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Folklore Genres

Genre was among the main concerns of the earliest Danish folklorists, starting with Anders Sørensen Vedel and his 1591 collection of Danish ballads. The term genre was not in use at that time, but Vedel had at least a general idea of the types of songs that interested him. The classificatory zeal that has marked a great deal of folkloric work up through the twentieth century received its initial impetus from the natural sciences, and taxonomical work of the Swede, Carl Linnæus (Carl von Linné 1707-1778). Linnæus's work on classification of organisms (Linné 1758) also appealed to literary scholars including those who became, during the last decades of the eighteenth century and up through the nineteenth century, interested in the traditional expressive culture of the peasantry.

Concerning literary genre study, Robert Allen mentions that, "for most of its 2,000 years, genre study has been primarily nominological and typological in function. That is to say, it has taken as its principal task the division of the world of literature into types and the naming of those types -- much as the botanist divides the realm of flora into varieties of plants" (Allen 1989, 44). The same applies to the study of folklore where genre classifications became not only an overarching organizational principle for folklore collections, but also a system for focusing collecting efforts. The earliest

Danish collections were all genre-based—accordingly, one finds collections of ballads (Syv and Vedel), proverbs (Petersen), myths (Saxo and Grundtvig) and legends (Thiele) from the very beginnings of the folkloric enterprise in Denmark.

Despite this early emphasis on genre-based collection and publication, the definitions—or at very least the characterizations—of revognized genres are fluid at best. In part, the confusion concerning genres stems from a well-known phenomenon in folklore, namely the distinction between etic (or scholarly) and emic (or popular) categories (Dundes 1962). In short, the terms that scholars use to classify the types of expressive culture can diverge from the terms that are used by non-scholars. So, for example, a farmer in northern Jutland may refer to all of the stories he tells simply as *historier* [stories], whereas a collector or scholar might use a specific term, such as legend or *sagn* to make the individual category more specific. Similarly, terms that are used by scholars might have different meanings in colloquial use. So, for example, that same farmer might refer to a lullaby as a ballad, or *vise*, while the collector might reserve the term ballad for describing narrative songs. To add a final layer of confusion, the use of terms—both emically and etically—changes over time. What was meant by a legend (*sagn*) in scholarly or popular expression in the early nineteenth century may be quite different from what is meant by that same term today.

Ballads and Folksongs

In the introduction to the ninth volume of *Nordisk Kultur* (Nordic Culture), Knut Liestøl provided a one line definition of the folk ballad: "Med folkevise er det her ment den episk-

lyriske ballade frå millomalderen" [The term *folkevise* (folk ballad) here is taken to mean the epic-lyric ballad from the middle ages] (Brøndum-Nielsen, Liestøl et. al. 1931, 3). Liestøl had inherited his limited view of the folk ballad from Grundtvig's *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, and it reflected the driving Romantic nationalist motivation behind the large ballad collecting projects in Scandinavia through much of the nineteenth century. The definition is unnecessarily narrow, and excludes a significant number of the songs that Tang Kristensen collected and classified as ballads. It also reflects the prevailing scholarly sentiment that the older something was (or was purported to be), the more valuable it was. This approach obscures the wide range of sung expression that was common in rural nineteenth century Denmark, and ignores the important role that singing played for many people, whether they be singers themselves, or just listeners. Finally, this characterization of the ballad genre as a predominantly medieval genre skewed scholarship toward the search for "original forms."

The vast majority of scholarship on narrative songs—or ballads—in Denmark has focused on the historical dimension of these songs. Generally ballads consist of a series of rhymed verses, sung to a melody that is repeated for each verse. The verses of a ballad are often set off from each other by a chorus or refrain that is repeated at set intervals during the singing of the song, most frequently after each verse. Whereas the verse carries the main story line of the ballad's narrative, the chorus usually makes an evaluative comment about the fate of the story's characters, or about their actions. Songs that did not tell a story and songs that related recent events in the manner of broadsides were frequently ignored or discounted by Danish ballad scholars as being "young" or of no historical value. Fortunately, Tang Kristensen did not make these types of value judgments on the songs that his

informants sang for him. Although Svend Grundtvig frequently rejected portions of Tang Kristensen's collections on the grounds that they were not old enough or did not conform to his incipient view of the genre, Tang Kristensen published many of these songs in his own later collections, providing a broader view of the folk song traditions of Denmark.

The main theoretical approach taken toward Danish ballad is reflected in the twelve volume encyclopedic work, *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser* (Grundtvig et al. 1966-1976).[1] The majority of *DgF* is concerned with the collation of Danish ballad variants and exhaustive documentation of historical attestations of particular ballads and ballad types throughout Europe. The study of particular word forms plays a small, yet important role, in the determination of a ballad's "age," and reflects the largely philological basis for much of this historical scholarship. Unlike more contemporary approaches to the study of folk song and folk music, the approach taken in *DgF* pays scant attention to music, and is for the most part a study of ballad texts. This approach angered Tang Kristensen who, early in his collecting, had spent a great deal of time producing accurate written recordings of melodies. Grundtvig discarded these recordings after his musical consultant, A. P. Berggreen, evaluated the melodies as incorrect and of little merit.[2]

One of the main trends in Danish ballad and folk song scholarship derived from the early typological inclinations of the earliest scholars. Accordingly, a great deal of time was spent on developing subgenres. Liestøl provided an overview of each of the major subdivisions based on the divisions present in *DgF*: *Kæmpeviser*, or heroic ballads in volume one, *Trylleviser*, or magical ballads in volume two, *Historiskeviser*, or historical ballads in volume three, *Ridderviser*, or knightly ballads in volumes four through seven, *Romanviser*, or the

romance ballads, and finally later, lyrical ballads, both in volumes eight and nine (Brøndum-Nielsen, Liestøl et. al. 1931). These two later volumes were actually conceived of initially as subordinate to the overarching, and very large, category of knightly ballads. To this elaborate list one can add *Skæmteviser*, or jocular ballads, a collection of which Tang Kristensen published in 1901.

One of the most significant developments in the study of narrative song, their transmission, variability and their composition came from scholars studying epic traditions in southern Europe. The early Danish collections of ballads were inspired by Romantic nationalist sentiment and a desire to recover the lost vestiges of a rapidly disappearing indigenous folk poetic tradition. Although many literary elites and scholars had turned away from the classical world and toward the local, the underlying thought that local traditions could emulate the grand classical traditions of Homer's epics lingered just below the surface. In some cases, such as in Finland, these aspirations actually broke through that surface. In the 1930s, two Harvard-based scholars, Milman Parry and Albert Lord, traveled to Bosnia to record Serbo-Croatian epics (Lord 1964). The goal of their research was to form an understanding of how epics were composed, learned and performed. The resulting theory, "the oral formulaic theory," proposed that singers of tales did not memorize their songs word for word, but rather made use of formula—a series of words that fit a set metrical pattern and express a single idea—as they recomposed their songs during performance (Lord 1964). In the years since the emergence of the oral formulaic theory, scholars have applied it to a vast range of expressive genres including the ballad. Ballads, because of their relatively short length (compared to epic songs which can run to many thousands of lines), may not be the best material for this type of study. Work, such as David Rubin's

(1995) on the cognitive psychology of ballads, with his emphasis on cue-item discriminability, may be more productive in understanding memory and composition in relatively short, rhymed and sung genres.

Composition has always been one of the main questions in regards to the folk ballad (Harris 1991). One of the most debated theories, espoused earliest and most eloquently by Charles Kittredge, proposed that ballads were communally composed where the performer and audience effectively fused into a single composer (Child, Sargent and Kittredge 1904, xvii). Ballad scholars in the Faeroes coupled the idea of collective composition to the chain dance, recognizing the close connection between collective singing and collective dancing (Luihn 1980). The theory, which has significant appeal to students of performance theory, suggests that the dance that accompanies the singing produces a state that is conducive to the collective composition of the ballads. Since the dance is integral to the ballad, the ballad cannot be composed without the participation of singers and dancers alike. The underlying idea, which is correct, proposes that every ballad performance is a unique event. It also follows that, as long as people keep dancing, more ballads should be composed; this notion of a constant stream of newly composed ballads along traditional lines never sat well with more historically minded scholars, who were more interested in the history of set texts than the performance context of ballad singing.

Although most Danish folk ballad scholarship has focused almost exclusively on categorization and the historical dating of variants, several other productive avenues for the understanding of folk ballad in late nineteenth century Denmark have been explored. An appreciation of the geographic distribution of folk ballads by *DgF* type is hinted at throughout *DgF*; while this has not been realized in any

cartographic manner, continued work on the Tang Kristensen collection should eventually allow for a fairly accurate mapping of all of the ballad variants that he collected from his numerous informants. Another worthwhile approach, again hinted at in *DgF* but not brought to fruition in any meaningful way, is to explore the relationship between ballad narrative and other genres of folk narrative; in particular, there is a strong relationship between *trylleviser* (magical ballads) and fairy tales. Similarly, motifs that occur in ballads, such as kidnapping and murder, are also fairly common in legends. Finally, the study of ballads in the context of an individual's larger folklore repertoire, an approach predicated on the study of folklore repertoire and pioneered by Nordic folklorists such as Tillhagen (1959), Pentikäinen (1971 and 1978), Koudal (1984), Holbek (1987) and Kaivola-Bregenhøj (1996) is made possible by the materials presented in this publication. This type of repertoire-based study should reveal aspects of the interplay of genres in repertoire and the reasons why individuals choose one genre over another for expressing a particular idea. The latter issue is related to Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi's work on the multi-conduit hypothesis of folklore transmission (1975).

Folktales and Fairytales

Folktale, and its sub-genre the fairy tale, is perhaps the best known of all folk narrative genres. Folktale covers a wide range of expressions. Perhaps the easiest way to define the genre would be to simply point Hans-Jörg Uther's *The Types of International Folktales. A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson* (2004; abbreviated as "the Aarne-Thompson-Uther [ATU] index") and say that anything indexed there counts as a folktale. But such an

approach would neither be helpful nor particularly informative. Folktales are fictional narratives that usually unfold in an unspecified place with unspecified characters; in many of these tales, magic is commonplace, and not unexpected. In an overview of the study of folktale in Scandinavia, von Sydow writes, "sagan [vill] I första rummet roa sina åhörare med sitt lustiga eller underbara innehåll utan att fråga efter, om det är sant eller ej. Den nämner därför i regel varken ort- eller personnamn. Blott händelsen i och för sig bryr den sig om. Detta medför också lätt en olikhet i stil: medan sägnen är kort och ofta helt torrt relaterande, söker sagan göra sin framställning så saftig och livlig som möjligt" [The fairy tale wants in the first instance to entertain its listeners with its amusing or wondrous contents without asking whether it is true or not. Therefore it usually mentions neither place nor person names. It only concerns itself with the plot. This also results in a difference in style: while the legend is short and often recounted in an utterly dry fashion, the fairy tale tries to make its representation as juicy and lively as possible] (Sydow 1931, 199). This very general characterization of the genre applies well to Tang Kristensen's collection of folktales. At the same time, it raises the issue of the gray areas that separate the boundaries between genres. Like Jacob Grimm before him, von Sydow appealed to a contrastive strategy in describing the folktale, opposing it to the legend (cf. Grimm 1816-1818).

In Danish, folktales are referred to as *eventyr*, a word that derives from the Latin *adventura*, the same root as that of the English word adventure. Although Grundtvig proposed early on a classification scheme for the Danish folktales based, not surprisingly, in large part on Tang Kristensen's collections, the system was incomplete (Lunding 1910). Fortunately, most scholarly interest in folktales has moved away from the early twentieth century fascination with classification and typology,

a fascination best exemplified by the ATU index and Stith Thompson's motif index (Uther 2004; Thompson 1932).

Two main structuralist approaches to the study of folk narrative developed during the middle part of the twentieth century. The first, often referred to as syntagmatic structuralism, was developed by the Russian formalist, Vladimir Propp (1895-1970). Basing his study on a collection of Siberian fairy tales by his countryman Alexander Afanasyev (1826-1871), Propp proposed in 1928 a "grammar" of the fairy tale (Propp 1928). The general approach was to break the fairy tale—those tales catalogued between numbers 300 and 749 in ATU, and ending in a wedding—into its smallest constituent elements which he labeled "functions." He then presented four rules concerning these functions: "(1) Functions of character serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled… (2) The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited… (3) The sequence of functions is always identical… (4) All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure" (Propp 1968, 21-23). As he moved through the Afanasyev corpus, Propp refined the approach, and explained the thirty-one functions that described all the fairy tale characters and action. Not surprisingly, the implications of these rules are quite far reaching. Although his work was originally published in Russian in 1928, it did not receive much critical attention in the rest of Europe and North America until it appeared in English translation in 1958, as *The Morphology of the Folktale*. When it did appear, it inspired many scholars, including the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and the American folklorist Alan Dundes.

Dundes, in his work on the morphology of the North American Indian folktales, effectively built on the morphology proposed by Propp (Dundes 1964). By expanding on the term "motifeme," first proposed by

Kenneth Pike (1954), and recognizing its equivalence to Propp's function, Dundes constructed an interpretive framework that allows one to go beyond the simple mapping of functions as they appear in a folktale. Although all folktales may be a single type in terms of their structure, significant variation exists in the way functions (or motifemes) are filled and by whom. Building on linguistic theory, and Pike's precedent, Dundes labeled the observed phenomena that filled a motifemic slot *allomotifs* (Dundes 1980[1964], 59). The range of allomotifs available for any motifemic slot is conditioned by several factors, including tradition dominants (Eskeröd 1947, 81), a narrator's own tendencies, as reflected in his or her repertoire, and audience expectations and response. Studying the range of possible allomotifs for any given motifemic slot within a tradition group or area can provide a deeper understanding of variation and the psychological, social, political and narrative forces that lead to such variation.

Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural approach to anthropology and mythology were no doubt influenced by Propp's syntagmatic structuralist approach as well. His approach to the study of myth is generally referred to as paradigmatic structuralism. In this approach, variants of myths from a target culture are coded according to binary oppositions. Such an approach led Lévi-Strauss to conclude, for example, that Zuni Indian myths focused on the mediation between life and death. For him, "mythical thought always works from the awareness of oppositions towards their progressive mediation" (Lévi-Strauss 1958a, 62). Yet, as Dundes pointed out, Lévi-Strauss's paradigmatic structuralism is "certainly not easily intelligible and very probably not easily verified" (Dundes 1964(1980), 47). Nevertheless, Lévi-Strauss's admonition that cultural expressions need to be studied in context is well

worth heeding, and it informs a repertoire-centered approach to the study of folk narrative.

Perhaps the most important theoretical and analytical contribution yet made to the study of folktales came from the Danish scholar, Bengt Holbek (1933-1992) in his book *Interpretation of Fairy Tales* (1987). His work was predicated on Tang Kristensen's collections, and his analytical model combined the best of Propp and Dundes, incorporating a strong psychoanalytical dimension along with the underlying structural analysis of the tales. Holbek's remarkably clear model was based on a graphical representation of the five "moves" that constitute the fairy tale. He proposed that four main types of fairy tales exist—active and passive masculine and feminine tales—and that all the types emphasize the mediation of three main oppositions: male and female, high status and low status, and young and adult. The manner in which these oppositions are mediated reveals a great deal about the psychosocial tensions that animate peasant life at the end of nineteenth century Denmark.

With his graphical representation, Holbek reconciled in a single model the seemingly irreconcilable theoretical positions of varying structuralist schools without falling pray to an overly reductionist methodology. His graphing of fairy tale variants—each one tied closely to the person who told the tale—produced a consistent method for addressing the narrative choices made by the tale teller while relating those choices back to both the fairy tale tradition as a whole, and the storyteller's repertoire and biography. Ultimately, Holbek proposed that Danish folktales—and fairy tales in particular—represented an expression of wishful thinking. He situated these stories as predominantly an expression of the lower classes and, although many of the events allude to interactions and alliances with the upper classes, the stories

are more about domestic tensions and family politics than any evaluation of interaction between the classes.

Legend

One of the earliest collections of Danish folklore that was neither ballad nor proverb was Just Matthias Thiele's collection of Danish legends, *Danske Folkesagn* (1818-1823). As Per Skar notes, "Thiele's model was the Grimm brother's groundbreaking work 'Deutsche Sagen' of 1816-1818" (Skar 1968, 7). In the introduction to that work, Jacob Grimm gave voice to the contrast between legend and folktale, proposing that, "Das Märchen ist poetischer, die Sage historischer" [The fairy tale is more poetic, the legend more historical] (Grimm 1816, v). This contrastive definition informed the understanding of legend through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even Tang Kristensen made little attempt to provide a definition of the genre—his definition is implicit rather than explicit, and can only be derived by looking at what he includes in his various collections of "Jyske folkesagn" (Jutlandic folk legends) and "Danske sagn" (Danish legends).

Like many of his contemporaries, Tang Kristensen was more concerned with subgenres or subcategories of legend, than with any clear demarcation of the legend genre itself. In the foreword to his first collection of legends, *Jyske folkesagn* (JFm 3, 1876), he provides an overview of his initial classification scheme, which he refined in later editions:

> Min ordning af Sagnene er saa som saa, og jeg føler Trang til at belyse den lidt. De om Bjærgfolkene staa forrest som de værdfuldeste og aandrigeste, da de nærmest pege tilbage paa

selve Gudesagnene. Eller er der gjort tydelige Overgange fra det ene Æmne til det andet, hvor saadanne vilde byde sig frem. De forskjellige Slags overnaturlige Væsener, der nævnes i de første Afdelinger, holdes i Sagnfortællingen ikke klart ude fra hverandre; ja det er hartad, som man kjørte i Ring... Titelen til 3die Afdeling: Sagn om Personer og Steder, er noget svævende, men jeg fandt ikke noget bedre til at betegne de historier... 4de og 5te Afd. indeslutter Sagnene om de fredløse Sjæle og de levendes Bestræbelser for at blive dem kvit....5te Afd. skiller sig væsentlig fra 6te. I denne optræder nok kloge Folk saa vel som i hin; men de ere traadte i Forbindelse med den Slemme og udrette deres Kunster ved hans Hjælp... Sagn om Skatte knytte sig især til Varsler, endskjønt de og kunde have været stillede i 1ste Afd., da det mesten Dels er Bjærgfolk, der ruge over disse... Om Ulve, Pest o. lign. fortælles til sidst, da saadant kan betragtes som Efterslæt (JFm 3, ix-x).

[My organization of the legends is what it is and I feel a need to explain it a bit. The ones about the hidden folk (mound dwellers) are at the beginning as the most valuable and the most spiritual as they nearly point back to the legends of the gods. Otherwise there are clear divisions from one subject to the next, wherever they stand out. The various kinds of supernatural beings that are mentioned in the first sections are not clearly separated in the legends; yes it is as if one was going round in

circles… The title of the third section: legends
about people and places, is a bit fluid but I
couldn't figure out anything better to describe
those stories… the fourth and fifth sections
comprise legends about souls that have no
peace and the efforts of the living to be rid of
them… the fifth section is quite different
from the sixth section. Cunning folk appear in
this latter section as well but here they have
made a pact with the Devil and practice their
arts with his help… Legends about treasure
are linked in particular to portents, even
though they could have been included in the
first section, since it is mostly hidden folk
who brood over these… Stories about wolves,
the plague and the like are told last since they
can be considered as an appendix.]

As in his later collections, in this first volume of legends he
focused predominantly on a theme-based classificatory
scheme, foreshadowing Reidar Christiansen's much later
index of "migratory" legends (1992 [1958]). By the time Tang
Kristensen published his major collection of Danish legends,
Danske Sagn (1892-1901), his classificatory scheme had
become quite elaborate but was still based on this initial
classification. In *Danske Sagn*, he broke the legends into thirty
final categories, with several higher level groupings.[3] One of
the main problems with the system is that it is idiosyncratic,
and does not correspond with other classification systems. To
make matters worse, Tang Kristensen did not follow it in
other works, such as his earlier *Gamle folks fortællinger om det
jyske almueliv*. The other main problem with the system is that
stories can only have one classifier attached to them—
accordingly, if a story includes, for example, a revenant, a

named minister and a folk healer, Tang Kristensen is confronted by a classificatory problem: should the story appear in volume five, with the majority of stories about revenants, in volume four, with the majority of stories about named ministers, or in volume six, with the stories about folk healers? He appears to have made his decisions regarding this classificatory puzzle appear on an *ad hoc* basis.[4]

As folklore collections—and particularly collections of legends—grew ever larger, the Swedish folklorist von Sydow became deeply interested in the emerging folklore genre system. One of his major contributions to the study of legend was the distinction between *fabulate* and *memorate*, a distinction that was refined by Pentikäinen (1968b) but ultimately shown to be untenable by Dégh and Vázsonyi (Dégh and Vázsonyi 1974; see also Tangherlini 1994, 12). In an overview of the legend genre, von Sydow mentioned the difficulty of characterizing the genre and of classifying legend texts, contrasting it to the relative ease of both tasks for folktales: "Av de båda orienterande översikterna 'Om folkets sägner' och 'Om folksagorna' har sålunda den förra måst åtskilligt överskrida det på förhand beräknade utrymmet, emedan ingen vetenskapligt tillfredsställande utredning om sägnen, des olika arter, dess uppkomst och livsbetingelser m.m. förut funnits att tillgå" [Of the two introductory overviews, "Concerning folk legends" and "Concerning the fairy tale," the first has exceeded considerably the prearranged limits, largely because no satisfactory scientific description of the legend exists including its various types, its origin and how it develops and changes etc.](von Sydow 1931, 93). As a main distinction between the two genres, he wrote, "[man] räknar till sagans område den mera medvetna diktning, som berättas främst i underhållande syfte utan tanke på om dess innehåll är sant eller ej. Till sägnen räknar man däremot sådana berättelser, som tagits på allvar såsom nyttig eller intressant

kunskab" [One considers in the realm of the fairy tale the more consciously poetic, which is told first and foremost with a view toward entertaining with little consideration of whether it is true or not. In contrast, one considers in the realm of the legend stories that are taken seriously as important or interesting knowledge] (von Sydow 1931, 96).

He went on to provide an ontology for these stories that are told as true. First, he divided them into historical and mythological legends, even though he admitted that "I ett vetenskapligt tillfredsställande ordningssystem är sålunda en indelning… knappast lämplig, men innan en bättre indelning kommer til stånd… kan man använda de båda rubrikerna vid en grov fördeling av materialet" [In a scientifically satisfactory classification system such a division is… hardly appropriate, but no better division comes to light… and so one can use both of these rubrics as part of a rough division of the material] (von Sydow 1931, 97). He explored other possible major divisions, including the well-known "place legends" and "migratory legends," but also recognized the near impossibility of assigning legends to either one or the other category. Instead, he proposed another possible series of categories, all of which generally accrued to the main category of "historical legends": *minnessägner, ättsagor, upphovssägner* and *vittnessägner*. Unfortunately, as he himself concluded, these categories were inadequate for any classificatory system, and only helped to highlight some of the aspects of the genre itself (von Sydow 1931, 111).

Other general classifications, such as that proposed by Hans Ellekilde in his edition of Svend Grundtvig's *Danske Folkesagn, 1839-1883*, offered far less precision than von Sydow's scheme (Grundtvig and Ellekilde 1944-1948). Ellekilde, for example, relied on very general categories, with a main division between "local legends," and "personal legends," the former placing main emphasis on the location

of the events described in the legend, and the latter placing main emphasis on the people described in the legend (Grundtvig and Ellekilde 1944-1948, 61). Again, even a simple scheme such as this failed because of the "boundary problem" that Dégh and Vázsonyi explored in the context of the memorate/fabulate discussion. Part of the problem lies, of course, with the "elasticity" of the legend genre—stories expand and contract, spill over into other stories, and sometimes shift genre during the telling. Tang Kristensen hinted at his frustration at classifying stories early on, noting "Om en Tid mod haaber jeg at kunne udgive endnu en lille Sagnsamling, hvori de 'Æventyrlige Sagn,' der staa som Overgangsled imellem Sagn og Æventyr, ville finde deres Plads" [I hope at one point to be able to publish a small legend collection where the "Fairy tale legends," which act as a cross-over genre between legend and fairy tale, will find their place] (JFm 3, viii).

Ultimately, none of these classificatory systems works, falling victim as they all do to the single text-single classifier problem. What is intriguing about all the classification work on legends is that none of the scholars actually state what it was he was trying to classify. Von Sydow comes closest with his characterization of legends as stories that are related to local belief and are concerned with interesting or worthwhile information.

Although the legend genre resists definition, it is possible to provide a concise characterization of stories that are considered to be legends. In an earlier work, I have proposed that legend typically is "a traditional, (mono)episodic, highly ecotypified, localized and historicized narrative of past events, told as believable in a conversational mode...legend is a symbolic representation of folk belief and reflects the collective experiences and values of the group to whose tradition it belongs" (Tangherlini 1994, 22). [5] Such a

characterization provides a basis both for genre distinction and for understanding the types of issues people might address through the telling of legends.

The analysis of legend can proceed from an exploration both of the interrelated processes of ecotypification, localization (the process by which stories are attached to local places and people), and historicization (the process by which stories are embedded in time) and of the negotiation of cultural ideology (beliefs, norms, and values) expressed in individual legends. Borrowing a term from botany, von Sydow proposed the idea of the "oikotype" (ecotype) to describe what happens to a story or a story motif when it moves from one cultural environment to another. One of the most common changes is that characters are altered to align with the tradition-dominant characters of the new cultural area. If a story about a goblin, for example, moves into a cultural area where goblins are unknown, then the goblin figure might be changed into another, locally recognized figure such as an elf. Understanding ecotypification can help one understand variation in stories both across national and linguistic boundaries—helping explain, for example, the differences in the conception of hidden people in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Similarly, examining aspects of localization and historicization can help identify the degree to which a storyteller wants to keep the story at a physical or temporal distance.

One of the most powerful tools for the consideration of cultural ideology and its expression in folk legend is a structural model proposed by William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972). The approach was further refined by Teun van Dijk (1980) and adapted for the study of legend by William Nicolaisen (1987). In this model, the events in a story are mapped according to three main structural categories, and three ancillary categories

(printed in italics here): *Abstract*, Orientation, Complicating Action, *Evaluation*, Resolution, and *Coda*. Legends frequently deal with someone's perception of outside threat, and provide examples of strategies to deal with that threat. The success or failure of the strategy represents an ideological endorsement or rejection of that strategy on the part of the storyteller.[6]

In the abstract of a legend, the storyteller provides a brief overview of the story—"did I tell you about the time Pastor Larsen conjured a ghost?" Frequently, these abstracts are not included in written archives, and Tang Kristensen's collection is no different. Consequently, it is difficult to assess how often they were part of the performances he recorded. The orientation sets up the story, situating it historically, placing it in the local environment, and identifying the members of the community. The selection of "community" is an important element—either the community is seen as coterminous with the community of the storyteller and his or her audience, or the community is presented as different, either because of historical distance, geographic remove, or cultural difference. In most cases, however, legends focus on a representation of "us"—that is, the teller and the audience recognize in the legend's actants people who are or could be members of their community. The most extreme example of this identification of storytellers with their story actants occurs in first person narratives.

The complicating action—"what happened" in the words of Labov and Waletzky—is the event that makes the story worth reporting. Labov (1997) wrote of a threshold of reportability; if the "what happened" does not rise above this threshold, the chances that the story will be told, remembered and repeated drop precipitously (see also Robinson 1981, 59; van Dijk 1975). The "what happened" in legend is most frequently presented as a form of threat by an "outsider" to the community "insiders." Exploring the types of threats, and

what is threatened, is one of the theoretically richest areas of legend study. In Danish legends, the threats are usually to the physical, spiritual, or economic well-being of the community. The forms that threats can assume are myriad. In Danish legend tradition, threats are either supernatural or natural, and come either from outside or inside the community. In either case, there is a large gray area—what Victor Turner would label a "liminal" space, betwixt and between the otherwise well-defined boundaries (Turner 1969). In many cases, legends explore whether something belongs to one category or the other.

Turner's concept of liminality is particularly powerful in relation to the understanding of legend. The complicating action often occurs in a liminal space—one that teeters on the boundaries of human controlled space and uncontrolled, or wild, space. Understanding how space is coded—inside, outside, and in between—in these stories provides significant insight into shifting interpretations among members of the tradition community during a time of rapid change in both the physical and manmade environments. Similarly, understanding each particular threat—both its form and its relationship to the environment—as well as considering the various implications of that threat to the storyteller and their audience in the context(s) of their everyday lives allows one to integrate the analysis of legend with the analysis of social, political, economic and cultural change. As such, legend provides an important window into changing conceptions of community.

Most supernatural threats (which may not turn out to be threatening afterall, as in the case of legends of the mound dwellers' baking for example (Tangherlini 1998a)) belong to the outside or nonhuman realm: they come from trolls, giants, mound dwellers, elves, merfolk, and *nisser*. Most of these creatures also belong to the "outside" environment—those

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physical areas that exist beyond the boundaries of the village or the farm and its out buildings: forests, heaths, swamps, streams, lakes and oceans. Some of them inhabit the liminal space between the "outside" and the "inside," dwelling in arable land, as in the case of the mound dwellers. Others, as in the case of the *nisse* (house spirit), inhabit the same physical space as community members. Some supernatural beings, such as revenants and witches originally belonged to the inside human realm but, because of their actions—dying and subsequently haunting in the case of revenants, and making a pact with the devil in the case of witches—have allied themselves with the threatening, outside realm. Witches, of course, are a particularly problematic category, since they are so hard to identify. Consequently many of the stories explore whether or not someone is in fact a witch (Tangherlini 2000).

Most non-supernatural threats originate in the human realm: they come from thieves, robbers, amdmurderers to name but three, all of whom are humans and one-time community members. Interestingly, many of these threateners come from outside of the threatened community. Thieves frequently live in underground lairs hidden in the forest, while robbers and murderers either strike while a person is away from home, or appear as wanderers asking for assistance before striking their blow. Occasionally, community members are overcome by greed and, through their actions, reveal themselves to be menaces both to the economic and physical well-being of the community.

In the structural model, the complicating action also includes the response of the "insiders" to the event. Often, they are simply baffled. In these cases, the story emerges as an opportunity for the storyteller and the listeners to negotiate a suitable explanation for understanding the event. In other words, they fit the event into a conceptual category that is accepted within the tradition group. Lauri Honko

(1962, 1964) proposed that this type of negotiation—and subsequent retellings of the story with the derived explanation—serves as a model for the creation and perpetuation of belief stories, a proposed subcategory of legend.

In many more cases, the "insiders" decide on a course of action to countermand the threat. Michel de Certeau (1985, 23) proposed that stories thus comprise, "repertoires of schemes of action... mementos [that] teach the tactics possible within a given system." Stories allow one to pose a problem and then explore in the relative safety of narrative the possible outcomes of a proposed strategy for dealing with that problem. It is surprisingly fitting that the theme song of the movie comedy *Ghostbusters* asks the question, "When ghosts appear in the neighborhood, who ya' gonna call?", acknowledging that the response to a threat is a strategic one—call the wrong person, and the strategy is likely to fail (Tangherlini 1998a). The long term outcome of the success or failure of a particular strategy is occasionally deferred to the story's *coda*, the "what finally happened" ending that may or may not appear in a legend.

The exploration of strategies and their outcomes is a hallmark of legend telling—each complicating action requires the "insiders" to decide on some form of counteraction. The counteraction can have a series of possible outcomes—positive, negative and ambiguous. The outcome is reported in the "resolution" in the structural model of the legend. The storyteller has a great deal of latitude in reporting the outcome of the encounter and, in so doing, can offer an ideological evaluation of the efficacy of a particular strategy. So, for instance, if a local minister fails in his efforts to conjure down a particularly resilient revenant, and a folk healer has to step in to save the farm, one can interpret the story in the context of the shifting power dynamics of late

nineteenth century Denmark, where the previously unchallenged role of the Lutheran minister as the spiritual protector of the community was in flux.

This analytical method has significant interpretive power when it is applied across a series of variants of a particular story or across the repertoire of a storyteller or group of storytellers. While it is certainly not the only way to understand legends, the structural map allows for a consideration of several issues in a consistent manner: who constitutes the inside community, what type of threat challenges the integrity of the community, how is that threat manifest, what strategies exist for dealing with that threat, and what are the outcomes of these strategies in dealing with the threat? The multiple forks in the decision tree governing a legend telling—many of which accrue to the storyteller as he or she moves from deciding to tell a story, to telling the story, to concluding the story—are closely related to the storyteller's current world view. Because a storyteller's world view often changes over time, it is not uncommon to find that a storyteller who endorsed one strategy at one time has changed that position at a later telling. Similarly, because these positions are constantly being negotiated as part of the give and take of everyday storytelling, one can encounter seemingly contradictory positions within a single person's repertoire. All of this simply confirms that the negotiation of cultural ideology—the norms, beliefs and values that inform so much of day-to-day interactions in a community—is a messy business, and one that is never complete.

Other Genres

Tang Kristensen's collections are not limited solely to the "big three" genres, ballad, folktale and legend. As noted,

many of the stories and songs he collected straddle the conventional genre boundaries so that in his collections one finds examples of "fairy tale-like legends," jocular tales (*schwank*), jokes, riddles, proverbs, sayings, greetings and leave takings, recipes, prayers, cures, and curses. Some of these genres, such as riddles and proverbs, have been explored in significant detail by folklorists (Mieder 2003; Taylor 1951), whereas others have received scant attention. Because these expressions make up only a small proportion of the five main repertoires considered here, I do not explore them in detail. Nevertheless, these expressions form a key part of the storytellers' repertoires and should not be disregarded—they offer important insight into the thoughts and views of the individual.

Tang Kristensen's collections—and the repertoires presented here—also include detailed descriptions of everyday life, farming practices, life cycle and calendrical festivals. Tang Kristensen had no real way to categorize these descriptions, and eventually settled for publishing them under the rubric of *Gamle folks fortællinger om det jyske almueliv*. He had no shortage of material, and eventually published twelve large volumes in this series with an additional third series still in manuscript form at the Danish Folklore Archives (1929/102). These stories, some of which could easily have been published in the *Danske sagn* series, provide rich background material for understanding past agricultural practices and late nineteenth century daily life. In this way, they provide equally rich material for understanding the context in which the other stories are told.

One of the major faults with Tang Kristensen's desire to publish stories according to the genre classifications that held sway at the time is that, in so doing, all the connections between stories that develop during the telling disappear. If one reads through a storyteller's repertoire, one often finds a

close relationship between the descriptions of daily life printed in *Jysk almueliv* and those in *Danske sagn*. These descriptions also intersect with those in the folktales printed in Tang Kristensen's various folktale collections, as well as with the contents of the ballads included in his and Grundtvig's ballad collections. These connections are lost, however, when the stories are broken up and parsed out into the published collections. The intersections among genres—and the close connections among all the accounts in an informant's repertoire—can best be seen when one reads a person's entire repertoire. This sort of re-contextualization is one of the main reasons I present the repertoires as I have done here.

Notes

[1] *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser* is referred to by its abbreviation DgF throughout.

[2] A greater appreciation of the relationship between folk song texts and the melodies to which they were sung informs more recent Danish scholarship, particularly that of Jens Henrik Koudal (1984).

[3] These categories and subcategories are included in the index of stories available from the Danish Folklore Nexus. Go to the "Topic and Index Navigator" tab on the home page and select the "ETK indices" accordion.

[4] Fortunately, this problem can be solved in the digital realm—although Tang Kristensen's classifications are available for all of the stories included in this work, other classifications of the same stories are also available in the Danish Folklore Nexus. For access to these classification schemes, go to the "Topic and Index Navigator" tab on the

home page. One can then select from a variety of indices to the collection.

[5] Borrowing a term from botany, von Sydow uses the idea of "oikotype" or "ecotype" to describe what happens to a story or a story motif when it moves from one cultural environment to another. One of the most common changes in stories is that characters are changed to align with the tradition dominant characters in the new cultural area—if a story about a goblin moves into a cultural area where goblins are not known, the goblin figure might be changed into another locally recognized figure, such as an elf.

[6] As part of the metadata accompanying stories accessible from the Danish Folklore Nexus, I have provided a coding of the legends as positively, negatively or ambiguously resolved. The reader can decide on the usefulness of this evaluative metadata.