective and personal*). According to his history-telling model, the institutional level refers to ideologies and politics (the Reds and Whites in the example), whereas the collective level deals with the life of the community (the local people believed in tomorrow and had the strength to live through the oppression); correspondingly, the personal level encompasses the home and private/family life (his own memories and thoughts as a child).

Although war history and the tacit knowledge conveyed through political traditions become rooted in individual memory, a narrated experience of the wider society strengthens the collective memory, explains political activity and power relations, and provides information on political groups and key historical events (see Andrews 2007: 8–9). The traditions related to politics can be seen to reflect not only thought at the individual level but also at the collective level (popular thought related to politics), in which ideas, knowledge, beliefs, expectations, suspicions and strivings are expressed

and in which guidance for action is given. The tragic consequences of this particular narrative take place at this level. The narrator obviously wants his audience to follow and understand his story: he provides the audience with a backdrop for the story and also shares his own experience of hearing it. The sentence introducing the protagonist points to the violent deeds described earlier by the narrator. There is a strong image of opposing powers at the institutional level: ideologies were harnessed for the purpose of war, thus making senseless deaths possible. The beginning of the Horror-Heikki narrative captures the point of view of people who were not politically active.

Thereafter, the narrative offers an explanation for the brutality, for the powerful and destructive emotions connected to the political division led to a frenzy of violence. At this point, the style of the text approaches a typical, more conventional genre: the description of the protagonist aligns him with the devil. The narrator's voice remains at the surface all the time. He prepares the readers for yet another twist in the plot by introducing the figure of Horror-Heikki. Here the narrative does not explicitly bring up the subject of politics, but it hints at the economic differences between the Civil War's opposing sides: the Reds, who were generally poor, and the Whites, who were usually rather affluent. The next episode takes place in a social setting at the collective (community) level. The reader is presented with a common Finnish stereotype, a fellow who has had too much to drink and subsequently starts to boast. Now the political theme is included in the narrative as Aaro's monologue. By referring to the politics of the town of Lapua, he points to the right-wing politics and political persecution in the early 1930s (the Lapua movement). His reference is an obvious part of political history in Finland. And thus the ensuing severe and brutal reaction of an unknown man makes sense to anyone who strongly identifies with left-wing politics. The narrative at this point virtually transforms into a ghost story. The death of Horror-Heikki invites speculation. Though presented as a possible accident, the timing (the same night) suggests that his demise was more than a coincidence. The voice of the narrator affirms this preconception: "In the old days people said that it was the angel of doom that was going about and setting things right." With this sentence, the narrator invokes "the voice of tradition", a typical feature in oral performances (Lauhakangas 2004). From the respondent's perspective, the most meaningful part of the narrative is yet to come: how this event affected the local community and sparked political discussion. Soon after the collective impact, he shifts his focus to private memories of political socialisation in the context of his family, thus giving us a glimpse of a young boy's perspective on his father's attempt to pass on his ideological views to his children.

At this stage the narrative has already begun to move towards the narrator's assessment: an explanation to the reader about the narrative's value. Drawing on Aaro's story, the memoirist offers a textual account of a social ideology intolerable to him. Then, using his father's voice, he presents democracy and equality as a solution to the social and political problems of the past. The narrator and his father share common narrative goals, and these goals emerge clearly not only in the context of a single family but



also in that of the nation as a whole. The narrative also beckons readers to listen to and interpret the experience of Aaro, the neighbour pulled into the cycle of violence. In light of today's knowledge of and perspectives on the past, modern readers can at least appreciate Aaro's dilemma and his altered role in the local community. After all, his story is far from exceptional: numerous young men were drawn into the activities of each side, Whites or Reds. Because brutality tends to pervade most narratives of war, the breakdown of solidarity among neighbours and acts of violence against former acquaintances – or at least such potential betrayals – leaves few of us surprised.

The narrative presents yet a third and a fourth perspective on the war and its aftermath: *the uncomprehending young boy* who listens to the narratives and *the adult man* weighing and interpreting the events as he puts them to paper. The child's sense of alarm and horror at such human cruelty is distilled over time, allowing the adult to come to terms with the past. In fact, the adult assures his reader that he understands the background to the events. Resolutely refusing to remain captive to a negative image of history, he underlines the human capacity to survive in times of oppression. Moreover, the narrative indirectly carries its protagonists into the future and thus releases them from the past; ultimately, faith in the future appears as a fundamental strategy for survival.

As mentioned earlier, oral history – at least in its most classical form – has tended to focus on testimonial accounts of particular events, often dramatic, which took place at a particular moment in history. Yet, as in the previous example, oral history can also be seen as a written document revealing dramatic changes in society. It is not known whether the local people retold and collectively interpreted the stories about Horror-Heikki. In my view, the crux of this story is situated in the mental world, in the process that gave form to the respondent's understanding of the political meanings at play during the Civil War in Finland in 1918. The most striking detail in the story is the fact that the narrator's father and Aaro, the man who had served as an executioner and appeared in both the first and the second story, had lived in the same village for decades after the war was over. Though the event in question had purportedly occurred some twenty years before his birth, the narrator's construction of the narrative through lines of dialogue suggests that it was told time and time again within the family. Another key piece of background information is the marriage between the narrator's brother and the executioner's daughter, a nearly intolerable match to the narrator's father, who, like many others, could not let go of their memories of vicious enmity between Reds and Whites.

### *Individual Approaches to the Political Past*

As the follow-up to the narrative suggests, the narrator had listened to his parents' recollections of political history throughout his childhood. Because the narrator was born in 1940, we can assume that the events of the Civil War he relates had taken place some thirty years before he heard them; I reckon



the boy was about ten years old when he heard the family narratives – in other words, the tales were narrated at the end of the 1940s, or perhaps even later. The time that had elapsed since the actual events occurred may indeed have altered the way in which the parents narrativised their experiences. Each narrative has crystallised into an explanation, an element broken loose from a story of personal experience to become part of the tale of a polarised nation, a story also coloured by the Winter War and the Continuation War, which, incidentally, took place before the moment of narration. Interestingly, the respondent says nothing about these wars; he consciously chooses to zoom in on reflections by his childhood self, the person hearing about events experienced in 1918. Referring to the narratives presented in his text, he continues by putting all the levels together.

The text above offers new perspectives on how oral history data can shed light on the relationships between people and politics and also on approaches to the political past through the individual. Narrative traditions are used to comment on political history and to understand the experience of interpersonal conflicts. According to the historian Jorma Kalela (2011: 75), historical consciousness tends to be acquired through varying presentations of history rather than simply through the framework of official historical accounts. As Kalela sees it, *shared histories* (stories, other forms of folklore) convey knowledge about the past and often play a key role in shaping an impression of history. The narratives of war constitute part of the history culture that is – among other forms – represented orally and textually in our culture.

The case study presented in this article reveals the differing views between the agent situated in the 1910s and the person recollecting stories and writing them down in the 2000s. Nonetheless, the creator of the text in the role of transmitter of oral tradition in writing has the potential to harness the feelings connected to politics at different temporal levels to be interpreted side by side. In addition to committing his father's experiences and stories to paper, the narrator condemns present-day European policies and elitism. In other words, as a genre, oral history texts do not concentrate only on memorising the past; writing also serves as a channel for airing opinions concerning the present day. In fact, the respondent's text begins with an account of his sense of disappointment, in which the dialogue of the recent past is built on the perspectives of two sides, the citizens collectively living under the pressure to Europeanise and the politicians together with the economic experts.

This case study reveals that the events and climate of 1918 are not merely part of the remote and hazy past. Indeed, the year 1918 constitutes a key theme in the responses to the politically themed collection even though there was no mention of the Civil War in the collection campaign brochure. This example illustrates how the political history of the local milieu combined with the course of an individual's life are in a meaningful dialogue in archived oral history texts from the point of view of the narrators and their descendants. The past infuses the present as long as the narratives continue to be told. The Red–White division of the local community or neighbourhood signified a striking transformation in the Finnish mental

landscape – a change that required a shared history by the Reds in the same way as it required one by the Whites, and at the general level, explanations and interpretations (cf. Kalela 2011).

The individual who writes to the archive about his/her political memories simultaneously creates an image of popular thought and cultural explanations, just as the story above referred to the collective interpretation of the older and past generations. These representations can, in general, be called representations of shared histories (Kalela 2011: 68) as they do not purport to present history as such, but rather interpretations of it and instructions of what to remember and how to remember, what to leave aside and what to forget. This brings us to the fact that the picture is never finished and complete because each generation brings new insights to oral history, each individual in his/her generation locates himself/herself within power and societal processes, thus producing a unique narrative about the past and contemporary history that is not culturally or politically neutral (see also Andrews 2007: 8; Hamilton & Shopes 2008: 4).

### *Closing Remarks*

In this article, I have discussed whether the modern practice of writing to the Folklore Archives constitutes a genre of oral history, and if so, on what grounds. There are many reasons for the fact that the requirements concerning the applied umbrella term (oral history) are fulfilled even when the Archives serve as a channel for narration. First, the impact of the collecting history and classification of the reminiscences at the Folklore Archives has created a foundation for the development of methodology beneficial to international oral history research. Second, the archive texts are narrative sources; they transmit past interpretations and personal testimonies of people in various narrative styles. As physical documents in the archives, they produce rich and complex source materials for oral historians or researchers (from various disciplines) using oral history theory. However, my view is that if we use oral history text as an umbrella term for written memoirs sent to the Folklore Archives collection campaigns, we ought to look at such writings *as a combination of various genres*. After all, they often consist of narratives, proverbs, autobiographical description, documentation of and giving meanings to oral communication, interpretations of the past based on vernacular history (see Kalela 2012) and history-telling (often reflecting sensory memory) as well as the expression of a narrator's opinions and views on present-day culture.<sup>8</sup> With these components at his/her disposal, the writing narrator tries to make sense of the past and its relationship to the present.

Within these large frames, writing narrators have the liberty to choose the style(s) and form(s) of the textual items they create. In principle, the final product is nonetheless just as genre-specifically predictable or unpredictable as a recording created in a face-to-face interview. Whether they share their memories in person or do so by writing to the archives, individuals

invariably take advantage of the tradition, linguistic registers and narrative strategies in their oral/textual performances to process past events and the reality around them.

Besides its potential for giving voice to individual experience, the real significance of oral history resides in its inherent capacity for opening up a wider field of cultural meanings. The methodology developed in oral history research can be applied by cultural researchers working with archival data, but each researcher names the written texts of reminiscence in accordance with his/her own scholarly approach. While oral history researchers usually concentrate on the themes and topics dealt with in the data, at the same time they are also interested in the particular characteristics of oral history and how it is constructed. The narrative richness and depth realised in long written responses invite researchers to investigate narrative meanings and make interpretations of culture.

As we have seen in the case study discussed in this article, the individual responding to the archive may embed stories that carry both personal meaning and societal significance to complement war history in his/her response. In this way oral history texts inform us of the kinds of oral narratives concerning past chapters in (political) history that have been produced within the community as well as how the listeners of the narrative have experienced – or continue to experience – them as they actively remember the events at the moment of writing. To summarise, the writings sent to archives can be seen as a complex genre, although with its own particular distinctions. My suggestion is that we may seek a compromise today by simply regarding texts sent to archive campaigns under the umbrella term *oral history texts*, which encompasses a variety of reminiscences and folklore in different forms.

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## NOTES

- 1 While British archivists have primarily conducted oral history interviews within their own communities through mass observation (see Sheridan *et al.* 2000), their counterparts in Finland, as well as those in Sweden, Norway and Estonia, have organised written collection campaigns (see among others Bohman 1986; Gullestad 1986; see also Hinrikus & Köresaar 2004a for the corresponding term in Estonia, *pärimuslik ajalugu* [‘oral popular history’]). In Finland, there is also great interest in oral history interviews. One of my present studies deals with the ex-MPs’ oral history interviews stored in the Archives of Veteran MPs’ Oral History at the Library of the Parliament.
- 2 See further: *Politiikkaa ja valtapeliä*: <http://neba.finlit.fi/kra/keruut/politiikka.htm> (in Finnish) *Politics and Power Games*: <http://www.helsinki.fi/sukupuoalentutkimus/aanioikeus/en/articles/powergames.htm> (in English)
- 3 See Pentikäinen 1971; Siikala 1984; Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1988.
- 4 Summaries are available in English, e.g. see Peltonen 2006; Fingerroos 2010.
- 5 Folklore Archives instructions: <http://www.finlit.fi/fi/arkisto-ja-kirjastopalvelut/hankinta-ja-kokoelmapolitiikka/luovutukset/arkistoaineiston-luovutus-ja#.VurLg0ZK9rI>
- 6 See e.g. Peltonen 2006 on reader images and argumentation; Pöysä 2011 on temporality; Latvala 2005 on semantic meta-functions, narrative patterns and shadow dialogue, Latvala & Laurén 2013 on close-reading the emotional level; Savolainen 2009 on reminiscence narratives; see also Savolainen, this volume.
- 7 As Taina Ukkonen (2006: 186–189) and Outi Fingerroos and Riina Haanpää (2006: 38–39) have stated, researchers today analyse oral history materials differently depending on their epistemological viewpoint. Roughly speaking, oral history researchers can be divided into two groups: those who seek to accurately clarify and represent events of the past and those who conduct interpretive oral history research, regarding recollection as a process and seeing images of the past as negotiable constructions and acknowledging people’s varying views. In Finland, folklorists are interested in both perspectives and their narrative strategies but the emphasis has usually been on interpretative research, with recognition of the relationship between the past and the present. (See also Ukkonen 2006: 189.)
- 8 For more on this, see Latvala & Laurén 2013; see also Pink 2010 [2009] on “sensory ethnography”.

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Politiikkaa ja valtapeliä: <http://neba.finlit.fi/kra/keruut/politiikka.htm>.  
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## 17. The Reputation of a Genre

### Understanding the Changing Meaning of Rumor

A common feature of writing about rumor generally finds the author beginning with two observations. The first, apologetic in its tone, almost a disclaimer to the reader, is that rumors are incredibly difficult to define. The concept, we are told, is entirely too slippery, eluding the grasp of even the most seasoned or erudite researcher. The second observation is then a brief note on some of the everyday “common” usages of rumor; these commonsense meanings of rumor will vary, we are told, so that sometimes “rumor” is a synonym for “false” while other times it means “untrustworthy”, or perhaps is equivalent to “gossip”, for example. This variety adds to the complexity of studying rumor. It is implied that these things do not tell us anything *really* about rumor.

I suggest we linger and pause where other authors quickly shuffle on. As a genre of social communication, we can treat “rumor” as simply as these previous authors have described its everyday usage – a label attached to information in order to categorize it as distinct from other classes of information. In this sense, what is to be studied is not any independent, universal property of rumor, if one can be even said to exist. Nor is it necessarily the psychological needs that rumor serves. Rather I propose to examine why and by whom the concept of rumor has been used to categorize items of information. This approach to the study of rumor examines the meaning of the concept of rumor for a particular group (and variations within and between groups), in what contexts it is deployed, by whom, and with what effect. In this paper, then, I take a slightly different route from the majority of sociologically or psychologically inclined rumor researchers. In paying attention to the difficulties often faced in the study of rumor we arrive at a much simpler understanding of rumor – but one that potentially yields more fruitful results.

In trying to explain what work rumor does, psychologists believe it expresses or alleviates internal emotional tensions while sociologists look at rumor as a collective form of sensemaking. Yet the manner in which rumor is defined often fails to hold up to scrutiny. The conundrum facing both approaches is that they yield a mismatch between the concept of rumor held by the researcher and that of the group being studied. Here, then, I want to introduce to this scholarly tradition the notion that the concept of rumor

simply categorizes information. To label some part of social communication as “rumor” is to create a distinction between that and other categories of knowledge such as “news” or “gossip”.

This is not a particularly novel or groundbreaking claim – indeed, it is one noted in much of the literature that I rely on, although previous work in this field has failed to extend this idea or look at the implications of such an observation. It is also one that will be readily recognizable to folklore researchers. I will not rehash arguments for and against emic or etic approaches to genre studies as it is much more gracefully handled by other researchers in this volume (e.g. Kokkonen & Koskinen and Koski).

However, focusing on the categorization efforts of people we can too easily rely on studying the aesthetic or stylistic boundaries that delineate the genre schemes of academic researchers. This often masks the fact that genres are also sets of meanings and systems of orientations that bind people together in a community (Lena 2012). Genres are social products. They are not only the categorization work of individuals but of groups engaged in the production of socially shared meanings. As such, it is not only the social products of people that are genres, it is the work of academics that also becomes a genre. In taking a genealogical approach to the study of rumor, I find not only gaps in the social scientific approach to rumor as genre, but conversely that the *study of rumor* is a genre in itself and one inextricably linked to its legitimation through a framing of rumors as a social problem.

The paper is structured as follows. I begin with some of the ways rumor is distinguished from other genres of discourse such as gossip and contemporary legend. I then take a rather chronological approach to covering previous research, beginning from the work on rumor in the early twentieth century, predominantly by researchers working within psychopathology and behaviorism approaches. The major figures in this field, Gordon Allport and Leo Postman, are the focus of attention. We take a brief detour to look at how rumor was conceived of in the United States during World War II. I argue that the context in which rumor was studied during this period has had a profound effect on the subsequent direction of rumor research. We then contrast this vein of research with that of the sociologist Tamotsu Shibutani, the next most influential thinker on rumor. After examining his writing on rumor as a form of collective sensemaking we touch on the work of more recent scholars who see rumor as a tool to understand variations in plausibility and credibility within distinct communities. Throughout this examination we highlight some of the gaps and flaws in rumor research. We attempt to mitigate these gaps in the final section which looks at recent work in the sociology of cognition and culture to understand how our approach to rumor may work and examine possible applications of such research.

### *Distinguishing Rumor*

Rumor researchers have a longstanding problem with preparing an adequate definition of rumor. It is most often defined by what it is not, commonly being contrasted with other “discourse genres” (van Dijk 1985) such as

gossip, contemporary (urban) legend, or conspiracy theories. One finds the distinctions between these are often blurry. The same piece of data might be alternatively described as rumor, legend, and so on by different researchers. This is notwithstanding the problems faced by experimental research into rumor where respondents often give, to the frustration of the researcher, examples of “gossip” instead of “rumor” (DiFonzo & Bordia 2007). Some researchers note that distinctions between these different discourse genres are meaningless to the narrators, i.e. in the emic level. Especially in the case of rumor and contemporary legend, there is practically no distinction at all. (Turner 1987; Kapferer 1990; Fine 1992; Turner 1993; Fine & Turner 2001; Fine & Ellis 2010.)

In the academic literature, rumors are often distinguished from contemporary legend or gossip by: (1) their content: rumors are about topics of general concern whereas gossip is about individuals of interest within the confines of the strong ties of a social network; (2) narrative structure: rumors are said to lack a narrative structure as opposed to contemporary legend (DiFonzo & Bordia 2007);<sup>1</sup> (3) function: rumor is a form of collective or individual sensemaking and can serve the purpose of alleviating internal anxiety due to ambiguity, whereas gossip functions as a form of social grooming (Gluckman 1963; 1968; Dunbar 1996), while contemporary legend serves the purpose of conveying morals or to speak to the underlying concerns of a community (Mullen 1972; Heath *et al.* 2001; Fine & Ellis 2010).<sup>2</sup>

Rumor research is also often seen to differ from that of folklore and contemporary legend with its emphasis on examining either the psychological underpinnings for why rumor is believed and/or disseminated, or its relation to group processes and social structure. Rumor researchers might see folklore and legend researchers as more interested in collecting “infinitely varying narrative texts” (Fine & Ellis 2010: 4) in order to engage in various forms of structuralist or generic analyses. Yet rumor research typically exhibits similar behavior. One comes across a variety of attempts – implicit or explicit – that categorize various subgenres of rumor; these vary based on institutional context (financial rumors, corporate rumors, etc.) and on the topic or target of the rumor (racial rumors or rumors of an out-group). One of the more well-known attempts at classifying various sub-categories of rumor was Robert H. Knapp, a World War II era rumor and rumor control researcher at Harvard, who devised a scheme classifying rumors based on the theme expressed: pipe-dream rumors (hopeful rumors), bogie-rumors (negative rumors), and wedge-driving (rumors about another group) (Knapp 1944). I examine this attempt later in the paper.<sup>3</sup>

Research varies, in addition, between examining rumor as a *process* or as a *product* (Fine & Rosnow 1976). Often it attempts to do both. Rumor is seen as a product – a discrete item of information – or as a process (either individually or collectively) to deal with the social environment. Not surprisingly, answers and methods are dependent on which academic domain the researcher situates themselves in. To that end, psychologists of various hues find rumor to either express internal emotional states (Allport & Postman 1947; Prasad 1950; Jung 1964) or as a pathological expression

of some deviant tendencies (Hart 1916). Those of a more sociological bent view rumor as being intimately tied with group processes, social structure, or identity (Shibutani 1966; Fine 1992).

In both cases, however, one finds there is often a strong normative component to the research; we highlight some of these in the next section. The context in which researchers study rumor has a profound effect both on how it is conceptualized and studied, and what the goals of such research are. For example, World War II era research in the US was shaped by the perceived need by the government to control information and to minimize rumors, viewing them as detrimental to morale (Knapp 1944; Allport & Postman 1947; Rosnow 1991; Faye 2007). On the other hand, research during the 1960s – again in the US – often viewed rumors as having a causal effect of varying strength on racial unrest and riots (Klapp 1972; Knopf 1975; 2006). More recent rumor research, often in which the boundary with “contemporary legend” is fuzzy, views rumor in the context of group responses to changes brought about by modernity or expressing group identity in relation to the wider social structure (Kapferer 1990; Fine 1992; Turner 1993; Maines 1999). One common theme, however, between all of these periods is the study of rumor within the context of post-disaster situations (Prasad 1935; 1950; Sinha 1952; Danzig 1958; Tsuganesawa 1996).

### *Early Rumor Research: Psychological Approach to the Study of Rumor*

Early work on rumor takes as its starting point that rumor is, at worst, outright falsehood and, at best, distorted or exaggerated items of communication (Hart 1916; Prasad 1935). Such an understanding of rumor essentially directed these early studies to examine three interrelated questions: (1) how do these falsehoods or distortions arise; (2) why do people believe such things; and (3) why do they then communicate them to others.

This focus on distortion led experiments using methods originally devised to test distortion in testimony and memory (Stern 1902; 1938; Bartlett 1932). This “serial reproduction” technique is essentially a version of the game “whispers” and entails a message being communicated in a controlled setting from individual to individual and tracking changes in the message as it travels. The most well-known users of this method are Allport and Postman, the leading researchers on rumor and rumor control in the US during World War II; their book *The Psychology of Rumors* is the most cited in the field. Analyzing the results from their serial transmission studies, Allport and Postman surmise that because of cognitive limitations in memory rumors undergo three possible changes as they spread: leveling, sharpening, and assimilation (Allport & Postman 1947). The consequences of this are that as rumors spread some details are omitted, some are accentuated, and gaps in information are filled or added in.

What is striking about these studies, besides their artificiality, is the rather parsimonious view of human communication. While there is no

evidence that Allport and Postman were aware of the research at the time, their writing fits closely with the highly influential model of communication put forward by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (1964), later modified by David K. Berlo as the Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) model (1960). In this model of human communication, a sender sends a message along a channel to a receiver. Any kind of “noise” or disruption on the channel will interfere with the ability of the receiver to understand the message sent, akin to the way a telephone system works (Corman *et al.* 2008). Coming from information theory and their work on radar systems this model has some merits but translated into a framework for human communication it ignores the active agency of the receiver in interpreting the message sent. This passivity is evident in Allport and Postman’s serial transmission studies which posit simply that a hearer receives a message in its entirety from a sender, and because of cognitive limitations on memory (amongst other things) the message gets distorted.

This view of human communication assumes that people begin from a starting point of truth which is then distorted as it is communicated amongst the masses and, importantly, outside of official/authoritative media channels (Kapferer 1990). This belies the fact that in many cases people work *towards* the truth, not away from it.<sup>4</sup> Conceiving of and measuring rumor in this way also “implies the existence of some objective standard from which deviations can be measured” (Shibutani 1966: 7). While Allport and Postman (1947: 5) postulate that rumors are part of peoples’ “effort after meaning” it appears that, in their view, it is a rather passive search.

Theodore Caplow (1947: 298) argues that Allport and Postman’s reliance on serial transmission studies leads to a view of rumor as “a rather aberrant form of communication and to focus attention only on its sweeping unreliability.” While it is easy to criticize Allport and Postman’s methods – virtually unused in contemporary rumor study – their concept of rumor remains extremely influential and became the basis for much of the subsequent conceptualizations of rumor (Rosnow & Fine 1976; Rosnow 1991; DiFonzo & Bordia 2007). Allport and Postman (1947: ix) define rumor as “a specific (or topical) proposition for belief, passed along from person to person, usually with secure standards of evidence being present.”

Rumor, then, is not necessarily true or false. Rather, the information is lacking the normal standards of evidence that one would associate with the news or official information. In this sense, there is nothing implied in the concept that rumors are inherently false; such a detail is also prevalent in later rumor concepts (Fine & Rosnow 1976; Kapferer 1990). This differs from earlier publications which quite openly stated that rumors were falsehoods. The hope of Allport and Postman was (and presumably still is) that this epistemologically neutral view of rumor would free rumor research from simply being an exercise in fact-checking and would allow the researcher to explore the underlying dynamics of rumor.

In practice, however, what Allport and Postman studied were items of communication that were either wholly or partially false (that is, distorted or exaggerated). This is not a problem unique to Allport and Postman. Indeed, if one analyzes the data used in rumor research (i.e. the “rumors”) one finds



that invariably the rumor is an example of a wholly or partially false story or communication circulating within a community.

Similarly, Shibutani objects to Allport and Postman's definition of rumor as "unverified information", noting that there is a whole range of information people use everyday to make decisions that "cannot meet high standards of verifications" (Shibutani 1966: 94) but that we do not call rumor. I return to this dilemma later in the paper.

While Allport and Postman detail the way in which distortion can occur (especially in word of mouth communication) this still does not tell us why rumors are believed or spread. Again, this comes down to whether the research is taking a psychological, social psychological or sociological approach to the study of rumor.

Psychology researchers view rumor both as an "expression of individual states of mind" (Rosnow & Fine 1976: 51) and as "serving important emotional ends (Allport & Postman 1947: ix). In the case of the former, rumor content reflects internal states of mind (fear, hope, hatred) while for the latter rumor serves as a way of reducing psychological pressure brought about by experiencing ambiguity (Allport & Postman) or cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962). Belief in false information comes about because under certain situations (crisis, disaster) people's ability to use their critical faculties are lowered, creating "an attitude which made them think that nothing was too strange and too extraordinary to happen" (Prasad 1935: 10). Yet while all of these factors explain why rumor may have the content it does, or why people may believe them, it still does not explain why people spread rumors.

Knapp (1944: 34) identifies five psychological reasons for why people spread rumor: (1) exhibitionism, that is, someone spreading rumors to make themselves feel important; (2) helping others via sharing information; (3) giving "reassurance and emotional support" to people in our social circle; (4) expressing hostility towards members of an out-group; and (5) due to the "projection of subjective conflicts", where rumor is a cathartic attempt to express suppressed emotions (this is close to Jung's (1964) explanation for rumor).

In addition to these apparently objective bases for rumor belief and diffusion there are other early rumor researchers who see rumor as a far more deviant and malicious act. Rumors, arise due to pathological processes at work or deficiencies in moral character.

Bernard Hart (1916: 20), writing at the end of World War I, argues that people who spread rumors have "the desire to figure as a person of distinction, to occupy the centre of the stage, and to have the eyes and ears of our neighbours directed admiringly at us." Other writers see it more as akin to a defect in character; rumors are spread by people who gain "perverted satisfactions [...] from exaggerating or spreading false reports" (Schmeidler & Allport 1944: 144).

Another psychiatrist during World War II writes that rumor are "spread by malicious or disgruntled citizens, or even by innocent dupes who like the childlike feelings of superiority derived from imparting supposed secrets" (Masserman 1946: 231). A World War II era study by the US

National Research Council claims: “the most persistent rumor-mongers [...] are those that feel emotionally insecure and are not well adjusted to life. These individuals are emotionally upset more easily and also lack and need prestige” (quoted in Shibutani 1944: 22).

If rumors are false, then one is not only deceiving oneself in believing them but deceiving others in spreading them. This deception causes people to make bad decisions – the implication being if they had “correct” information they would not have made those poor choices. Such deceptions take advantage of the psychological weakness of particular individuals or inflame the passions of the (illogical and dangerous) crowd mind (Trotter 1908; 1916). These underlying notions, or biases, toward rumor means that the concept was typically – and still often is – associated with riots and decreasing levels of trust between social groups (Danzig 1958; Chicago Commission on Relations 1968; Musambachime 1988; Bubandt 2000; 2008; Mackey 2001; Kirsch 2002; Knopf 2006).

### *World War II and the Study of Rumor*

This negative view of rumors and the problems they cause was especially prevalent in the US during World War II, as some of the above quotations have illustrated. Rumors were thought to decrease trust with the government and reduce morale. The government needed the acquiescence of the public to make economic sacrifices and participate in large-scale government programs. Rumors at the time were seen as an impediment to this. Knapp (1944: 22) writes, “wartime rumors not only impair morale and confidence, but are in many instances the deliberate weapon of enemy propaganda.” Floyd H. Allport and Milton Lepkin (1945: 3) in their analysis of certain rumors in circulation during World War II state that rumors “created [...] a genuine problem for the administration of the rationing program and for the solidarity of the country in its war effort.”

Here we see that the study of rumor can also be the study of social control. There was a prevailing belief during wartime that the diffusion of rumor both represented a lack of social control and conformity, but also would cause people to not follow directions from the state. Indeed, this concern with conformity and control led to the creation of a variety of organizations tasked with collecting rumor in order to facilitate rumor control. As rumors were seen as false information or mistaken beliefs in circulation a common method of rumor control was via the “refutations of false assertions” (Allport & Lepkin 1945: 3).

Knapp’s writing on rumor control is indicative of prevailing attitudes in some quarters towards rumor during World War II. His six sets of rules highlight the importance of the context of social control and conformity in understanding rumor research. Rumors are seen to be anything deemed explicitly false or anti-state. The state here is seen as the final arbiter on truth and reality. As such, Knapp (1944: 35–36) suggests that rumors can be suppressed through: (1) “Good faith in the regular media of

communication”; (2) “Maximal confidence in leaders” (rumors of authority figures were particularly troubling); (3) “Issue as much as news as possible, as quickly as possible”; (4) Making information as accessible as possible; (5) “Campaign deliberately against rumor mongering”; (6) “Prevent idleness, monotony, and personal disorganization.” Here we can discern some of the meaning of rumor: it arises out of a lack of trust in media and/or authority figures, out of a lack of information, and because people are “idle”.

A headline from the November 22, 1942 issue of the *Daily Boston Globe* highlights the normative meaning of rumor during World War II in the United States: “Rumor Study Shows Baseless, Vicious Stories Give Aid to Enemy by Confusing the Public.” The modern study of rumor, shaped heavily by the work of Allport and Postman, along with Robert Knapp, was not merely a “scientific” study to explain rumor, but instead a research project designed to improve rumor control.

The US government (amongst others) instituted a number of campaigns to create norms against the spreading of “rumors” (however defined). It is not clear how successful they were, given the prevalence of rumors noted by researchers during the war. However, Allport and Lepkin (1945), discussing difficulties in collecting rumors in circulation, surmise that people were hesitant to share rumors with researchers because of the government campaign against rumors.

What is interesting about the public campaign of rumor control – with public admonitions that “loose lips sink ships” and the like – is the implicit meaning that rumors, in fact, can be *true*. First, that they may accurately reflect some event or planned events; secondly that they may accurately reflect collective understandings or emotions. Caplow (1947: 298), writing about rumors in the military, claims that “Rumors do undoubtedly threaten military secrecy insofar as they may contain the gist of military secrets”. That is, communication labeled as rumor is a threat to an organization because they are often true.

I highlight the way in which rumor was conceived of within the context of World War II in order to show how the concerns of the state – controlling rumor – informed the work of those conducting rumor research which formed the core of future studies on rumor. Indeed, the point of rumor research during that time was to improve rumor control. The context in which rumor was conducted cannot be divorced from the research itself and the goals towards which the research was directed.

### *Sociological Approaches to Rumor*

After Allport and Postman the next most influential rumor researcher is Tamotsu Shibutani. He drove rumor research in a much different direction from that of Allport and Postman, Knapp, and related psychological and behaviorist approaches. A second generation (*nisei*) Japanese-American, Shibutani grew up in Northern California. During World War II he was briefly interned before joining the US Army (Shay 2005). Shibutani actively

collected rumors in the Japanese-American community after the attack on Pearl Harbor, data that he used in his graduate work on rumors at the University of Chicago.

Shibutani's work opposes the behaviorist approach to rumor as entirely too individualized and overly mechanistic. For Shibutani, while not discounting individual-level processes at work, the group is central to the study of rumor. If a rumor is not communicated can it still be called a rumor? Beyond the passivity in people suggested by earlier approaches, for Shibutani (and to which we're inclined to agree) these psychological and behaviorist studies treat rumor as some sort of physical object with universal properties that exists "independently of human behavior – something that strikes the individual from some outside source, pass[es] through, [and] initiates response" (Shibutani 1948: 43). The problem for Shibutani is that in this sense rumor is too often treated as a "noun rather than a verb, it is seen as a thing having a separate existence" (Shibutani 1966: 8).

Shibutani, instead, sees rumor as a verb and not a noun. It is a process not a product. Rumor, for Shibutani, is when people experiencing ambiguity "attempt to construct a meaningful interpretation of it by pooling their intellectual resources. It might be called collective problem-solving" (Shibutani 1966: 17). Inspired by pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, this is a radically different view from Allport and Postman of human agency and human communication. It is one that does not involve falsehood, deception, and distortion but rather one that finds people adopting different roles in interaction with others in an attempt to construct meaningful interpretations of ambiguous events.

This is a far more collective view of rumor. In this formulation, it is neither a static product of internal emotional states nor distortion through cognitive limitations. Instead rumor is part of an active, collective process of people's attempts to understand the world around them.

While I find Shibutani's account of rumor perhaps more agreeable than most, Shibutani still ends up reifying the concept of rumor. Taken to a logical end we find that, essentially, all the communicative acts within the collective sensemaking process are "rumor". Yet this notion of rumor as action or process ignores the usage of rumor as a concept by the groups engaged in sensemaking – the very objects of study for Shibutani. As such, not all of the communicative acts would be called "rumor" – indeed, there are a host of other discourse genres and communicative responses people might use to categorize the variety of communication that goes on when people are trying to make sense of a situation. Shibutani's approach – implicitly – only finds that which is bizarre or, more often than not, deemed after the fact as false. Indeed, Shibutani's definition of rumor – as a collective enterprise where intellectual resources are pooled to come up with a definition of the situation – could also be applied to that which is normally contrasted with rumor, that is, with news itself.

This is a problem that typifies virtually all rumor research. The construction and foregrounding of the rumor category results in highlighting the seemingly bizarre, often outwardly false things, that people can believe. It gives "greater epistemological weight to the study of extraordinary

interactions” (Brekhus 1998: 46). In Shibutani’s case, his attempt to construct a concept of rumor as the product of collective sensemaking serves to mark this act as one that, by its very nature, produces outcomes that are labeled “rumor”. Yet in doing so, Shibutani elides the fact that the bulk of communicative interactions in a collective sensemaking process are ones that participants themselves would not label as “rumor”, nor in many cases would researchers. In focusing on this particular foregrounded marked category it serves only to exoticize this particular aspect of communication, ignoring the very mundane and prosaic elements of sensemaking (Brekhus 1998).

In addition, the construction and foregrounding of rumor as a marked category, the crafting of distinct categories of rumor and news, has the effect of making the production of knowledge appear a lot more static and neat and tidy than it actually is (Adkins 1996). The distinction between rumor and news (and the lack of attention on any communication that is considered neither) often obliterates any similarities between the two categories.

The notion of ambiguity is shared by both Shibutani and Allport and Postman. Indeed, for Allport and Postman ambiguity is a key component of their “basic law of rumor” in which they hypothesize that “the amount of rumor in circulation will vary with the importance of the subject to the individuals concerned *times* the ambiguity of the evidence pertaining to the topic at issue” (Allport & Postman 1946–1947: 502). For Allport and Postman ambiguity causes emotional stress and tension which must be alleviated through rumor. Shibutani does not discount these individual-level emotional stresses, but he views ambiguity as a situation where people actively work together to reduce that ambiguity via creating meaningful interpretations. They work towards making sense of things. In both Shibutani and Allport and Postman’s formulations, however, ambiguity is a rather undefined concept. Here we would interpret both their views on ambiguity as reflecting what the sociologist Sandra Ball-Rokeach (1973: 378) terms pervasive ambiguity in which “there is insufficient information to construct a definition of a situation.” This differs from “focused ambiguity” which is defined by a need to find a solution to a well-bounded problem.

### *Rumors, Plausibility, and Credibility*

While ambiguity is quite central to Shibutani and Allport and Postman’s view of rumor, for other researchers it is far less central. For these rumor researchers the persistence and circulation of some rumors cannot simply be explained by either (ambiguous) notions of ambiguity or due to individual psychological states. Instead, rumors are “truth claims” about the world; the circulation of such claims implies a certain level of belief amongst the community in which the claims persist (Fine & Ellis 2010). In this sense the circulation of rumors can tell us about levels of plausibility and credibility within a community. Credibility generally refers to the source of information, whereas plausibility is related to whether a claim is believed to be true.

This approach can be quite fruitful and researchers working within it attempt to map out the contours of belief in a community of speakers.

Zerubavel (1997: 12) would call these “thought communities” or “cognitive subcultures” – although in the United States the more salient lenses are of race and identity.

A number of works find similar stories circulating in distinct communities albeit with the target of the story altered. For example, the same story may circulate within two separate racial groups of someone meeting a violent end, with the perpetrator a member of the different group (Fine & Turner 2001). Other analyses find particular claims circulating in distinct communities that are believed as implausible in other communities (generally by their lack of circulation) (Turner 1993). David Maines (1999) calls these “racialized narrative structures.” Analyzing rumors in this sense, one focuses on the content of the story to gauge its plausibility. The benefits of this analysis are that it forces the researcher to think about the context of the narrative within the broader social structure, rather than as a product of individual processes. Similarly, it focuses Shibutani’s assertion of collective sensemaking to one in which the outcomes are dependent on social influences; while collective sensemaking may be common to all groups, the outcomes of such efforts are not.

An excellent example of this is Gary Alan Fine’s “folklore diamond model”. This is a framework that attempts to explain the production of rumor and contemporary legend, and hence understand the boundaries of plausibility and credibility in a community. The folklore diamond model consists of three inputs to explain rumor content: (1) social structure; (2) personal imperatives; and (3) performance dynamics. The combination of these factors, for Fine, influences the content of narratives circulating within a community. (Fine 1992; Fine & Turner 2001.)

The issue with research of this type, however, can be an unreflexive acceptance of what is “rumor”. In these cases, rumors are stories which either the researcher or the majority believe to be false and/or peculiar. It is not clear why some stories are chosen as rumor and others are not and it only serves to study seemingly abnormal or atypical stories.

Rumor research working within a behaviorist framework and/or focusing on the truth value of the claims tends to focus on the communication divorced from those actually doing the communication or the context in which it takes place. Sociological work that views rumor as a causal factor in riots or violent collective behavior, for example, tends to fall into the same trap. The problem when communication gets removed from those engaged in it, where the communication alone is thought to have a negative impact, is that policy (and policy-funded research) is too often directed towards rumor control rather than examining *why* the communication was plausible to the community in which it circulated in the first place.

### *Context and Rumor*

So where are we at the moment? Early rumor research tends to view communication in a parsimonious and mechanistic fashion. Rumors are



falsehoods that have the effect of deceiving those who believe them. These falsehoods have a negative effect on communal relations or between those of the state and its citizens. Rumors are thus seen as being the product of pathological defects, poor moral character or, at best, the result of distortion resulting from cognitive limitations on memory and recall.

The negative view of rumors during World War II and concerns by the state about information and belief and morale drove much of the early rumor research. As such Allport and Postman mixed experimental studies with collecting rumors as part of rumor control efforts. They devised what they thought was a neutral, testable concept of rumor. The benefits, in some ways, was that this concept was supposed to be divorced from the varieties of meaning that rumor can have amongst different communities (something that makes collecting rumors difficult). The drawback, as Shibutani emphasizes, is too broad a concept; there are, in fact, many types of information we believe and make decisions based on that are technically “unverified” yet are not called rumor.

As I noted in the introduction, and in the criticisms of Knapp’s research, rumor can have different or multiple meanings depending on the community using that term or based on context. Fine and Patricia A. Turner (2001: 18) write that “Like many concepts used by the general public, however, rumor has multiple meanings.” The contextual nature of rumor means that the same item of information may be categorized as “rumor”, “gossip”, or “news” (or not even categorized at all). Ralph L. Rosnow (1998: 14) writes that rumor is “defined by the context in which it circulates.” That is, “Whether or not a communication were called rumor would depend on who was saying what to whom” (Rosnow 1998: 14). Here Rosnow asserts that labeling some part of communication as “rumor” or not is dependent on the level of knowledge that someone may have about the communication; that is, whether they take it to be true or not. But whether something is called “rumor” or not is also dependent on the meaning of “rumor” to the individuals involved in the communication. The importance of context is brought up by Shibutani, criticizing the thematic content analysis of researchers like Knapp. Shibutani writes,

A rumor with the same content may be the source of fear for one person and a source of hope for another. A classification such as that attempted by Knapp involves the assumption that a given rumor has an effect which is generic in the rumor itself [...] (Shibutani 1944: 23.)

These variations in context are due to variations in the meaning of the concept of rumor. Luise White (1994: 75), in her study of rumors in Africa, writes along similar lines: “Not everyone hears or appreciates or understands gossip the same way – some gossip and some rumour may be unreliable to some people while sounding perfectly reasonable to others.”

Yet these multiple meanings – and the implications of such variations in meaning – are often left untouched by rumor researchers. In fact, this very problem raises important questions about previous attempts at more

“scientific” studies into rumor. This failure to “take account of changes in the interpretations of the objects of study” (Flyvbjerg 2001: 32) in fact has major implications for the study of rumor.

Essentially, the stability of the rumor concept – and hence the positivist study of rumor exemplified by Allport and Postman – is dependent on the researcher’s concept being an adequate fit for the object of study. But this object of study – rumor – is entirely dependent on the interpretations of both the researcher and the communities in which “rumor” spreads. The common fact that there is often a large variation between what the researcher defines as “rumor” and what a given community defines as “rumor” means that much rumor research will end up empty-handed. This is the conundrum of what Anthony Giddens (1982: 11–13) terms the “double hermeneutic” whereby the study of society and social actors in society “depends upon the social scientific observer accurately understanding the concepts whereby the actors’ conduct is oriented.”

A good example of the difficulties one has in studying a concept that is thoroughly dependent on both one’s own interpretation of it as well as those one is ostensibly studying are two early experiments conducted on labeling communication statements as rumor. Clifford Kirkpatrick (1932) and George H. Smith (1947) gave students a number of statements labeled as either fact, rumor, or were not labeled at all. Smith’s results showed that while labeling something as “fact” apparently increased believability in a story, labeling something as “rumor” did not reduce believability in the manner expected. Smith (1947: 87) writes “‘rumor’, itself, clearly does not have the automatic withdrawal value it might be supposed to have.” For Allport and Postman (1947: 189) this revealed that the public were “not yet rumor conscious” about what the label rumor really meant. Writing about the implications for rumor control, they argue that, “It means that one cannot kill rumors merely by tagging them” (Allport & Postman 1947: 191). Yet this also reveals that the *meaning* of rumor in the minds of the researcher and in those of the actors being observed can differ. For researchers in this study, the rumor concept was used to label statements that were false (and hence pernicious). For those participants in the study, rumor was a label used to categorize statements that might be true or might be false. It simply meant uncertainty.

The implications of this division between the researchers’ understanding of the concept and those of the participants have not been fully explored by rumor researchers. As Giddens observes it is a problem common to much social scientific research. In this case, “the study of society can only be as stable as the self-interpretations of the individuals studied” (Flyvbjerg 2001: 33). Rumor research fails to seriously account for the variations in the meaning of rumor and the disjunct between the researcher’s understanding of rumor and that of others. Indeed, one of the striking things about many academic concepts of rumor is that it would be difficult to use these concepts to find rumor. Common to virtually all Western accounts when we look at the data published is that “rumor” is information or stories that the researcher takes to be false.

### *Forging a New Approach to Rumor*

How, then, do we resolve these two problems, the variations in the meaning of rumor and the issue of the marked category? I propose that instead of ignoring these issues, as much rumor research has done in the past, we confront them head on.

Taking a more ethnographic and hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (Flyvbjerg 2001), it may be more useful to look at how the rumor category is constructed and used by people in everyday life – including outside of periods of disaster and crisis – rather than treating it as an object existing separately in the world with universal properties that we can measure.

Rumor is often used as a way to mark or label some aspect of communication, a piece of information. Depending on the meaning of “rumor” to the person using it (and the hearer) this could mean that the information framed as rumor is false, is untrustworthy, or they do not know and are hedging their epistemological bets. Fine (1995: 125) writes that “for an audience to describe a text as rumor or legend is to assert that they do not accept it as ‘fact.’” White (1994: 76) similarly takes a more agnostic stance, writing “the terms rumor [and] gossip [...] are deployments, not autonomous categories.”

Shibutani, in fact, begins his book *Improvised News* to highlight some of the variations in meaning that the concept has, and how it is deployed in everyday usage:

The central attribute of rumor, as it is commonly conceived, is error. Rumor is ordinarily regarded as a false report, or at least one which is unverified and probably false. When an unverified report turns out to be true, no one notices its obscure source. When subsequent events reveal a report to be have been unfounded, the item is dismissed as having been ‘only a rumor’. It is also customary to label as ‘rumor’ those reports that one is inclined to question. (Shibutani 1966: 3.)

Shibutani here highlights that rumor is a concept deployed by people to categorize and create distinctions between items of communication. These are often items of information perceived as epistemologically suspicious. If we follow these insights from previous rumor researchers, taking rumor to be a device for carving out separate “islands of meaning” (Zerubavel 1991), what does this entail? The use of categories and distinctions between them allows us to learn about the world around us and make it more coherent (Laszlo, 1990; Zerubavel 1991; Goldberg 2011). While categorization is a universal cognitive act, how these categories are crafted and deployed can vary (Zerubavel 1991). Anthropologists, for example, have frequently found in their studies of different communities the different ways in which people do (or do not) distinguish news from rumor or gossip (Firth 1956; Brison 1992; White 1994; 2000; Stewart & Strathern 2007). In many cases these distinctions either do not exist or the boundaries between categories are much less distinct than is considered in other countries.

Studying rumor from this vantage point, we can think of rumor as akin to a “frame”. While this concept is most notably associated with Erving Goffman (1986) here I utilize Zerubavel’s (1991: 11) definition of a frame as being “characterized not by its contents but rather by the distinctive way in which it transforms the contents meaning.”

In this sense, when we use the term rumor it frames the information to which it is applied in a particular way. Something framed or marked as rumor has its meaning changed; how this meaning changes depends itself on the particular meaning of rumor at the time and in the context of the group using it. Shibutani (1966: 3) writes that “When an unverified report turns out to be true, no one notices its obscure source. When subsequent events reveal a report to have been unfounded, the items is dismissed as having been ‘only a rumor.’” Similarly, in discussing the status of gossip, Adkins (1996: 326–327) writes “When gossip attains the status of knowledge, we don’t refer to it as gossip anymore – it’s simply a fact.”

So, for example, during World War II, information that President Roosevelt was essentially paralyzed below the waist could be labeled as rumor: “No rumors about [President Roosevelt], however, have been so persistent as those concerning his health, although the White House physician and the press have constantly pointed to his amazing energy” (*Daily Boston Globe*, 22 November 1942). The meaning of rumor here is that this information is false, should not be believed, and should be ignored. In other contexts such information may or may not be categorized as rumor and the meaning of rumor may or may not be different.

This in itself points to one of the strengths of studying rumor in this manner as it allows for the incorporation of power, authority, and institutional context into the study of rumor, something often neglected. Indeed, Fine (1995: 125) writes that one important approach to rumor would be to highlight “who has the authority to describe a particular set of truth claims as unsecured, unverified, and suspect?” When we marry the idea of rumor as a category with a study of its situated use situated it enables an approach that can elucidate what Michel Foucault (1980: 132) describes as “the ensemble of rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true.” In many cases understanding the meaning of rumor within institutional settings would enable the researcher to highlight the manner in which distinctions are made between truth and falsity and the effects of such work.

Fine and Bill Ellis (2010: 25) write that “rumor involves the *power* of knowledge and the *authority* of the speaker, and thus we speak of the politics of plausibility and credibility.” In a separate piece, Fine (1995: 126) suggests examining “*when* and *how* are rumors believed as truth claims.” Using our approach, however, one can take the opposite approach to see when and how *truth claims* are believed as rumors through the deployment of the category. As such, while we agree with Fine and Ellis in analyzing the politics of plausibility and credibility their approach may fail to account for power and authority.

None of this suggests that I am wholly discounting previous concepts of rumor employed by rumor researchers as being wrong. Rather, what

I would argue is that researchers in the past were often measuring their own structures of plausibility and credibility *rather than that of the community in which the rumors were ostensibly circulating*. This, then, opens up a connection between institutional settings and the meaning of rumor, whether in academia or elsewhere, rather than being simply the product of “ordinary” people.

One area, for example, may be to study whether the institutionalization of mass media and the rise of the state had an effect on the meaning of rumor and distinctions between these categories. If one reads older accounts of “rumor” it has a subtly different meaning than it does in modern rumor studies. A “rumor” was simply news, often from afar. In the seventeenth century, for example, the insurance group Lloyds of London got its start in a coffee shop, “a center for the exchange of rumors” (Wright & Fayle 1928). However, the boundary between rumor and news appears to harden in the early part of the 20th century with the increasing institutionalization of the mass media, specifically newspapers.

Luise White (2000), discussing the growth of the newspaper industry in 1950s Uganda, argues that it was the growth and institutionalization of the newspaper there that began the creation of more distinct and separate categories of information such as news, gossip, and rumor. The newspaper was seen by authorities as a means of stamping out gossip and rumor by printing “the truth” as “rumor and gossip were not thought to be substantiated like newspaper accounts” (White 2000: 56). The perceived authoritativeness of the printed word along with the professionalization and standardization of the rules of journalism created an increasing distinction between rumor and news and a situation where news was official, rational, and modern and rumor unofficial and irrational.

When we extend research into the meaning of rumor within institutional contexts we in fact find a variety of meanings and a variety of attitudes towards rumor. Controlling rumor was outwardly a policy of the US military during World War II. At the same time intelligence officers were tasked with collecting “rumors” from the enlisted men as a means of officers keeping track of troop morale (Caplow 1947). Shibutani argues that Allport and Postman’s definition of rumor fails to account for the variety of “unverified” information people make use of everyday; the practices of intelligence are a prime example of this. Indeed, within the intelligence community rumor is a commodity and useful for understanding both community sentiments as well as actual “news”. As such, one finds a strong disconnect often between the concept of “rumors” used by researchers as well as variations in the impact of these meaning differences. In some situations communication labeled rumor must be squashed whereas in others it is a useful sensemaking device.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have argued that the majority of previous research on rumor has reified a concept that is untenable given the variations in meaning that one finds both in the people being studied and in the researchers.

Psychological research on rumor tends to view rumor like a physical object with universal properties that can be measured and studied, largely ignoring the contextual nature of rumor that makes their meaning variable. Even when the context-dependent nature of rumor is acknowledged (Rosnow 1988) the implications of such context-dependence are not examined. Sociological research typically looks at rumor as a collective activity aimed at sensemaking or expressing community concerns. However, these approaches still tend to exoticize rumor and fail to examine the many quotidian ways that people make sense of the normal and the unusual. I find that the work of those researchers emphasizing plausibility within communities to be a more useful framework for the study of rumor. However, they often fail to account for power, authority, and institutional context in the production of plausibility.

I then argued that in order to mitigate such shortcomings we begin from the starting point of many observations of rumor. That is, that rumor is (1) used to label items of information to distinguish them from other categories of information and (2) the meaning of rumor can vary.

Thinking of rumor in this way means taking a more ethnographic and phenomenological approach to the study of rumor. It means attempting to measure the meaning of rumor for a particular community at a particular point of time, how rumor was deployed, in what context, and to what effect. Doing this allows us to then both look at variations meaning between communities but also to examine issues of power and authority in communication by looking at what the effects of the rumor category are. Finally, this approach opens up avenues for a more contextual approach to rumor, to see how the meaning of rumor differs in institutional contexts and what the effects of such meaning variances are.

While I argue that this is a better approach to the study of rumor as a social phenomenon, in examining the social and historical context of rumor as an object of academic study I find that there are in a sense *two* genres at work here. The first genre is the social activity of the people being studied. The second genre is *rumor research itself*. That is, the study of rumor is a genre produced by academics. As an object of study it is inseparable from its wartime history and legitimated by the framing of rumor as a social problem. The implications of this for rumor study and the study of genres in general deserves further attention.

## NOTES

- 1 Although I think this point is rather debatable: see Dalziel (2013).
- 2 This last function is common to rumor for some researchers as well.
- 3 Knapp's classification seems very similar to that of Hart (1916) although this is not cited in the work.
- 4 This is not to say that people cannot err in their work towards a commonly accepted truth.



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## 18. Textual Politics of the Interpretative Act

### Generic Readings and the Metaphysical Detective Story

Contrary to appearances, in and of itself reading a text is an act of stepping out of the private domain into a public, communal sphere. It is about political participation, a gesture by which one shows interest not only in the existence of meanings gathered together and shared within the community, but also shows interest in the influence those meanings wield. Likewise, the reading act embodies one's interest in developing, transforming, and defending those meanings, which in spite of readers, are often fluid and changing. By nature the meanings seem to flee and slip out of one's hand just as one is reaching them. For the same reason, revealing the ways in which the interpretative act is political *ipso facto* appears to be a challenging task. It is difficult because the political nature of meaning production reveals itself in the process of arrangement during reading, which is naturally handled by the reader. Often, it is the act of interpretation by which we attempt to control the free-flow of meanings. This act is certainly one of the very reasons for the actual flight of these meanings, rooted as it is in our inextinguishable quest for coherence, configuration, and the meaning of the work of art (see Rabinowitz 1998 [1987]: 42–46). The arrangement process which the reader practices is, then, the very act by which he or she creates meanings on the one hand, and abolishes them on the other – seeing the political justification for this is like lifting oneself by the hair.

As at least some of the meanings are always genre-bound, altering them alters not only the genre but its political aspects as well. The aim of this chapter is to examine the generic characterization called the metaphysical detective story that is connected to late modernist narratives playing with the conventions of the detective story. It is the defining of a certain group of liminal, transgressive texts which together constitute a “genre” that creates and erases at the same time; the detective genre with novel hybrids of styles, formulas, and other genres. But what the metaphysical detective story especially does, I argue, is to mimic and deep-hole drill the reading act as such, thus being a constant reminder of how even the most innocent act of interpretation may transform not only the form but the reader as well. The main argument is, then, that this metamorphosis is already dictated during reading; firstly according to those considerations on (a right) meaning and enjoyment the reader is apt to have; and secondly according to the textual and cognitive routes the form allows the reader. By casting a critical glance

upon the reading of metaphysical detective stories, the aim of the chapter is also to explore wider remarks that will serve generic studies in general.

Authors such as Umberto Eco, Thomas Pynchon, Paul Auster, and Alain Robbe-Grillet have usually been mentioned in connection with the metaphysical detective story, and their influence is indeed indisputable. The basis upon which to bring these authors and their novels into the same context is the way all conjoin the phrasing of questions of interpretation and, at the same time, do this while shifting rapidly from one genre or register to another. All of them have some element of detective story present in their stories, be it *the crime*, or a mystery, that sets the narrative and the investigation in motion; *the detective*, or a private eye, who leads the investigation; *the narrative* that proceeds in accordance with the investigation; or *the closure*, in which the detective has brought the investigated case to its end and reveals not only *whodunit* but also why and how the criminal has done it (see Tani 1984: 41; Dove 1997: 10). These are also those basic conventions of the detective genre that the metaphysical detective story in general has so willingly stretched and questioned.

If the reading act is considered to be a sorting, classifying, and evaluating of information and, at the same time, is considered to be an event, then the political modus or its way of being can be quickly observed. It remains, however, ambiguous. The classifying process is an act by which one connects individual texts to larger “textual tribes” by connecting single strains to larger atlases (Hirsch 1967: 76–77; cf. Rabinowitz 1998 [1987]). The concept established in the field of literary theory and aesthetics, and known as the hermeneutic circle, demonstrates this very clearly. As readers, we try to make the parts fit into a whole. Likewise, support from the whole assists in interpreting the parts. At the same time, the interpretative current dominating the latter half of twentieth century remains vivid. We are still bound to dispute the ways text *per se* exists, and to ask questions like who or what quarter defines it, how it exists, and what kind of meanings a text can express. And yet we are integral parts of history, historical beings who share meanings, play and compete with them, pick up from them the best and the most adequate ones. The question of interpretation is, therefore, still relevant. Evaluating the interpretations *is* politics; classifying the elements of text into genres *is* political praxis. But what one does not consider enough or often enough is that all it eventually takes to get to the core of praxis is one single reading act. The textual arrangement, the generic limbs of the text, textual audiences, and the reader – there is, indeed, a burning political debate going on even during the most innocent act of entertaining oneself.

Probably one of the most meaningful ways to place this phrasing of the question into some context is to bring single texts together with larger textual tribes (which seem to share the same strains within each tribe), but to read them dialectically. In practice, this means that one reads – or tries to read – texts not only generically but also by holding other possible ways of reading near at hand. Reading generically does not, however, imply that one always acknowledges all generic features. The reader makes conjectures, assumes, uses private encyclopedic competence – for to read is in most cases to stand on the threshold of the somewhat unfamiliar. In other words, whether an

expert or not, the reader moves between the styles, forms, and registers, or between genres, compares them, and tries to make them fit to the text he or she is reading at that current moment.

But before we can even hypothetically try to define the nature of the metaphysical detective story or ask how it works in practice – not to forget the questions of value it has in relation to the questions of interpretation and genre – our premise must be set in terms of transitions and metamorphoses. Instead of endless quests for origin, the emphasis lies in genealogy in a Foucauldian sense, in the examination of those conventions the particular entity uses to spawn and to multiply (cf. During 1992: 125–127). Likewise, in order to understand the metaphysical detective story as a genre and to use it as an aid to wider generic understanding, it is first necessary to take a look at those separate conventional shifts which assist the metaphysical detective story to emerge within the course of the history of the detective story. After a quick survey of the conventional shifts, I will use Umberto Eco's concepts on interpretation as well as formal elements of *La Reprise* (2001), a novel by Alain Robbe-Grillet, to demonstrate how genre and politics are connected during reading.

### *The Foundations of the Metaphysical Detective Story*

Authorities such as G. K. Chesterton and Gertrude Stein already conceived the detective story as an outstandingly modern form (Lehman 2000 [1989]: 23). As a notion, this can be perceived to mean not only the attachment between the story and the contemporary context in which the story has been written, but also the interrelationship between the detective character and the story as a whole. The first of the essential historical metamorphoses that participates in giving birth to the metaphysical detective story has taken place several times, and considers the detective. The wider interpretation of the sleuth is crystalized in questions like what method of detection has been needed in different phases of modernism – and how this method is understood when the surrounding world has gone through the change of its own. In other words, it has been asked: what makes a good sleuth?

The metamorphosis of the detective is to be seen in relation to the concept of textuality that was essentially understood to be more diversified during the late twentieth century (Jameson 2009 [1991]: 77). Therefore within the genre of the detective story, the process of detection turns gradually into something else. When starting to emphasize the *crime as text* and the quest as an act of interpretation, authors can commence manipulating not only the genre but also the reader. Instead of chasing the criminal, the detective can just decrypt one particular code-text without feeling any guilt as to whether his or her interpretation might be right, wrong, or arbitrary. As *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988), the second novel by Umberto Eco, illustrates, the detective story can also be organized around various interpretations each more imaginative than the other. Not until the end of Eco's novel may the reader become convinced that the most reasonable of these interpretations may actually be the one introduced in the end of the narrative, after other interpretations have failed;



the interpretation that sees the “key text”<sup>1</sup> just as a historical document, for example as an old delivery list of laundry. Until then, the reader has had time to bathe in the flux of poetic and imaginative readings based on innovative analogues. It is this irreconcilable contradiction – the conflict between the historical document and its wild, imaginative interpretation – that highlights Eco’s novel and enables it to grow out of itself, until it gets under the skin of the reader as a feeling of paranoia. When the grand narratives like Western historiography are challenged – as the postmodern, Lyotardian mantra goes – and the phenomena are interpreted from the perspective of secret meanings hidden inside every phenomenon, then everyday reality altogether – media, culture, historical buildings, party politics, goods, and so forth – begins to acquire darker tones. In this respect, the textual metamorphosis of the detective story affects the reader’s own realism.

Just as crucial for the position of the sleuth is the second process of metamorphosis begun already in the 1930s. The hard-boiled detective story launched in the United States between the First and the Second World Wars differs greatly from the other types of genre at that time, especially the classical, British detective story. The latter mainly culminated in the novels of Agatha Christie in terms essentially of the story type which occurs in an enclosed space and which relies heavily on puzzle-like problem-solving (the so-called “clue-puzzle”) and a limited scope of clues and suspects. The world wars introduced, however, a new type of detective story in which *the spaces* described by the genre quickly became increasingly larger. At the same time, the sleuth’s quest inevitably mutated: “the detective process is no longer only the solution of a riddle, but a quest for truth in a reality far more complex and ambiguous than in the stereotyped ‘fairy tales’ of the British tradition” (Tani 1984: 23). This change forced the detective to turn from the virtuous and intelligent character to the cynical and hung-over private eye. With good reason, Stefano Tani referred to this new detective as *doomed*: in an urban milieu the feeling of an inability to problem-solve grows simultaneously with a sense of alienation.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of attempts, the private eye does not understand why the problem still remains – as if the whole world has turned against him. And in a way, it has: what the classical detective story used to cherish does not seem to be accurate any longer. Changes in social infrastructures (above all the Great Depression) have a serious impact on the genre of the detective story, and in so doing, sow seeds of future forms.

The third transition takes place when these interpretative or quest-related difficulties unite with the first wave of postmodernization. There are at least two sides of this transition. Firstly, at this time, the detective story is implemented as a model of the narrative for different types of stories cherished by both so-called high modernism and mass culture – which, of course, according to Fredric Jameson, becomes intermixed (2009 [1991]: 64). One of the most obvious examples is *The Name of the Rose* (1980), Eco’s earlier best-seller, in which the form of detective story is blended with the historical novel. This generic transposition, or the playful *bricolage* of “high” and “low” modernist literature, was taken seriously in postmodernist art very early (Jameson 2009 [1991]: 2–3) and it was just a matter of time

before the popular form of the detective story was taken up to be utilized in other contexts as well. Reaching out towards the psychological description alone has been a real concession, for indeed the deepening of the characters originally did not come into question at all because the form itself and its refinement were the dominant motives for the detective narrative (see also Lovitt 1990: 68; Cawelti 1976: 36). The same transition may actually explain why the metaphysical detective story has been able to spread from literature to the movies: in the American film industry, the popularity of the genre has grown rapidly and not in vain – Hollywood has always sought new ways to thrill and entertain and the metaphysical detective story seems to be a good, new source of inspiration.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, many authors who started to use the form of the detective story came from outside the genre and therefore could better assist the genre to become aware of itself. In Robbe-Grillet's *Les Gommages* (1953) the quest was turned against the solver and in the end, it was the detective himself who came to be the object of his own criminal investigation, the murderer.<sup>4</sup> In proportion *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), Pynchon's novel written in the spirit of a mystery story, sets a tension between Oedipa Maas and an inheritance given to her, but when the solution – what the inheritance might include in practice – is ready to be revealed in the public auction and the crying of lot 49 is about to start, the novel ends. With compositions like this, the authors forced their readers to look straight into the conventions of the genre and especially at their own expectations towards the possibilities for these conventions to be fulfilled.

From Robbe-Grillet on, there has been a conversation about a certain type of “bastard-genre” within the genre of the detective story, that is, a postmodernist method to handle earlier forms of the same genre (see Hutcheon 2005 [1992]; McHale 1992; Black 1999; Merivale & Sweeney 1999b; Merivale 2010). I have referred to this as a metaphysical detective story, which, as a concept, is here based on the definitions made by Michael Holquist (1983 [1972]), Patricia Merivale, and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (1999), although other names for it have also been given (anti-detective fiction by Tani 1984; and anti- or posthermeneutic detective story by Black 1999: 79). The name chosen represents best, I think, the direction the genre has taken in relation to its earlier metamorphoses: it has begun to investigate its own genealogy.

This change of direction does not, however, imply that the genre at issue is hermetically sealed. Quite the contrary, as Alastair Fowler writes about antigenres (which the metaphysical detective story in a way also is, see Tani 1984; Black 1999): “it has a life of its own that continues collaterally with the contrasting genre” (Fowler 2000 [1982]: 238). This definition applies to the metaphysical detective story as well. In the background there is, of course, a larger theoretical turn, which is as Brian McHale (1999 [1987]) has appositely called it, the transition from the epistemological dominant to the ontological dominant in postmodernist literature, or, as one would say, the metaphysical shift. Therefore, the metaphysical detective story is not merely an experiment in form but it has both other objects of parodying and other intentions alike. William V. Spanos suggests, for instance, that the

main target of postmodernist detective story is the Aristotelian, “logocentric Western view of man-in-the world” (1987 [1972]: 15).

Merivale and Sweeney’s attempt to aggregate the features typical of the metaphysical detective story is illustrative here. At the center of the narrative there is usually (1) a detective, be he an amateur operating on his armchair or the private eye on duty. The detective operates in (2) a milieu that is a labyrinthine city or the text he tries to decypher. In addition, the object of the detective’s attention is usually (3) a lost text, a missing letter, or a limitation related to textuality, for example the imperfection of a notation that is used or its opacity in general. Like his predecessors, the postmodern detective collects the clues and the hints that he supposes to be linked with the crime but as the quest proceeds he notices how nonsensical, ambivalent, or empty the clues are. Finally, (4) the clues are no longer in such a significant position as they were and their existence in itself does not guarantee their validity. In addition to the search for the missing person or text, the detective can (5) lose his identity: as the quest reaches its conclusion the identity of the detective can either be challenged or split in half or just made to vacillate increasingly. Lastly, (6) the quest narrated in the metaphysical detective story is not provided with closure: it can always be shown as false, useless, or even impossible. (Merivale & Sweeney 1999b: 8.)

In other words, the metaphysical detective story puts its own foundations into operation, recycles and modifies them constantly in order to make itself fit better into current social and cognitive circumstances. The result is that the actual reader and the sleuth are brought nearer to one another, but with a critical overtone in their approaches.<sup>5</sup> We therefore become more and more aware of our own situation as readers. We can no longer naively and uncritically just follow the incomparability of the detective – the postmodernist texts do not lend themselves to such reader behavior very often. Instead, we are forced to participate in the quest, and calmly try to tolerate its uncertainties simultaneously facing the possibility that we might also fail in our reading task. Hence, the traditional co-operation between the actual reader and the fictional detective is being challenged, and like the detective in his complex text-world, the reader has to learn to read and interpret on his or her own as well.

### *The Quest for Genres*

The co-operation between the reader and the text calls, nevertheless, for learning, or summoning up, the basic rules at least. Usually we already have this expertise and it is based mainly on earlier reading experiences and especially on that cognitive basis that is formed and renewed via casual processes of socialization. It is as if we instinctively had an intuition-based ability for abductive reasoning in relation to connections between things and phenomena, reasons and consequences. As Thomas Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok describe the concept formulated by Charles Peirce, the abduction is pre-rational preparedness to act or re-enact that has evolved in us in the course of evolution (1983: 18).

In case of interpretative choices, this preparedness points to the adaptation process done during the reading. Chosen strains are connected to chosen, identified, or otherwise recognized genre. Nevertheless, the very same generic adaptation comes to emphasize the political nature of the interpretative act. When the metaphysical detective story as a freely moving, form-stretching vagrant in the liquid space of postmodernism is considered as a generic base for adaptation, the question of politics converts back to art. This time, however, it does so in a more accented fashion. Surprisingly, postmodernism, usually accused of immoderate irony and reluctant to take sides, now appears to show its true colors. The form it emphasizes, especially in the case of the metaphysical detective story, has not emptied out its contents, but quite the contrary: it returns the political customs by underlining frictions, conflicts and contradictions present in the play between the reader and the detective story form.

In fact, as an independent, creative, and *open* form, the metaphysical detective story cannot be imagined to live without its strictly formal, and closed counterpart. This family member is, of course, the established model of the classical detective story. Within the frames of literary history, the metaphysical detective story is definitely not the only hybrid or genre mutant – the novel *per se* is famous for its omnivorousness – but it is definitely one of those late modernist characterizations which go deep into the core of all reading, and mainly because of its self-consciousness. This is the natural next step for the detective story as a genre altogether: once it wanted to create many variations within a strict formula as possible, it made some of the authors feel suffocated, which, then, led them to ask what all this eager need for formula was about in the first place – “why?” instead of “what?”. The same moment of self-remembering, or transgression, then, was apt to create the postmodernist pair for the strict formula-based classical detective story. But as a genre, this “evil little brother” does not necessarily transgress for the sake of transgression as it is more willing to just ask for the foundations of detective form and of all reading, that is, detection. And by doing so, it asks for going further into metaphysics where it finds – and encourages readers to find – the reader searching for formulas, narrative topologies, meanings, and genres.

At the level of reading act, this kind of dialectical recognition of the genre should be taken as a critical attitude that brings us closer to different, partly generic, partly political roles of the reader. It aids us in better understanding these roles and how they are committed to reach a happy, meaningful ending, generic recognition, or enjoyment at least. In addition, the dialectical reading helps us to see more clearly the political conflicts between these interpretative roles, the way expectations on genre as well as desire to enjoy, for instance, can push even transgressive detective stories back into recognized genres by trying to turn them into something other than the forms they are meant to be. Like genres, the roles of reading are often a group of individual associations we project onto the particular text (see also Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume). As readers, we have different purposes and goals. Therefore, the crucial question is which one of the possible textual audiences we see most compatible with our associations. In

the best case, then, the dialectical reading is capable of transcending these roles.

This said, it may be in order to pinpoint this position in relation to the few treatments on genre made in literary studies. I share here Fredric Jameson's Marxist idea of genres as "essentially literary *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact" (2002 [1981]: 92). Jameson's idea explains partly what is at stake when the generic reading touches upon the literary satisfaction. The generic recognition and the enjoyment it brings are an affirmation in favour of preserving these institutions (see also Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume). This is why both the transgressive texts, the overinterpretations, and the dialectical readings are needed, as a counterbalance. Like the metaphysical detective story and the dialectical reading in general, overinterpretation may in fact be, as Jonathan Culler clearly puts it, "a practice of asking precisely those questions that are *not* necessary for normal communication but that enable us to reflect on its functioning" (2007: 172).

Likewise, in the case of genres, overinterpretation does two things simultaneously: it gnaws at the moorings of the genre, but by doing so, it also feeds into the evolution of the genre. In literary studies this view of dialectical change of genre via overinterpretation and transgression is especially cultivated within reception aesthetics (see Jauss 2007 [1972]: 76–109) and early Russian formalism. Over the last ten years, this tendency has only strengthened (see Lyytikäinen 2006). However, Jameson's point of view on social contracts, where there is a mutual agreement between the writer and "a specific public", is that such a contract emerges within the actual reading act, in the prevailing encounter with the form. Therefore the binding social ties not only emphasize the context of the narrative, as the sociology of literature may suggest; even more, these ties put the form as such and the reading act to the fore as well. For better understanding, then, I argue for combining creatively the more or less holistic view of reception aesthetics (as it has traditionally drawn from the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer and emphasized the reading as a phenomenon in which the genres are seen in positive sense mainly as a part of reader's own prejudices), Jameson's Marxist approach on social institutions and Eco's text- and form-oriented aesthetics. This fusion is, of course, to be seen both horizontally and vertically: the genre is necessarily shaped by the current historical conditions and it draws from the family resemblances (Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume), but at the intersection of these two is the form in its primacy.

Before coming to grips with the form, however, it is necessary to add that family members (metaphysical, classical, and hard-boiled detective stories) do have some shared resemblances. Categorizing the features outlined by Merivale and Sweeney is, then, apposite, but does not so much tell us about the canonization or the end of the detective genre, as explain the motion the detective story as such is in and especially how this motion is originally introduced into generic circulation. The metaphysical detective story began with manipulating the conventions of the earlier forms of the detective story, thereby forcing the genre to become more self-conscious as form. At the

same time, however, it opened up the possibility of connecting with other genres. This meant that the genre had already begun to grow out of and beyond itself – as genres in general are apt to do (see Bakhtin 1981: 6–7).

It may seem unclear whether one should consider the metaphysical detective story as a genre at all – especially if the genre is understood in an old-fashioned, “pre-modern” way, as a relatively established group of stylistic and formal features (see also Fowler 2000 [1982]). But what the metaphysical detective story definitely does bring up for its own part is the other definitions of genre – wider, more liquid – and especially the elemental need to keep all these in play at the same time, to keep in motion the genres and the reading act. This same constant openness has been, of course, widely recognized already in literary theory (Bakhtin 1981: 3–40; Fowler 2000 [1982]), and not least in Eco’s theoretical writings.

To put it more clearly, in relation to its family members, the metaphysical detective story is constantly taking new shape, quickly changing into something completely different in its new amalgamations. Fleeing from well-worn formulas happens, however, by moving backwards as a way forward. The metaphysical detective story alters itself at every turn, while keeping firmly in mind the family bonds, or, ways in which the detection process was carried through in former detective stories that were more loyal to the enclosures of the quest.

Speaking generally, it is always easier to encounter “dying” forms, or at least established forms than it is to engage with those still forming or otherwise liquid. Genre as something of a closed group of fixed features is the type of thing one becomes aware of generally in retrospect. The metaphysical detective story, taken as a genre on its own or as some late-modernist parasite of detective form, is here considered as a group of texts that together have already enjoyed their heyday. Just as the strictly entertaining, closed detective form has evolved in its own directions despite postmodernism, so too has the metaphysical detective story. The works of Pynchon and Robbe-Grillet have been canonical works for a long time, and for this very reason, forthcoming metaphysical detective stories cannot much longer draw content from the same sources without running out of steam. As a narrative topology it has to turn towards other genres, other forms, and the environment of the current century. The urgent need for informational excess, for instance, the maximalist aim to combine all more eagerly certain styles and genres into larger encyclopedias, appears to be one direction it finds fertile.<sup>6</sup>

In any event, the metaphysical detective story will become an established and widely recognized form before long. Its inevitable “death” as a genre should not, however, discourage us. Instead, this notion can lead us back to the wider, generic considerations. In particular, the recognition of the metaphysical detective story as a genre is fundamentally a question of community. If then the most basic question of reading is the simplest one – “What does this all mean?” – this question formulates our sense of which group of texts the particular one may belong to, i.e., what is the genre of the text at hand (see Fowler 2000 [1982]: 38). It is not necessary to dwell for long on the obvious political aspects of this phrasing of the question – who



decides in which genre it really belongs – but to concentrate more on the formal features of texts that do have several policy-makers of their own. If it is still appropriate to speak about “interpretative communities” at the fluid times of private readings, those same communities are not to be reduced to some concrete groups of people or general reading expectations. Instead, it would be better to connect interpretative communities to the textual features. Authorial audiences, narrative audiences, the model reader... these firmly textual concepts used by Peter J. Rabinowitz and Eco, among many, drop same hint: particular readers nearly always attempt to understand their readings in an enjoyable or meaningful way, and it is not as much a matter of private or generalized taste as it is one of form. Our textual aims ask for suspicion and guessing, both well-recognized features of the detective, and these are the aims that I will concentrate on next.

### *Reading as Guessing*

The complex and open world – the worldview of the metaphysical detective story – sets requirements for aesthetic representation. Complex and open works are needed if we want the literature to have any basis for accessing the reader and the historical existence he or she experiences. Eco has observed in many of his theoretical writings those central features that the detective story has absorbed into itself over time. Thereafter, these concepts have been perceived as an integral part in the theorizing of the metaphysical detective story. Next, I will highlight some of these concepts.

Already in the 1960s Eco introduced the concept of the *open work* (*opera aperta*), which he held to better reflect the diversity of meanings in the constantly changing post-war culture. The term was originally charged with social tensions – as it referred at least indirectly to the vulgar Marxist concept of a class relationship between society and literature – and was conceived wrongly from the beginning. Unlike what Eco intended it to mean, the concept was taken as a weapon to be used against the text and for the rights of the reader. In other words, the interpretation of Eco’s concept took an alien direction: within “reader-oriented radicalism” the open work began to signify an openness that enables a complete plurality of meanings, when what Eco originally intended was a term whose concrete referents were texts that allowed many different ways of reading. What he did not intend was for it to be read in just any way at all (1987 [1979]: 9; 1982 [1966]: 67). As an example of an open work, Eco used *Finnegans Wake* (1939) by James Joyce, where the openness was most of all lingual. In the shadow of Joyce’s magnum opus it might be difficult to understand the baseline of Eco’s description: works or texts can be open in many different ways. The narrative does not need to have an end, and it can also be open on the cognitive level. The open work enables interpretations that lead the narrative towards disintegration or incoherence; towards complexity that is closer to reality of the contemporary reader. The openness is also present in Pynchon’s corpus, for instance, and it is obviously an essential part of literary postmodernism as well (McHale 1999 [1987]: 10–11).

Another concept Eco begins to use later, linking it with the detective story, is *rhizome*, adopted from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari but used with somewhat different overtones. If the reading act is about the reaching and handling of cognitive competence, about detection, as readers we often turn to different models which we believe to match up with the cognitive structure of text composition. To illustrate this, it is a question of different sorts of encyclopedias or of labyrinths which describe the interpretative moves the reader or the detective makes during reading (Eco 1986 [1984]: 80–84). We shift from one concept or hint to another via analogy, association, deductive or abductive shortcuts. In the detective story every clue one decides to follow and consider as a part of the criminal investigation is equivalent to the interpretative situation of choice. As readers, we tend to end up in such situations, while trying to separate the essential meanings from inessential ones. As Eco conceives it, the rhizome describes with great veracity the cognitive nature of the open work because in the open work there is, theoretically speaking, a great number of possible interpretative shifts we can choose from. Therefore, for Eco the rhizome is a model for the network of references, the route map in which every single route is connected to every other and in which there is no center, just the labyrinth with no exit (*ibid.*: 81–82; Eco 1985 [1983]: 57–58; Caesar 1999: 115). “*Tout se tient*” is also a phrase repeated over and over again in *Foucault’s Pendulum*: we just have to find the links, because in the end, everything is connected to everything else. Hence, the rhizome is not just the very method we often apply when fitting together our associations and the elements of the particular text. It is also the cognitive form that is embedded in several metaphysical detective stories.

Unlike the closed and classical labyrinths, the rhizome as a model gives the reader an opportunity to either get lost or drift completely elsewhere, maybe even further from the process of criminal investigation. For the same reason the crime that launches the quest in many metaphysical detective stories may even be entirely forgotten and cease to be meaningful at all. The other elements of the text – the identity of the main character, other characters, or a completely different milieu – begin to stand out. The text ceases to be an entity unrelated with the actual world we are living in. On the contrary, it is tied even more tightly to those casual and everyday acts of interpretation that we apply to the surroundings near at hand, in order to better understand ourselves, each other, and the reality of our surrounding world.

The rhizome as a model also deconstructs the idea of language as a closed or autonomous system. In this light, language and its stories indeed grow ligatures beyond the storyworld to bind with our causal reality, as illustrated by historiography and science. Thus, not just Pynchon and Eco but also authors such as Don DeLillo use paranoid affects to emphasize the significance of the form. As the metaphysical detective story seduces the reader into experiencing the narrated world as connected with an actual reality, by just underlining the striking similarities between them, the reader begins to wonder about the mysterious motives behind these similarities, to speculate with them, and finally to invent them (Eco 2002b [1992]: 48).

Indeed, paranoia is a mechanism that is used to rearrange inner and outer reality by linking different coincidences to each other and seeing them as a series. And most of all, paranoia is a narrative process. (O'Donnell 2000: 11–12.) In this respect, the rhizome works as a productive model to picture the overlapping of different textual and actual worlds.

All in all, the rhizome can be said to be not only a cognitive form but also a theoretical tool for demonstrating the acts of interpretation that are characteristic of postmodernist texts. As for the open works, they require more than just enjoyment: more and more they challenge us to the play determined by the form by forcing us to realize ourselves not only as readers but also as players. Together the rhizome and the open work come to emphasize the same fact that Paul Ricœur announces elsewhere: reading is guessing (1976: 75–76) – and it is this process that the metaphysical detective story has strived to make the most of.

By turning the attention of the reader towards the text as form, the genre conceives very concretely the primal nature of guessing. Guessing equals the process of criminal investigation, and abductive thinking. As it was firstly theorized by Peirce, abduction is, most of all, a method of thinking backwards. Parallel to induction and deduction as a scientific method, the logical weight of every premise in abduction is counted separately. Reasoning proceeds from the consequences to the reasons by searching for the intervening connections. These links are conceived via more or less lucky conjectures and intuitive understanding of the relations between the things (see also Sebeok & Umiker-Sebeok 1983: 19–22; Eco 1986 [1984]: 40). In the metaphysical detective story, then, this idea has been taken as a *leitmotif*: the detective can fail on his mission or just guess right by accident. At the level of reading, guessing is, similarly, one of the main methodical components when trying to reach the decision as to what kind of narrative the form will allow the story to be – or, what genre the story belongs to. In other words, the reader applies to abductive thinking as he or she fits together associations and the formal features of the text. However, in order to understand the latter better, namely the *stylistic* solutions on the narrative level – the form is in many ways equal to the style – we have to revert back to a more concrete level on which the question of the interpretative act as such draws our attention.

In the concrete reading act, the reader begins to read the text linearly, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, but at the same time the reader operates on the cognitive level of the text non-chronologically and non-linearly. This means that when reading the text progressively from left to right, the reader is constantly remembering, predicting and carrying the elements of texts he or she sees as being important. Likewise, *prejudices* are important: they are tools of interpretation just as much as reading is about translating from a “foreign language” to a language the reader knows (see Gadamer 2006 [1989]: 398). Combining, maneuvering, and guessing all belong to a tactical repertoire of the reader irrespective of the level of competence.

Guessing is not only limited to the supposition of what is going to happen next, but also depends on who is narrating, why, and in which register the

narrator is narrating. As readers, we make assumptions about the writer but importantly these conjectures do not have much to do with the actual author. Rather, these conjectures have to do with the textual constructions which in literary theory have been termed the implied author and the model author. The reading act is a *play* in which we as readers set ourselves to the certain position by trying to gather the strains from the text to support our understanding (Dove 1997: 15; Gadamer 2006 [1989]: 102–110). A salient point in this is that, unconsciously, we even have certain pretensions to identify with the model reader, or the reader who could perfectly understand the message that the model author, the author-like construction inside the text, has supposed the perfect reader to understand (Eco 1987 [1979]: 15). At first sight, this array might seem like the classical one-way model of communication, but because of the play this can be avoided. Reading as play, as a game of understanding – of political understanding, one could add – means that the rights of the reader are not going to be taken away. Quite the contrary; recalling Eco, the play just sets up the rules and the generic playing positions for the readers. Even a semi-private game is, then, all about politics, about sharing, opposing, and supporting. The same game can be played only by following certain rules; if the rules are being broken, sooner or later this leads to the end of the game. To use another of Eco's metaphors (shared partly by Jacques Derrida), text is a lazy machine which allows certain ways of using it but not just any way (Derrida 1990 [1988]: 8; Eco 1994: 3; Culler 1998 [1983]: 139).<sup>7</sup> It allows neither any possible audience nor any possible generic position.

On this score, in the metaphysical detective story there is a built-in pedagogical model. By blending “high” and “low”, closed and open, popular elements and artistic ambitiousness the genre emphasizes the simultaneous existence of at least two different model readers. The stool for the imaginary reader is shared, so to speak: the reader shifts on the scale between the naive (or semantic) model reader and the critical (or semiotic) model reader (Eco 1990: 54–55, 92). When the naive model reader is at the mercy of the text narrated by the narrator, the critical model reader is capable of seeing the narrative situation from a critical distance. He or she understands and has learned to appreciate the ways the narrator sets traps for the reader.

Put crudely, then, the classical detective story relied heavily on the naive reception of the narrative, as the enjoyment of the formula was its primary purpose. By contrast, however, the metaphysical detective story demands that we be both naive and critical readers. The play bound to the form, or the dialectical playing with the generic expectations of the reader and even their joining, does actually help the reader to better understand those political processes of interpretation that condition his or her intentions and desires. Nevertheless, this occasionally requires the reader to comply with the operations of the model author: the reader has been seduced into the rhizome-like labyrinth, in a game where the rules are learned only in the course of the game (see also Eco 1985 [1983]: 53).

### *The Quest and the Repetition*

In the course of reading Alain Robbe-Grillet's later novel *La Reprise*, something similar may be learned. Set in demolished post-war Berlin, Robbe-Grillet's agent story splits the meanings as the reader forms them. Something that has happened a few pages ago suddenly turns out not to have happened at all. The protagonist confronts other characters, and soon afterwards it appears that these meetings never took place. Despite the obviously hallucinatory text-world, we as readers cannot even be sure that it is really hallucinatory; our interpretation does not stop the movement of meanings. Hence, the reader's position is to tolerate the uncertainties, the narrative fading away, the change of observation into non-observation – as if, in the end, nothing has happened.

Besides the prologue and the epilogue, *La Reprise* is an account of five days in destroyed Berlin. By carefully following the scattered hints, the reader can conceive the narrative to be a report written by a man with many identities and names but who is referred to in the beginning as Henri Robin. As the reader might also conceive, Robin works for the French secret service. Nevertheless, his report is interrupted by a different narrator with commentaries whose explicit intention seems to be to show the incorrectness of Robin's account. Already the first comment makes it explicit: "Le narrateur, lui-même sujet à caution, qui se présente sous le nom fictif d'Henri Robin commet ici une légère erreur" (Robbe-Grillet 2001: 29) ["The narrator, himself unreliable, who calls himself by the fictive name of Henri Robin, here commits a slight error" (Robbe-Grillet 2003: 17)].

Notes refer particularly to those moments or the details in the narrative that the reader of the report – a man who, as the reader can work out by connecting the dots, has received (or stolen) Robin's account – regards as false, even as intentional distortion of the facts. Besides correcting the details, the commentator seems to address the report to an unknown receiver. As for us, we do not know for whom Henri Robin has compiled his account. The basic premise we can presume on this basis is the possibility that there are two different model readers for Robin's report: we and the receiver of the account, probably someone in the French secret service, Robin's manager perhaps. The probable answer to the question of who the commentator may be, and for whom he addresses his comments, is, nevertheless, hinted at briefly: "Ils ne travaillent pas pour nous, mais pour les services secrets américains, peut-être aussi pour la police soviétique" (Robbe-Grillet 2001: 66) ["They do not work for us, but for the American Secret Service, and perhaps for the Soviet police as well" (Robbe-Grillet 2003: 45)]. "*Ils*" here points to the fact that the commentator and *his* narrative audience share the same employment, nationality, or side. But if the commentator aims his comments at the fellow members in the secret service, he appears to do this with a double audience. His parts are highly literal and meant to question all the meanings both Robin and the actual reader find worthwhile. In this respect, his comments are surely directed at us as well, but the overall purpose of these comments is even more interesting: erasing the cognitive basis of the narrative.

The regular disruptions that the commentator makes keep the reader constantly on his or her toes and prevent the possibility of allowing the reader to become captivated by the narration. The actual reader is not allowed to trust the narrator of the account at any point. Instead, he or she is encouraged to rely on the commentator. But this just leads the reader out of the frying pan into the fire: the disparity of truth and falsity, and the commentator who sees himself as being more truthful than the narrator, are two reasons why the actual reader is compelled to suspect not only the commentator but also the validity of the “more truthful” narrative the commentator has narrated.

Thus, on its first level, the political dialectics of interpretation in *La Reprise* are set between these narrators. The actual reader has to challenge the commentator, the second narrator who has decided to pass his annotated version of the story on to us, the readers of the original account. The same kind of array was present in *Foucault's Pendulum* as well: the narrator is the reader of another narrative and he is retelling it, in his own words. In neither Eco's nor Robbe-Grillet's case can we get at the original text, or sequence of events. All that can be accessed of this original text is just an interpretation of it. By comparison, the commentator in *La Reprise* is not just the character taking part in the events of the novel. He is also taking part in the narrative process by establishing a prime reading position that is set by the report under certain restrictions: no actual readers are allowed.

Nevertheless, understanding this intervention of the commentator requires that the actual reader is capable of realizing that the original intention to write the account may not only be “what is said” but also “how it is said”. As Eco would describe it, we have to have the possibility of interpreting the text semiotically in order to make critical model readership possible. But whereas the reader has to have enough of this sort of knowledge to reach this position, Robbe-Grillet's novel makes this very hard by creating a cognitive hierarchy between the actual reader, the commentator, Robin, and the “real” sequence of events. This, in turn, creates a categorical disparity between the actual reader and the commentator on the original text. As readers, we may only guess and suspect what this reconstructive narrator really knows.

The play between the form and the reader evolves, rarely twisting: as if there were different rules for different players. As for the reader, it gives the impression that the novel is based on repeated redefinitions, challenges, translations, and conflicts. The active readership that is made possible to us – the position of the critical reader of *La Reprise* from which we guess the motives of the commentator, on the one hand, and suspect all that is said and narrated, on the other – lives therefore in a state of constant threat. There are just different, incompatible critical readerships and not a single moment of peace during which we could enjoy the validity of the interpretation. Loyal to the metaphysical detective stories, *La Reprise* does not allow coherences or enclosures of the narrative, not even the model reader that could expect these. Neither does it allow the reader to pull up and rely on any truth. By repetition, that which is described becomes the indescribable.



In other words, the concept of the rhizome is brought in again: there is just interpretative motion tied to the linear reading of the text, and by reading, the text disappears and there are no crossroads ahead, no situations of choice, no enclosures, nothing. It is not just the concatenation of meanings but also the motion of them as they move ahead before us – which, of course, represents the Derridean absence. This absence made possible by *différance* is the distinctive feature of the vitality of writing (Derrida 1990 [1988]: 7). Or as Michel Foucault (1984 [1970]) sees it, the writing is vital as long as it is not restricted or stopped by the meaning-oriented reading. Taking the generic level of the reading into account, the vitality is a motion escaping the definitions that we use to recognize and group texts into genres. It is the act of escape that describes aptly the modus of reading the metaphysical detective story.

On another level, the political dialectics evolve in Robbe-Grillet's novel between the reader and the concept of repetition. Borrowing the term from *Gjentagelsen* (1843), by Søren Kierkegaard, *La Reprise* uses repetition as a supportive concept in the quest peculiar to detective stories. When the quest and the abductive reasoning that constitutes its practice usually take place backwards in time, being at the same time a reconstruction tinged with guessing, repetition is instead remembered forwards (Robbe-Grillet 2001: 7). In this respect, it does not matter if the rememberer is part of the events to come or not. Mainly, he or she is involved only with the process of remembering *per se*. By looking back, the rememberer comes to bring something forgotten back to life. But when something is, then, remembered forwards, the forgotten is not only brought back. Also, something that was merely possible in the past is made to actually happen in the future. The repetition that Robbe-Grillet uses in *La Reprise* becomes clearly evident when it is revealed that Henri Robin was in Berlin as a child with his mother. Robin and his mother searched for Robin's father, but unsuccessfully. Therefore, the journey to a bombed-out Berlin in 1949 is his second journey to the city, the repetition in Kierkegaard's sense. For this reason the remembered becomes realized towards (chronologically) and into Robin's current reality: earlier experiences begin to throw their shadows on Robin's way and on the events of the novel. The trauma he still carries within him begins to emerge in actual events.

Repetition is not, then, just demarcation in the sense of crossing boundaries but it is also trans-temporal. The characters, speakers, and readers of *La Reprise* are all subordinate to the concept of repetition, its followers more or less. The rhizome-like cognitive structure makes it possible that what will happen in the future is already set – remembered – in the events of the novel: repetition is repetition only via repetition. Hence, the repetition continues its circulation even after the events of the narrative have already occurred. It stands as a supportive concept of the quest because the remembering forwards, as such, takes part in the formation of the quest we are reading. In fact, the repetition *creates*, or recreates the actual quest on the basis of already happened things.

By intertwining Robin's visits to Berlin, the remembering forwards forms, then, the repetitive sequence of events on the basis of memory. This

associates the repetition directly with the concrete act of reading: the things the reader has read in the text – or remembered from the genre to the text – form the shadow that throws itself onto the narrative. On the level of events, the repetition is equivalent to the reconstruction, that is, the trauma remembered by Robin. So it is at the level of reading as well: the shadow of the narrative creates repetitive occasions of choices that the reader meets during reading. The cognitive labyrinth that is constituted on the basis of these interpretative choices is thus an outcome of generic reading. Therefore, for the reader as well, the co-operation between a concrete interpretation and prejudices of the reader is an action of reconstruction and recontextualization. At the same time, however, a unique interpretation is problematic from the beginning: the shadow thrown onto the text of *La Reprise* can be understood to limit the reading, as a generic attempt to stop the motion of the meaning. The very process of guessing that the reader goes through makes it difficult to understand the text itself.

All in all, what has happened and what has not yet happened are all the same from the point of view of repetition. Robbe-Grillet's novel forces one to admit what was earlier represented so clearly in Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*: truth and non-truth can exist simultaneously. The opposite interpretations (A and not-A) can be valid in tandem, community (A = A) is not necessary and, what is most important, there is always the possibility to take the third option, the mystery hidden in A. Especially in the case of late modernist texts this so-called hermetic logic seems functional (see Eco 2002a [1992]: 27–29). The essential thing is simultaneity: there are no situations of either-or. The role of the reader is set differently: the reader has to simultaneously accept the possibility and the presence of many different theories of interpretation. In a situation like this, cherished by postmodernism, Richard Rorty's theory of pragmatism (2002 [1992]) has been regularly offered to solve the case: we just need to pick the most adequate meaning without caring if it is "right". Nevertheless, if we cannot say that truth really does exist and we should not pursue it – that there are no solid points in the universe, as the central metaphor of *Foucault's Pendulum* demonstrates – we can at least presuppose that there are representations of truth that help us understand certain phenomena better. Only this hermeneutical walk – trying, guessing, mistaking, succeeding – ensures that the truth, the generic understanding, or the validity tied to the interpretation of the text, might show itself in turnovers, transitions, and variants.

### *To Speak of the Reading...*

Eco uses Rorty's pragmatism also to improve his own theory of interpretation. Text can be *used* and it can be *interpreted* but these two methods differ from each other as they have different aims and intentions (1990: 57–58). The *use* of the text is to recontextualize it as the reader wants it to be recontextualized: when the connection or the analogy is invented, the reading is justified and successful (see also Kokkonen & Koskinen, this volume). In contrast, the *interpretation* of the text is that we are trying to read text as it wants us

to read it, with great care, holding back the creative role of the reader, if needed. In both cases, recontextualization is, however, important. According to Eco, even the most formal texts, or closed texts that can be interpreted only in one way (like *Superman* comics and train timetables) do not leave the reader so much interpretative clearance that one could use text as one wanted. In comparison, open works have to be seen as lazier interpretative machines than the closed ones, where their operative principle is in giving the user more possibilities (Eco 1994: 3).

It might, however, be more truthful to speak of different types of games than of interpretative machines. The play should be taken as Gadamer intended it: the play is an aimless game and in it the meaning may not be reachable at all as it moves forward ahead of us – as it did in *La Reprise*. The play is play because it is played for the joy of playing. It is not work and it is not serious but certain rules are, nevertheless, included – rules that prevent playing it in an arbitrary way (2006 [1989]: 102–110). This does not block the experimental validity we can reach during the reading act. But the main thing is nevertheless reading as play, or as a political act of numerous textual participants.

What then are the meanings given by the genre in this light? If texts, be they novels, newspaper articles, or programs, are desired to be understood in relation to certain text groups – which is to say, via recontextualization – this process calls for us to translate the meanings to correlate with the features of the chosen and recognized text group. As Gadamer frames it: understanding is to understand *in a different way* (2006 [1989]: 296). Text is not, however, an autonomic entity but rather an intertextual unit that describes, or recontextualizes, earlier parts of the genre. Its meaning becomes realized as the text cites, parodies, or just manipulates earlier parts of the same series – and as we recognize the use of these techniques during reading (see also Pyrhönen 1994: 47–48). For this reason, we are faced with many challenges, especially with the question of how the interpretation can be valid at all (Culler 2001 [1981]: 42–43). How does one relate to the text? How does one begin to read the text in a way that, as a part of a larger textual tribe, it can be understood? How does one treat all the out-growing filaments of the rhizome that convey and transform the genre constantly? And most of all, how does one permit this kind of motion without allowing it to become an obstacle to the understanding?

More problematic, nevertheless, is the question of how we talk and negotiate our interpretations and share them with each other *without translating* the interpretation of the text into the use of the text. Unobserved as it may be, the formal aim of the text is not only to change generic precursors but also to change the reader as such. Starting to read is to penetrate those regularities and the interpretative communities that texts set for themselves (Faivre 1994: 5–6). This is no easy task. In the case of television, for instance, the presence of actual interpretative communities is much stronger than the interpretative communities of readers: as David Morley points out, viewing “is almost always accompanied by argument, comment, debate and discussion” (1986: 9). Working with literature, instead, is usually a lonely act, in which discussion and debate come afterwards, while sharing experiences.

Therefore, although the isolating of other readers outside is not always complete, it is usually the reader who sets the genre, but only in co-play with the form. Paratexts too may influence reading with rising expectations, but sometimes the process of “making sense” requires the reader to shut out other influences as much as possible.

The interpretative communities produced by the text are not necessarily in relation with the dominant way of reading used in our circle of friends or among the scholarly communities. Especially with literary texts, this description on so-called *initiatory hermeneutics* is apposite:

Non è la stessa cosa essere un iniziato ed essere un mistico. L'iniziazione, la comprensione intuitiva dei misteri che la ragione non può spiegare, è un processo abissale, una lenta trasformazione dello spirito e del corpo, che può portare all'esercizio di qualità superiori e persino alla conquista dell'immortalità, ma è qualcosa di intimo, di segreto. Non si manifesta all'esterno, è pudica, e soprattutto è fatta di lucidità e di distacco. (Eco 2001 [1988]: 228–229.)

An initiate is not the same as a mystic. Being an initiate – having an intuitive comprehension of what reason cannot explain – is a very deep process; it is a slow transformation of the spirit and the body, and it can lead to the exercise of superior abilities, even to immortality. But it is secret, intimate; it does not show itself externally; it is modest, lucid, detached. (Eco 2001 [1989]: 215.)

The most paradoxical element of initiation is nevertheless its apparent subjectivity. According to Antoine Faivre, “higher knowledge” can only be experienced individually and it can only be shared in the context of the “discourse of subjectivity” by describing not only the knowledge itself, but also by describing the resources and methods to reach it (1994: 5). In his study Faivre deals with Western esotericism, but this also matches up not only with the reading of the metaphysical detective story outlined in this article, but also with all reading in general. *Foucault's Pendulum* particularly recycles the history of Western occultism: the protagonists read any available text or phenomena poetically, arbitrarily, and with hermetic logic, no matter what the established meanings of these texts and phenomena are. Especially postmodernist literature is not embarrassed in the face of any text type or genre, and does not hesitate to use text types in accordance with its own ethos. The metaphysical detective story is no exception.<sup>8</sup>

In Eco's corpus this notion on initiation as metamorphosis that includes the reading of the text, is brought forth in his postscript to *The Name of the Rose*: “Text is meant to be an experience of transformation for its reader” (1985 [1983]: 53). This metamorphosis can be understood at least in two different ways: on the one hand, it can be seen as an alteration arising in consequence of intuitive understanding. On the other, it can be understood as a moment when the text gains an understandable form, i.e. the genre for it is found. Naturally the first mentioned change to happen inside the reader means that subjective impressions have been finally gathered together. It is another case altogether, however, whether or not there are any possibilities for the reader to share these impressions with others. The same subjective impressions concern the genre that is supposed to be the right one. Therefore

the reading act as well as talking about those readings are both political acts. When the private reading experience is brought to public conversation, the politically charged translation process has been under way for a while already. Now, the rhizome of understanding shows up in a different light where the reader is yet again forced to change. The new play begins: we play with our interpretation and the point of view of the third party changes us as players. As we engage in conversations with others about their different interpretations, we experience new insights but also new disappointments. Yet what is most important is that we are forced to negotiate over the right or valid meanings, maybe even to let go of some of our subjective impressions. The rhizome that connected the reader with the form of the text is fulfilled somewhat by repetition:

one will often be forced to take dead ends, to work with signifying powers and subjective affections, to find a foothold in formations that are Oedipal or paranoid or even worse, rigidified territorialities that open the way for other transformational operations (Deleuze & Guattari 2004 [1980]: 16).

In the course of this article I have used the metaphysical detective story to suggest that all reading is not only paraphrasing and recontextualizing but also guessing. Using these as methods in reading, one comes to transform the interpretation into political practice. The aims of reading always differ: one intends to enjoy, another guesses the author's intentions to reach validity. Nevertheless, the form resists and draws other semio-cognitive routes, unknown sometimes even to the most competent reader. A genre such as the metaphysical detective story brings readers face to face with their own intentions, desires, and prejudices, not to forget their encyclopedic competence and sense of genre conventions. The play being as it is, reading in general transforms both the reader and the form, but no-one can know what will happen in play. The sense of a generic reading, then, shows itself until it enters into the core of a twofold interpretation process: understanding the genre is first, to negotiate about the subjective impressions, and secondly, there is the turning – translating – of them into something else. Here, the politics are present at every step of this process, for it is the rhizome as a cognitive model for reading which calls for it. Escape and connect, detect and banish – these, then, constitute the generic tactics.

## NOTES

- 1 Because “key text” should be seen as hint or clue, Joel Black describes it as follows: “The detective uses the information supplied by the key text to achieve his final goal, which is to discover or recover a prized object that may well be *another* text. The detective’s success in finding the prize will depend on his prior ability to find and read the key text that specifies its whereabouts, and even its identity” (1999: 79).
- 2 The alienation *per se* is not, however, the feature rooted in the detective story during the world wars. Edgar Allan Poe’s pioneering detective stories are already characterized by alienation: the individual in the hustle and bustle of the city is like the orphan eye in the crowd. The city in “The Man of the Crowd”, for instance, is

- an actual purgatory for ghosts, shadows, and rootless criminals, in which survival is possible only if the detective has trained himself to be a first-class observer (Lehman 2000 [1989]: 118–119).
- 3 Whereas Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Der Name der Rose* (1986) is a direct film adaptation of Eco's first novel, the contemporary Hollywood movies that typify the metaphysical detective story very clearly include, for instance, Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000) and *Insomnia* (2002), along with Brad Anderson's *The Machinist* (2003). Also, in the past decades two popular television series, *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991), created by David Lynch, and *The Singing Detective* (1986), by Dennis Potter, have borrowed some elements from the metaphysical detective story. Essential, likewise, is Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958).
  - 4 Robbe-Grillet's debt to Jorge Luis Borges should not be forgotten: with his short story "La muerte y brújula" (1942) Borges prepared the way for later authors to operate with the genre. If these authors took seriously the idea of a genre on its way to self-realization and tried to make the genre meet the requirements of the actual world and current worldview, it is Borges who should be credited with this. In Borges's short story the detective called Erik Lönnrot sets up the quest by picking up the theological hint found on the scene of the first crime. Nevertheless, the media informs the real murderer on this invented quest and therefore accidentally encourages the real murderer to decoy Lönnrot via the other two symmetrical murders not only at the fourth crime scene, but also to become the fourth victim. (Irwin 1996 [1994]: 421.)
  - 5 The Romantic bipolarity between rationality and irrationality is clearly observable in Poe's detective stories and it is this venue within which the genre has, from the beginning, settled itself. Poe's stories brought order in the middle of chaos by setting into action the purely intelligent player who by using not only his power of reasoning, but also his imagination, was able to solve the mysteries and foil the irrational variables, expose the real criminal and bring this criminal to justice and, indeed, bring into balance the genre conventions and expectations of an actual reader (Knight 1980: 39; Tani 1984: 4). It is not in vain that John T. Irwin calls Poe's genre an *analytical* detective story: later the stories in which the main character has the same qualities, will also be christened detective stories (see Irwin 1996 [1994]: 1). The analytical detective story is therefore a certain kind of representation of the Enlightenment. Thus, it is not unexpected that the detective story has constantly reflected social tendencies. Moreover, this is the reason why the metaphysical detective story specifically returns to use the analytical detective story; the return as such can be seen not only as a form of nostalgia, but can also be seen with hindsight as an ironic resource to reconcile postmodernist views to aspects of the Enlightenment (see also Eco 1985 [1983]: 67).
  - 6 In September 2013, the University of Liège, Interdisciplinaire de Poétique Appliquée (CIPA), hosted a conference on past and current themes surrounding the metaphysical detective story, there called "The Metaphysical Thriller". One of most interesting contemporary subgenres discussed in the conference was *Neuro-Noir*, presented by Susan Elizabeth Sweeney.
  - 7 Or as Derrida puts it elsewhere: "Each text [...] is a machine with multiple reading heads for other texts" (Culler 1998 [1983]: 139).
  - 8 The postmodernist historical novel that is synthesized with the metaphysical detective story in Eco's first two novels clearly demonstrates the history of oppressed voices as apocryphal history whose central form is "secret history" (McHale 1999 [1987]: 90–96). The alternatives and the shadows are axiomatically a crucial part of postmodernist literature as they offer a fresh point of view that differs from the hegemonic discourse. By doing so, apocryphal history shows the ideological position of narrative conventions that are taken as a truism.



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