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Repertoire and the Individual

People are the most important part of any folklore study—they are the ones who create, perpetuate, learn, change, embrace, discard, invent, appropriate, memorize, forget, relearn and perform again and again the expressive culture that makes up the traditions of the groups to which they belong. Tradition, in this context, should be seen as anything that a member of a group decides is worth perpetuating. If a person can convince others in the group of the need to perpetuate the expression, then it becomes part of the group's active tradition; if not, then it becomes part of the individual's idiosyncratic expression. This continually negotiated process results in an ongoing tension between individuals and other people with whom they associate, either directly or indirectly. This productive dialectic between individual people on the one hand and tradition on the other hand is what animates folk culture. Despite the key role that individuals play in the folklore process, for the first century or so of the field's existence, these people behind the ballads, proverbs, myths, folktales, legends and other folk expressions that captured the imaginations of the earliest folklorists were at best ignored.

The earliest conceptions of folklore envisioned it as akin to a force of nature—a superorganic entity that essentially had a life of its own, entirely independent of the people who perpetuated it.[1] Olrik's "laws" of folk poetic composition (1908) stand as one of the most recognizable expressions of the superorganic position in folklore since Olrik implied that the laws were both universal and independent on the folk poets themselves. Because the laws were wholly internalized and not expressible by the poets themselves, tradition existed outside the minds of humans. This odd proposition led to significant contradictions in the collection of folklore. Collectors took a profound interest in finding old people who could remember the ostensibly even older folk expressions that offered a window onto the original national culture, but once they found these people, they took no interest in them as individuals. Instead, their interest was more in storytellers as representatives of a class of people who, because of their economic status and their age—older peasants were always preferable to younger peasants—were vessels of the objects of collection. The "laws" fully constrained their folk expression. They themselves were implicitly considered not worthy of being studied (and understood).

Peasants were preferable to all other classes because, while they were clearly the progenitors of the urban, elite classes with whom the scholars identified, they were unsullied by the corrupting influences of education. Largely considered illiterate, peasants were seen as uncritical storehouses of wisdom (lore) that had been passed down in unadulterated form from the earliest times of the *ethnos*. This idea of the *ethnos* was in turn conflated with the concept of nation. Scholars could aggregate the peasants stories and songs; pass aesthetic judgment on variants regarding which episodes or verses must be the "more original"; and then reconstruct the outlines of earlier culture. Ultimately, these scholars aspired

to creating a picture of the original oral "treasures" of the nation.

Implicit in many of the large nineteenth century collections and subsequent academic studies of these collections is an attenuation of the most extreme form of a superorganic conception of folklore. Rather than positing an external life for tradition, these studies suggest that tradition is rooted in the collective—tradition does not exist by itself, but rather emerges through the collective interactions of the peasants who all contribute to varying degrees to the preservation of their traditions. Even from this attenuated position, the emphasis on the collective processes of folklore without any attention to the individual's role in tradition began unraveling in the late nineteenth century. Scandinavian folklorists came down on both sides of the equation. Some emphasized the anonymous, collective nature of folklore, which essentially obviated the need for an understanding of the individual's role in folklore, while others became increasingly aware of the individual negotiation of the boundaries of folk expression. In some sense, this tension recapitulated the shift in the nineteenth century agricultural economy, in which personal anonymity in the larger agricultural *fællesskab* [community], a characteristic of the late eighteenth century, was supplanted by individual agency, with the rural worker as an actor in an expanding "free" market.

Once Tang Kristensen was able to shake off the demanding collecting yoke with which Grundtvig had imposed on him, he became increasingly interested in the individuals from whom he collected. He was not alone in this interest, even though the academic enterprise, spearheaded by Olrik, still was enthralled by earlier national Romantic ideas. The historic-geographic method was largely aligned with the uncritical superorganic view of folklore, since the main methodological innovation of that approach was to map

variants of songs from the Finnish epic tradition Kalevala without regard for the backgrounds of the individuals who sang the songs. Nevertheless, in the early decades of the twentieth century, a theoretical complement to Tang Kristensen's growing interest in his informants developed with von Sydow's criticism of the historic-geographic method. The additional critical light that von Sydow's work and that of his students shed on the folklore process led to an increasing awareness in Nordic folklore circles of the primary role of individuals in the creation and perpetuation of folklore.

The debate was in no way settled by von Sydow's emphasis on "tradition bearers" (Sydow 1948b). The notion that folk tradition has a life of its own independent of the thousands of essentially anonymous people who perpetuate that tradition received a significant boost at the beginning of the twentieth century with Carl Jung's work on the theory of the collective unconscious (Jung 1959). Although Jung was predominantly interested in myth, his idea of a common inherited reservoir of human experiences implied that myth, folk belief and all folk expression for that matter were part of this common inheritance. The idea of a broad common inheritance conflicted, however, with the equally untenable position that folklore was a reflection of the ancient national spirit passed on uncritically through generations by illiterate peasants. Jung's work, particularly that on archetypes, continues to inform popular theories of folklore, such as Joseph Campbell's theory of "universals" (Campbell 1949). The problem with this approach is that it posits an original or normative form for any folk expression, much in keeping with the position of the early Romantic nationalist folklorists. In short, all of these approaches emphasize the "tradition" side of the folklore dialectic, offer no tenable analysis of what tradition is, and pay no attention to individuals as part of this process.

Despite the continuous drumbeat of the superorganic nature of folklore that continues to beat in New Age conceptions of tradition, the study of folklore has become increasingly anchored in the study of individuals and their relationship to folk traditions. Among the first substantive studies of individual repertoire were those of Milman Parry and his graduate student Albert Lord, who studied Serbo-Croatian epic (Lord 1964). Their goal was to understand how individuals were able to remember and perform epic, a nagging question of composition raised by Homeric epic and given additional momentum by the discovery—or creation—of other national epic traditions such as the Finnish *Kalevala*. The result of Parry and Lord's analysis of the repertoires of Serbian epic singers in Bosnia was their proposal of the oral formulaic hypothesis of folk composition. Even though Parry died young when a gun in his luggage discharged, Lord continued their work on the hypothesis and, in the process, drew increasing attention to the performance of folk expressions.

Since the underlying idea of the oral formulaic hypothesis maintains that epic is not memorized, but rather recomposed—and the field data unequivocally supports this idea—Parry and Lord's position refuted the stance that folklore was passed down uncritically and essentially unchanged by the illiterate masses. Rather, the transmission became tied both to the individual who learned, remembered and brought his or her own individual artistry to bear on the material and to the audience whose response to the individual's performance conditioned that performance. Although texts were still of paramount importance to Parry and Lord, other considerations now came into play. These considerations of how tradition spreads through the intervention of individuals who "perform" aligned well both with the theories of von Sydow and his students. The ideas

also offered fertile ground for the emerging field of structuralism. Implicit in Parry and Lord is the notion that competent performers of a tradition internalize the structure of the folk expression, and expand or contract their performance of a story based on their own expertise, experiences and the performance context—stories and songs do not need to be memorized (although some certainly are) for them to be part of the traditional repertoire of a "singer of tales." Support for these ideas can be found quite easily in Tang Kristensen's collection. Although he never explicitly articulated a theory of the individual and tradition, Tang Kristensen had clearly surmised the importance that individuals play in the folkloric process.

These emerging ideas in early folkloristics concerning the role of individuals as creators of tradition aligned with developments in the field of anthropology. Franz Boas, at the turn of the twentieth century, had revolutionized the study of anthropology in the United States, with his book *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911). His historico-critical school of anthropology, which emphasized the way individuals tried to make sense of the complexity of the societies in which they lived, informed the work of his later students, such as Ruth Benedict, who was also deeply involved in the development of folklore studies in the United States (Levy Zumwalt 1988). The functionalist anthropology of Bronislaw Malinowksi and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown also helped tilt the general field of folklore toward an appreciation of the tension between individuals and communities, and the function that expressive culture has for individuals in these communities. As Juha Pentikäinen noted, "The golden rule of the functionalists was: 'Ask the natives.' In collecting as well as studying they considered the attitudes, interpretations and world views of the natives important, neither did they in describing the culture's totality and its functions forget to depict individual

differences" (1978, 14-15). Although Tang Kristensen did "ask the natives," he was apparently the only one listening at the time. Fortunately, he had the good sense to write down what they told him.

Boas's theories and his fieldwork methods influenced a large number of folklorists throughout the world. His methodological emphasis on the close working relationship between a researcher and a single informant—an approach that reached its zenith with Boas's student Alfred Kroeber, who brought the native Californian Yahi Ishi to live in the anthropology building at the University of California, Berkeley—resulted in a boom of studies of individual repertoires. A precursor to these ethnographic studies was Mark Azadovskij's (1926) study of a Siberian storyteller, Natalja Osipovna Vinokurova, the first scholarly consideration of an individual and her folklore repertoire. He situated her and her stories in her social and economic milieu, as much as in her tradition milieu, and explored her narrative style, noting that she is preoccupied with the historical aspects of her stories (see also Pentikäinen 1978, 15-16). The portrait he painted of her is intriguing, and he presented her as a distinct individual whose repertoire diverges quite dramatically from what normative collections would suggest. In so doing, he highlighted the way collections often "level" the expression of individuals to fit editorial expectations, and he drew attention to the importance that individual predilections have in shaping tradition. Azadovskij's study was influential in both Russia and Hungary, and one can trace his considerations of individual repertoire and the role of storytelling in the work of Gyula Ortutay (Ortutay and Fedics 1940) and, later, Linda Dégh (Dégh 1969).

Otto Brinkmann's study of storytelling in a small German village society, *Das Erzählen in einer Dorfgemeinschaft* (The Storyteller in a Village Society, 1933), was a precursor to

Dégh's work in Hungary, and ushered in an increasing focus among northern European folklorists on the role played by storytelling and storytellers in small communities. Gottfried Henssen narrowed the focus from an entire community to a single individual in his work *Überlieferung und Persönlichkeit: Die Erzählungen und Lieder des Egbert Gerrits* (Tradition and Personality: The Stories and Songs of Egbert Gerrits) (1951). Henssen explored the relationship between personality and repertoire, emphasizing the psychology of a gifted, creative individual. This shift away from the community and toward the study of exceptional individuals, a shift that one also sees in Carl Hermann Tillhagen's studies of repertoire (Tillhagen and Taikon 1948; Tillhagen 1959), may have let the pendulum swing too far. The approach risks misrepresenting the character of tradition in a community, and also risks descending into the study of idiosyncrasy rather than the tension between individual and tradition. Importantly, the study of the role that individual personality plays in shaping culture was an increasing focus of anthropologists as well, an agenda that had been shaped by developments in psychological testing and profiling in the 1940s, and John J. Honigmann's influential work on culture and personality (Honigmann 1954; see also Pentikäinen 1978, 28-30).

In northern Europe, Siegfried Neumann continued to explore the productive tension between individual and tradition with two studies of storytellers in Mecklenburg, *Ein mecklenburgischer Volkserzähler* (A Mecklenburgian Folkteller) (1968) and *Eine mecklenburgische Märchenfrau* (A Mecklenburgian Fairy Tale Woman) (Neumann and Peters 1974). As in many such repertoire studies, Neumann focused primarily on tellers of fairy tale. Stefaan Top's "Repertoire und Biographie am Beispiel einer flämischen (Volks-) Liedsängerin" (Repertoire and Biography of a Flemish (Folk) Singer as Example) (1982) extended the genre range to

include ballads, but it still limited the study to someone with a particular genre specialization. Although an emphasis on specialized repertoire made sense in the groundbreaking work of Parry and Lord, whose goal was to understand compositional techniques among a highly specialized and professional group of epic singers, it makes less sense in the context of the interplay between individuals and tradition in general.

Intriguingly, Tang Kristensen intuited the need to collect entire repertoires, irrespective of genre specialization. This awareness became more important after Grundtvig's death, which took with it Grundtvig's inordinate focus on fairy tales and ballads. In short, although all the studies I have mentioned helped shift the emphasis away from the texts *per se*, and situate folklore expressions as products of the complex relationships between individuals, their communities and the traditions of the groups to which they belong, they often fell short of the holistic perspective to which they aspired, either by emphasizing the idiosyncrasies of an individual to the detriment of an understanding of community or by emphasizing one genre to the detriment of an understanding of the interplay between genres.

It took several decades for the study of individual repertoire and performance to catch on in the United States. When it took hold in the 1960s—at the same time that structuralism had taken hold—the study of performance emerged as one of the main theoretical focal points in American folkloristics. Dell Hymes's work on *The Ethnography of Speaking* (1962) and his later essay, "Breakthrough into Performance" (1975) were influential in focusing folklore scholarship on aspects of performance. In 1972, Americo Paredes and Richard Bauman published a small collection of influential essays under the title *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore* (1972). Bauman, Hymes and several others,

increasingly focused on the "ethnography of speaking," an approach that also aligned them with linguistic anthropologists and sociologists such as William Labov and Emmanuel Schegloff. The perspectives in the Paredes and Bauman compendium were not necessarily new (although their application in folkloristics was), but the volume did focus American folklore on aspects of performance and the importance of context in folklore. Alan Dundes, in "Text, Texture, Context," had drawn attention to the interplay between texts, and the importance of context for understanding the performance of a particular text (1964). Similarly, studies of the anthropological and ethnographic component of folk performance had raised the important issue of competence, an issue that informed von Sydow's distinction between active and passive tradition bearers.

By shear force of numbers, Tang Kristensen managed to capture this holistic perspective on the interplay between individuals and tradition in his collection. Although he was interested in collecting from excellent storytellers and singers, mentioning in many of the prefaces and afterwords to his published works the lengths to which he went to seek out the best storytellers and singers, he did not limit himself to one genre or another and always accepted even the smallest contribution. Without saying so explicitly, he was giving voice to what most people understand intuitively—that some people are better at some things, such as storytelling, than others. If one wants to hear a song well sung, one seeks out a known singer. To hear a joke well told, one seeks out someone known to be a good joke teller. Sometimes such people are one and the same, and sometimes they are not. In light of this, I proposed a modification of von Sydow's idea of "tradition bearers": instead of speaking of "active" and "passive" bearers, Tang Kristensen's collection reveals that it is more accurate to speak of a sliding scale between active and

passive tradition *participants*, recognizing that an active participant in one part of a community's tradition might well be a passive participant in another part of the tradition. Similarly, being active in a tradition at one point in one's life does not mean that one will be active later on in life, and just because one is active in the tradition does not necessarily mean that one is also competent (Tangherlini 2008c). Given this complexity, repertoires cannot and should not be studied in isolation.

One of the most articulate voices calling for increased attention to performance was that of Roger Abrahams. In his work, he recognized the range between active participation and passive participation, as well as the shifting terrain of tradition competence. His study of "the dozens" included clear examples of individual performances where tradition participants challenged each other's competence to perform. In writing about folklore performance, Abrahams noted, "The performer…given his ability to actively produce a narrative [relies] heavily upon the audience's understanding of the lineaments of both the type and its individual manifestations. Of importance in such an approach is not the item itself but the total event in which the item provides the primary focus... His role as presented is to activate the sense of meaningful encounter, meaningful transaction. He differs from the members of his audience only in that he has a productive competence within that type of performance while theirs is, at least at the moment, a receptive competence" (Abrahams 1975, 15-16). As American folklore studies became increasingly focused on the "folklore event"—a focus that brought with it a concomitant emphasis on the tension between the individual and tradition—one could trace among some scholars a decreasing interest in the study of texts. This decreasing interest in the "primary focus" of the folklore event brought with it the danger of abandoning folklore

altogether in favor of the far more general study of performance.[2] During the past two decades, this shift in folkloristics from a field that paid scant attention to the individual to one where the individual as an agent in creating, shaping and perpetuating traditional expressive culture has been characterized as a split between "performance oriented" scholars and "text oriented" scholars.

Despite this alleged "split," one would be hard pressed to find folklorists who abandoned the study of text altogether. Instead, over the course of several decades, the appreciation of the importance of individuals and their performances fused with the study of texts that had, until the first decades of the twentieth century, been studied largely with no consideration of the performance contexts in which they were recorded. In some ways, this state of affairs echoes Malinowski's forgotten maxim, "The text, of course, is extremely important, but without the context it remains lifeless" (Malinowski 1926, 24; quoted in Pentikäinen 1978, 22). Linda Dégh, for instance, continued to expand her study of storytelling communities that she had begun with her dissertation, *Märchen, Erzähler und Erzählungsgemeinschaft* (Folktale, Storyteller, and Storytelling Community) (1962). Similarly, Alan Dundes developed an increasingly sophisticated psychoanalytic approach to folk expression that recognized the role that individual psychology plays in the conditioning of repertoires and individual variants. Elliott Oring's studies of humor (1984), Henry Glassie's ethnographic explorations of the role of folklore in small communities (1982), Dan Ben-Amos's explorations of folklore in context (1975 and 1982), and Kenneth Goldstein's recordings of folksong repertoires (1956a and 1956b) all contributed significantly to the increasing awareness of the theoretical importance of foregrounding individuals in the folkloric process.

Abrahams, in his characterization of the folklore event, brought up another important issue, namely that of the "meaningful transaction." Folklore creates meaning, both for the people who perform it and for the people who listen to it. Once something no longer creates meaning, people stop doing it—unless the lack of meaning, such as the performance of nonsense rhymes, is meaningful itself. William Bascom in an influential article entitled "Four Functions of Folklore" (1954), proposed that folklore serves a series of distinct functions in any culture: (1) it can offer escape (2) it can validate cultural ideology (3) it can educate and (4) it can assert social pressure. Although overly broad and reductionist, Bascom's emphasis on the role that folk expressive culture plays as a meaning making aspect of culture is one that deserves attention. One of the key tasks of folklore analysis is the exploration of the range of meanings created through the performance of folk expressive culture. Such an approach necessitates both a deep understanding of the culture in which the performance takes place, as well as a thorough knowledge of the performer, including his or her background, along with a broad knowledge of the backgrounds, expectations and tradition competence of the audience (or implied audience). Since this sets the bar quite high—perhaps to an unattainable height—the best one can hope to achieve is an ethnographically thick description of the target culture incorporating a strong social, cultural, economic and political dimension coupled to an in-depth biography of the teller or tellers. Few collections of folklore are by themselves extensive enough to sustain this type of approach; similarly, the range of meanings created by a folk performance can be very broad. These considerations, however daunting, do not doom the folklorist's task to futility; rather, they force one to recognize that any analytic conclusions are necessarily contingent on the degree of detail

available for the micro-context of performance and the macro-context of the performer's life in a complex society.

In Scandinavia, the pendulum began its swing away from the early conceptions of folklore as a superorganic entity in the early decades of the twentieth century. Von Sydow and his students led the way, despite the still powerful sway of the Finnish school. The very large collections of folklore such as those of Tang Kristensen in Denmark and the Finnish Literary Society in Finland offered an archival anchor that allowed for the very large cataloging and indexing enterprises such as the ATU index and the ML index to continue. At the same time, von Sydow's concept of tradition bearers became increasingly influential. As researchers and students alike explored the archives, they began discovering the individuals behind many of these traditions. Consequently, they recognized the possibility of rehabilitating the archive to align with modern concerns of performance and context, leading to several productive studies of individual expression based on archival resources that had been discounted as old fashioned by folklorists in the 1970s (Holbek 1987; Tangherlini 1994).

Juha Pentikäinen's study of the repertoire of Marina Takalo, a Karelian folk singer, was the first sustained examination of the productive tension between an individual and tradition (1978). His study, *Oral Repertoire and World View*, was based predominantly on recent collections but situated Marina's repertoire in the context of several hundred years of folk collection in Karelia. As the title of his study suggests, his goal was to explore the interaction between a singer's traditional repertoire and her world view, revealing the interplay between the two: the songs in her repertoire, along with her personal interpretation of those songs was influenced by her experiences and expectations, while those experiences and expectations were influenced by her songs.

As he noted, "Life-historical repertoire analysis thus throws light on the way an individual experiences her *Umwelt* [environment] in her own niche and how she arranges and organizes her *Umwelt* on the basis of her own experiences and world view" (1978, 32). Although the method he proposed can seem unnecessarily complex, the analysis of repertoire in the context of individual experiences and broader social history, along with an awareness of the performance aspects of folk expressive culture offers the reader a far deeper appreciation of the productive tension between individuals and tradition than an aesthetic consideration of text ever could. Similarly, the approach offers a clear route to recognizing how folk expressive culture creates meaning for individuals in complex societies.

Pentikäinen's study posed several intriguing questions related to stability and change in folk traditions, questions that have always been an important part of folkloristics. Unless these questions are situated in the study of individuals, their repertoires, and the repertoires of others in the tradition community—either explicitly as in the case of Dégh's study of folktale tellers in Hungary, or implicitly as in the case of Pentikäinen—the answer to those questions often exclude the most important part of the folklore equation: the individual. In his consideration of Takalo's repertoire, Pentikäinen concluded, "[her] repertoire of folklore did not seem to be any stable, unchangeable whole, rather it appeared to change in accordance with the development of the individual personality and the epochs of her life history. There was an active repertoire…which Mrs. Takalo spontaneously and without specific prompting…hurried to convey to every researcher who came to meet her" (1978, 331). Pentikäinen went on to distinguish between a person's "latent" and "active" repertoire, and the threshold between the two, emphasizing the dynamic nature of repertoire.

Since Pentikäinen's landmark study of Takalo's repertoire and his interpretation of the repertoire as a reflection of her world view, the study of individuals and their folklore repertoire has become one of the hallmarks of Nordic folkloristics. Repertoire is of course a moving target. In these studies, repertoire refers to all the folklore that a single person performed for a collector, either during a single interview or, in most cases, over the course of extended fieldwork. This view is necessarily limited in scope, as the fieldworker's biases can easily influence what is collected. One need only think of Tang Kristensen's early methodology where, with Grundtvig's encouragement, he asked first for ballads, then folktales and then anything else. Rather than providing an accurate picture of "everything" a person can tell, the repertoire view is a snapshot—or perhaps a collage of snapshots—that gives a broad sense of what a person told or sang over the course of several meetings. Although these snapshots can never be considered exhaustive documentation, they can provide an accurate picture of what the repertoire "looked like" at a given time. Indeed, many repertoire studies reveal that certain stories are a "stable" part of an individual's repertoire, while other stories lose their ability to create meaning for the teller or his audience, and thus move out of the active repertoire (Goldstein 1971; Siikala 1990; Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1996; Georges 1994; Tangherlini 2003).

Since the mid 1960s, numerous important studies of individual repertoires as well as groups of repertoires have been published. Tillhagen's earlier studies of Swedish storytellers and their repertoires, as well as his study of gypsy storytelling clearly set the stage for Pentikäinen's work (Tillhagen 1948; 1959). Finnish folklorists, such as Anniki Kaivola-Bregenhøj and Anna Leena Siikala, are among the most productive in this area. Kaivola-Bregenhøj's *Narrative and Narrating. Variation in Juho Oksanen's Storytelling* (1996), an

abridged version of her monograph *Kertomus ja kerronta* (Story and Narrative), is based on her fieldwork in the 1960s and 1970s with a sexton who also turned out to be an excellent storyteller (1996, 9). Her close analysis of a single performer's repertoire set against a thick ethnographic description of the tradition and the cultural context allowed her to undertake convincing analyses of variation in his repertoire. As she noted, "Narrative variation never takes place on the narrator's terms alone; it is always the outcome of interaction between the narrator and the audience" (1996, 29). The study of variation, accordingly, should be predicated not on the study of a single repertoire, but rather on a series of repertoires, thus allowing for the delineation of variation within a repertoire, and variation within a tradition group.

Anna Leena Siikala, in a series of thorough studies of Finnish storytelling, provided such an analysis (1980a; 1980b; 1984; 1990). In these works, she emphasized the interaction between individual personality and repertoire, as well as the contours of tradition as shaped by the individual storytellers. Some of this work is inaccessible to a non-Finnish speaking audience (1980 and 1984). *Interpreting Oral Narrative* (1990) offers the most accessible formulation of her approach. In the course of the examination of storytellers in Kauhajoki, Finland, she outlined a typology of narrator types (1990, 143-160), which provides a more sophisticated representation of the varying levels of engagement with different aspects of tradition among community members than the simpler model proposed by von Sydow.

Beginning in the 1960s, the shift in Scandinavian folkloristics toward the study and analysis of individual folklore considered in the context of larger tradition and set against the shifting economic and cultural terrain of the individual's own life is striking. Bjarne Hodne's study of fairy tale telling Norway, *Eventyret og tradisjonsbærerne: Eventyrfortellere*

i en Telemarksbygd (The Folktale and the Tradition Bearers: Folktale Tellers in a Telemark Village) (1979), is among the best known of these studies and stands as a Norwegian companion to classic works such as that of Brinkmann and Dégh. Gun Herranen undertook a preliminary analysis of the repertoire of a blind storyteller, whose life experiences colored his stories (1984; 1989). Reimund Kvideland contributed to the study of repertoire, both with his short article "Olav Eivindsson Austad: Ein forteljar og miljøet hans" (Olav Eivindsson Austad: A Storyteller and his Milieu, 1989) and his overview article "The Study of Folktale Repertoires" (1993). An edited collection of fairy tale repertoires from the Nordic region piloted the idea of repertoire comparison across a broad, yet linguistically and culturally linked region (Kvideland and Sehmsdorf 1999). Important for the present work is Henrik Koudal's study of the repertoires of two Danish singers from Tang Kristensen's collections (1984). Unlike most repertoire studies, Koudal presents the entire song repertoire of each of the informants. Finally, Marisa Rey Henningsen brought the Nordic emphasis on the study of repertoire to southern Europe, and offered a compelling portrait of storytelling among women in Galicia in Spain (1994; 1996).

Bengt Holbek's landmark study *Interpretation of Fairy Tales* (1987) is a masterful exploration of individual repertoire, personality and community. Holbek not only developed an important methodology for the study of fairy tales, but also explored the lives and repertoires of one hundred twenty-seven storytellers (Holbek 1987, 85-87). He supplemented the necessarily broad study of these repertoires by including two additional sections: The first section, an analysis of one fairy tale, *Kong Lindorm*, in thirteen variants told by a series of narrators all from Jutland and all collected between 1845 and 1905 , and the second section, an analysis of the fairy tales of

five storytellers. These analyses were inspired by Dundes's psychoanalytic approach predicated on a Freudian analysis of symbolism in the stories, but were conditioned by an understanding of the social context and economic conditions in which the storytellers lived. By exploring the repertoires of a series of storytellers set against a comprehensive appreciation of the tradition group, Holbek sidestepped the problems that pester other studies of repertoire. Nevertheless, as with many other repertoire studies, he emphasized a particular genre, and offered little comparative material for understanding the interplay between genres in an individual's repertoire. In earlier work, I presented a similar approach to the study of Danish legend repertoire, offering an overview of one hundred legend repertoires and an in depth analysis of three repertoires, all set against the social, economic and political developments in nineteenth century Denmark (1994).

Repertoires cannot and should not be studied in isolation. Folklore has come a long way from the days when philological interests were the driving force behind collection. Yet even nineteenth century collectors who were inspired by the quest for *urkultur* (original culture) occasionally paid attention to the individuals who were the "storehouses" of this "ancient" lore. Tang Kristensen's idiosyncratic insistence on keeping notes on his informants led to his own increasing interest in these people. As this approach developed, he became one of the first collectors to systematically collect as complete an overview of individual repertoires as he possibly could.

The five repertoires presented here allow one to engage in one's own analysis of multiple repertoires that include a wide range of folklore genres, and to situate that analysis in the social, economic, political and physical environment in which these storytellers lived. The productive tension between the individual and the broader tradition can be brought into stark

relief through the study of these repertoires. Such an approach enables one to interrogate more fully how these particular expressions helped create meaning for a number of Danes at a time of profound social, cultural, economic and political change.

Notes

[1] The superorganic view holds that there is a level of culture that is not controlled by the organic level—i.e. the level of human control—but which guarantees a consistency in human behavior (Pentikäinen 1978, 17; Dundes 1965, 129-130).

[2] This danger was realized in the late 1990s when the Program in Folklore and Mythology at UCLA was disestablished in favor of a program entitled "World Arts and Cultures." This degree program shifted the intellectual focus to the broader study of cultural performance.