

*SamGU im. A. Navoi (20-25 marta 1968 g.)*. Samarkand, 1968, p. 160.

<sup>40</sup>Sadnik, L., Aitzetmüller, R. *Handwörterbuch zu den altkirchenslavischen Texten*. Heidelberg, 1955, pp. 63, 141.

<sup>41</sup>Skok, P. *Etymologijski rječnik hrvatskoga jezika*. Kn. 1. Zagreb, 1971, p. 179.

<sup>42</sup>Klawe, J. *Totemizm a pierwotne zjawiska religijne w Polsce: Studium porównawcze*. Warszawa, 1920, p. 146.

<sup>43</sup>About the evolution of the proto-Slavonic lexeme *ubog* in the composition of the discussed phrase, see in detail: Lipatov, A. K *semanticheskoi istorii slova ubog*. In: *Semantika slova v istorii russkogo i drevnerusskogo yazykov*. Gorky, 1989, pp. 71-76.

## THE SHEPHERD TURNS INTO A VANISHING HITCHHIKER

### Recording Folk Beliefs Will Save The Changing World Views Into The Future

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Some ten years ago I was listening to the general discussion after a lecture at the Folklore club in Stockholm. A famous professor of anthropology told us that folk beliefs were dying and so were the memorates because no young people were having any supernatural experiences.

Now I know better. At the time I thought that perhaps there would be fairly few people in Stockholm and Uppsala with such experiences, but every semester a few of my students considered that they had been exposed to supernatural experiences. For ten years I used to teach folklore studies at the University of Umeå, on the Northwest coast of the Baltic. As I was living in Uppsala, and had to make the journey up to Umeå, I never had the opportunity to collect any interviews myself from this northern part of Sweden. Outside the towns there are still large forests with scattered farms and villages. Most people have cars and television sets and are very dependent upon them. However, there is still time and space for many things only talked about in private, and not explained rationally. I learned from the students that everything in the books could still be met with out there.

During the week before this discussion had been lecturing on Lauri Honko's 'Folk Beliefs and Memorates',<sup>1</sup> when the girls in the group started giggling for no obvious reason. So I waited until quite a composed girl explained: *I have had a supernatural experience and I feel so exposed by his analysis.*

She was twenty-two, I could not ask her to tell me in front of the whole group, but I have never forgiven myself for not recording her memorate. She vanished among the eight million Swedes, but in the next year I started asking the new members of my class to acknowledge their own folklore and write down a piece for me, as an exercise.

Thus, never leaving the classroom, I eventually got a small 'teacher's collection' of folklore items known to the ethnology students of Umeå. Half of them were from the north, the rest from various places in southern Sweden. They were 20-30 years of age with a few middle-aged exceptions. The students who told me traditional folk beliefs and memorates came from North Sweden, some of them were very young, only twenty. A dominant trait was the automobile when meeting the invisible ones, the fairies. They even sprang on the engine bonnet for a ride of six kilometres.

We all know that the supernatural beings of the farms and the forests will not be encountered in urban environments, but the car is of such vital importance to people in the countryside that it will be included in meetings with the supernatural parallel beings, the unseen, the little ones, underground dwellers, fairies, etc. In the north of Sweden they may still be part of the world view, although not in a logical or rational way. Cultural compartmentalisation<sup>2</sup> may be a scholarly useful labelling term, but people who meet the supernatural beings do not care about the intellectual logic if the emotional logic is clear to them, making their world view consistent and conceivable from a natural point-of-view.

## Old Man's Lake

Among the things I was told there was this memorate. In the northern inland of Sweden, in the forests of Lapland, there is a small village with a name meaning *Old Man's Lake*. Here there is talk of a ghost, a shepherd, appearing at night. There are two roads, one right through the village and the other around it in the outskirts, some five kilometres longer. When you drive a car to the coast from the mountain villages some 300-500 kilometres away from Umeå on the Baltic, you have to choose either the shorter, straight and broad way through the village where nothing exciting will happen to you, or the longer one around.

Late on Sunday nights young men return from the mountain villages back to their military service in Umeå. They are really in a hurry, but they choose the longer way. If you pass a certain spot alone in the car, there may suddenly be a man sitting beside you in the car. He complains severely, but you are not supposed to talk to him, just drive on until he gets off.

The boys are not sure whether he has killed a child or committed suicide, but at night when passing this spot they may get him into the car. There are

generally four young in the car on weekend leave from army in Umeå, so they have never actually met this complaining man, but still they choose the longer road, for you never can tell... They go there to check, but nothing happens. They know the story. Perhaps they also know of the 'vanishing hitchhiker',<sup>3</sup> but there is no mention of that in the report of a young male student some years ago (EA 7:1).

I was interested to trace this urban automobile legend in Lapland in 1984 and told my colleague in Umeå, Alf Arvidsson about it. He knew more about the ghost shepherd of Old Man's Lake from the collections of the Folk Life Archive in Umeå. I wondered if the hitchhiker had been there long before the cars or if he had come from the urban outside world, but Alf Arvidsson knew from the archive collections that somehow he was part of another traditional legend complex, the devil driven out through a hole in the lead bar between the panes of the window. The place was somehow regarded as doomed. All kinds of evil things were attributed to Old Man's Lake.

So we kept our eyes and ears open to further information.

Looking for quite something else at the Institute of Dialect and Folklore Research in Uppsala, ULMA, I came across a note dated 1931 from a neighbouring village, stating that the people of Old Man's Lake were particularly blasphemous, playing cards and dancing, never going to church and then a parenthesis was added: the devil appears in church.

Still there was no clear connection between the complaining shepherd/hitchhiker and the devil in the church.

Three years later new students wrote down their recognitions. They were discussed in class and I asked if anyone knew about the shepherd host. This time there was a lady from the next parish, born in 1945, who had known about it since childhood. She knew that the shepherd could have no peace because he wanted to tell the world of the murder he had witnessed. Travelling peddlers used to stay the night at the inn, but they always disappeared at night without any trace. The shepherd discovered a hatch in the wall at the head end of the bed where the guests were put up. The inn-keeper, a farmer, and his wife used the hatch to kill the guests, then robbed them of their goods and money and the bodies were sunk in the lake.

At this point I begin to wonder which came first, the place name or the deed? Could this story of a crime explain the name, since there was already something evil attached to the place? I suggest that the place name Old Man's Lake was there first and that the explanation came later.

There was common talk of robbed and killed peddlers along the roads all over Sweden. There are plenty of such stories in the archive of the Folk Life Institute in Uppsala. It certainly happened sometimes and so the fear still increased.

The lady student added that this road was lonely, narrow and winding. The innkeeper's wife was the commanding leader. The hitchhiker would be a recent invention according to her. The shepherd ghost who could get no peace in his grave was quite sufficiently exciting to her as a child.

When she wrote down the story for me in 1987 she was not very interested in his transformation into a hitchhiker complaining in a car, while driving a car was the natural life medium for the twenty years younger student from the Lappish inland.

I recognised the car as the transportation vehicle used by the supernatural beings when accompanying the stressed and anxious human beings into modern technological life.

Going back to the archive record dated 1931, I found that the notion of the people was not a general categorisation but the effect of the excerption. It really was not meant as bad as it sound when isolated. Instead it formed the structural opening lines of another redaction of the legend: about the devil. This redaction seems to be influenced by the great revival movement. The villages of inner Lapland are not very much older, since the area was colonised during the nineteenth century:

*The people of Old Man's Lake were rather 'blasphemous'. They would play cards, they would dance and never go to church. Once this boy arrived in spring. He was hired as a shepherd.*

*He took good care of the cattle. Curiously enough, he never undressed as he went to bed and they never saw him eating. They had a new maid at the farm, a pious maid (meaning a good Christian human being). She watched the shepherd in his sleep and she could see that he had the cloven goat hoof and horns on his knees. She told the parson.*

*Next time there was a dance in Old Man's Lake the parson watched the dancing people from outside the window. Through the pane he could see the shepherd dance taking on airs and he looked like the devil himself, Old Nick.*

*The next day he drove to the farm and told the people there. There was a fierce argument between the parson and the shepherd. The parson told the shepherd to get off. He said he would wait for the farmer's wife to die. Then he would take her along. The priest armed himself with the words of the Holy Bible. Because the shepherd had refused to leave by the door, the priest took a needle and punctured the lead frame of the window and so forced him to get out through the hole. (My translation).*

This is a wide-spread motive all over Scandinavia, the standard way for the priest to banish the devil.<sup>4</sup> There are some twenty records in the folk life archives in Uppsala and Umeå. The redaction of the devil is known from several places in North Sweden, some of them never mentioning the place 'Old Man's Lake', whereas the redaction of the shepherd who witnessed the murder is attributed by the others to the village named 'Old Man's Lake'. The name called for an explanation and so attracted the motif already known. One record actually relates the witnessing shepherd story and mentions the devil redaction on the same page (ULMA 9243, 90).

When people need folk poetry and fiction to explain something on their mind, it happens that a symbol, a metaphor or a verbal image is changed into its opposite by the rhetorical figure of the metonym. The metonym may switch cause and result, choose the part instead of the whole, if a new expression would more adequately correspond to the feelings of the local situation. So people around Old Man's Lake had the devil himself turned into an innocent victim witnessing the evil couple commit murder and robbery.

Now that times have changed and the car is dominating the need in a large low-density environment, the oral tradition of the ghost was transferred into a vanishing hitchhiker, who has more in common with the flying Dutchman than with any revival salvation. The religious contrasts are not longer as sharp as they were, Sweden being one of the most secularised countries in the world. Still, it is the neighbours who tell the stories, and not the inhabitants.

This mode, where people will transpose motives and significance into contemporarily valid circumstances, should be considered on a general level where human beings meet with the supernatural beings of their minds. There is even a collection published on *The Phantom Hitch-Hiker*.<sup>5</sup> A recent parallel was recorded in October 1990 by Bengt af Klintberg in the Swedish county Dalecarlia from two young women:

## **The Hitch-Hiker Girl**

There is this girl trying to get a ride, usually standing by the roadside not far from Mora. Drivers pick her up now and then. After a short while the girl starts screaming: 'Let me out, let me get out!' So of course, they stop to let her get out. Doing so she turns away from them and then they can see that there is a hole in her back and it is all eaten by worms (Criterion of the supernatural female-beings of the forest).

That girl was murdered, she is a haunting ghost. She did in fact stand there, trying to get a ride. Somebody picked her up, but soon he turned into the forest on a narrow road and she was raped and murdered.

There is another version of the story where car drivers notice her hitchhiking but pass on without stopping. Then all of a sudden, she will be sitting in the car right beside the driver. Then she screams and wants to get out. (af Klintberg 25th October 1990, Mora, Dalecarlia, forthcoming n.d., my translation).<sup>6</sup>

These two parallel transformations of legends where man encounters the supernatural beings reinforce the recognition by Bengt af Klintberg that the legends of today and those of yesterday do belong to the same genre (af Klintberg 1990).

In 1990 I accept that tradition is an ongoing process of constructing and reconstructing shared culture, corresponding to the needs and concerns of the people who bear and build the tradition. They create and reshape the traditions. Traits and units will disappear and be changed into something more useful for the living people. Only the shared traditions will live on, not the ones which no longer mean anything to anyone. We cannot change that, but when we, as folklorists, dedicate ourselves to the collection of the traditions of culture, we state that they are important. That is why we also have to explain why this and that is interesting to us and to our co-researchers who tell us. We have got to make that clear to ourselves in order to do justice to them. Everything taken for granted has something specific to relate about our culture. This kind of self-reflection will be the source criticism of today and it will hand over the key for how to treat the sources. This will be especially important when given back to the people who created the folklore, carried it on and reconstructed it. Nonetheless, they will still interpret the folklore in a way that will mean something to them.

So the collections of the great archives will be the best protection for the continuous future life of traditions. It is true that we implicate the situations by our mere presence, all the more by interviewing. We have got to accept that, because if we did not collect and record, no one would ever know what had been there. I would not have been able to follow the changing world views from the 1980's back to the 1940's or 30's, if I had not had such predecessors as Oskar Loorits and Nils Tilberg.

I would like to thank my colleague Alf Arvidsson from the University of Umeå for his help.

### Sources

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2. ULMA – Archive of the Institute of Dialect and Folklore Research in Uppsala.

### Literature

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<sup>2</sup>Singer, M. *When a Great Tradition Modernizes*. An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization. Chicago, 1972, p. 320.

<sup>3</sup>Brunvand, J. H. *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: Urban Legends and Their Meanings*. London, 1981/1983, pp. 27-45.

<sup>4</sup>Klintberg, B. af. *Svenska folksägner*. Stockholm, 1972, p. 331.

<sup>5</sup>Goss, M. *The Evidence for Phantom Hitch-Hikers*. Wellingborough, 1984.

<sup>6</sup>Klintberg, B. af. Do the Legends of Today and Yesterday Belong to the Same Genre? In: Rörich, L., Wienzer-Piepo, S. (eds.) *Storytelling in Contemporary Societies*. Tübingen, 1990.

## **TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND NARRATIVES OF A CONTEMPORARY IRISH TRADITION BEARER**

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Belief in the supernatural has been an integral part of the world view of the Irish people over many centuries. Irish literature from the early Christian period offers testimony to the existence of such belief in ancient times<sup>1</sup> and thus also to its antiquity since much of its content clearly predates the Christian era in Ireland. Irish and Anglo-Irish literature<sup>2</sup> also bears witness to the continuation of such belief in Ireland down the centuries and into modern times. But it is modern folk belief and the large body of oral tradition collected over the last hundred years<sup>3</sup> in Ireland which documents in the most comprehensive and intimate way the persistence of belief in the supernatural, as well as the very richness and the variety of its expression and its continuing importance in the lives of the people who share its precepts. The widespread distribution of the belief in the supernatural in Ireland in modern times<sup>4</sup> is a clear indication that belief in the supernatural has been a common property of the Irish people over the many centuries. Even today such belief has retained its position as an active element in the thoughts and habits of some people, in the *Gaeltacht* (Irish-speaking) and *Galltacht* (English-speaking) areas of Ireland, and among active