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INVENTING THE TEXT: A CRITIQUE OF FOLKLORE EDITING

David E. Gay

Whether they are transcriptions made for the moment, editions of epics and other kinds of folk poetry, or anthologies of folk literature, texts are at the core of all folklore research. As researchers we depend on the texts that we generate, and that have been generated by others before us, and yet the role of editing in folklore research is rarely discussed. Editing is more than the simple objective transcription of an empirically real text. It is an interpretive process that produces the facts on which research is based. The editor of a folklore text selects from the source materials the relevant "facts" to be used in creating the published text.[1] This process of selection is a creative and interpretive act that gives a particular meaning to the facts. I use the term "creative" quite consciously here, for the actions of the editor in making texts are like those of any other creative artist. Just as the work of a creative writer is the product of the imaginative efforts of that writer within the writer's intellectual and cultural contexts, so too the text that arises from the work of an editor is the creation of that editor, shaped by the editor's ideas about the nature of the material being edited, and these ideas are shaped by the intellectual and ideological traditions within which the editor is working.[2] The critical edition is a kind of literary genre, and

> *as such it is marked by peculiar characteristics and biases toward the original work which it seeks to reproduce. Furthermore, any actual edition produced by a critical scholar will bear within itself yet other, and more particular, idiosyncrasies which are characteristic of the scholar who produced it, and the context in which he worked.* (McGann 1983: 93; 1991)

Through their selection, emendation, and collation of multiple texts into idealized texts unlike any attested texts, editors mold our ideas about the nature of the materials, and even of the cultures that produced the materials. Some examples will make this clearer. The New Testament is not often considered a folklore text, though its

oral origins and many thousands of variants in Christian manuscript and oral traditions clearly make it one.[3] As with any such text, variation is the rule in the many manuscript and oral versions. This variation is, however, a serious problem for textual critics of the New Testament. The great nineteenth-century Biblical scholars made enormous advances in the study of the texts of the New Testament, especially in the discovery and editing of ancient manuscripts and papyri, and set the standards and methods for modern New Testament textual research, but they did not shake off the traditional need for a stable and unvarying text for the Bible.[4] The goal of New Testament textual scholarship was, and remains, to restore the original texts of the canonical New Testament as they came from the pens of the Apostles.[5] One of the most influential statements of this goal of New Testament textual criticism is the introduction to Westcott and Hort's edition of the New Testament (Westcott & Hort 1882).[6] They describe their edition as "an attempt to present exactly the original words of the New Testament, so far as they can be determined from surviving documents." But,

> *[s]ince the testimony delivered by the several documents of witnesses is full of complex variation, the original text cannot be elicited without the use of criticism, that is, of a process of distinguishing and setting aside those readings which have originated in some link in the transmission....* (Westcott & Hort 1882: 1).

The goal of this textual criticism is

> *virtually nothing more that the detection and rejection of error. Its progress consists not in the growing perfection of an ideal in the future, but in approximation towards complete ascertainment of definite facts of the past, that is, towards recovering an exact copy of what was actually written on parchment or papyrus by the author of the book or his amanuensis....* (Westcott & Hort 1882: 3)

The methods of the New Testament textual criticism have been described in a number of handbooks since Westcott and Hort's work, which agree with Westcott and Hort that the goal of the textual critic is to restore the original texts of the New Testament.[7] The

reconstructed texts produced by New Testament textual criticism, however, are composite texts unlike any attested early New Testament texts.[8]

This search for the *Urform*, the pure original form of a text, is not confined to New Testament studies. It has of course long been the goal of textual scholars in many disciplines, including folklore, where the method was developed to its greatest degree by the Historic-Geographic school.[9] While this school of folktale research is unfortunately usually only remembered for its efforts at reconstructing the originals of folktales, its adherents were conscious of the limitations of the method. Archer Taylor remarks in his study of the Finnish folktale "The Black Ox" (1927) that "since no very considerable differences are noticeable in these versions [of the folktale], it is possible to construct any prototypic form with more than the usual confidence, though a certain amount of doubt must, of course, always be present in any such reconstruction." The key problem is variability, for

> *probably every tale in circulation among the folk is at the same time a definite entity and an abstraction. It is an entity in the particular form in which it happens to be recorded at any moment; it is an abstraction in the sense that no two versions ever exactly agree and that consequently the tale lives only in endless mutations* (Ibid.: 3–4).[10]

In Christian texts variations often mark fundamental differences in the meaning and structure of the texts from the canonical texts approved by the official churches. These variations are thus very important in studying the texts as a part of Christian culture, for they "are not corruptions in varying degree of one original," but rather "the changes which, in the mass, engender growth and development. They are the suggestions of individuals which will only be perpetuated if they win the approval of the community" (Sharp 1965: 14).[11] That a variant form of a Gospel story survives in a particular folk community means that they have accepted it as a valuable part of their religious life. And once accepted, the variants become as much a part of the religious narrative, and so the religious experience, of the community as the canonical forms of the stories. Sometimes they are more important than the canonical

stories.[12] For New Testament textual critics such variation in the sources is a clear sign of degeneration in the texts because

> *had all intervening transcriptions been perfectly accurate, there could be no error and no variation in existing documents. Where there is variation, there must be error in at least all variants but one....* (Westcott and Hort 1882: 3)[13]

And because New Testament textual criticism defines variation as corruption New Testament scholars do not appreciate variation as characteristic of texts in folk tradition or as an important factor in understanding how the New Testament was received and used by the various Christian communities.[14]

They are, however, aware of the oral origins and affinities of the New Testament texts. Adolf Deissmann noted the connections in ancient times between the Christian Gospels and popular literature and of the continuity of that tradition beyond the writing of the Gospels-pointing out, for example, parallels between ancient epistles and modern "heavenly letters" (Deissmann 1927: 227 ff.). Deissmann thus reminds us that

> *the production of popular Christian literature never ceased. It runs through the centuries. Often it went as it were subterraneously from the earliest known texts of vulgar Latin, the Muratorian Canon, and the swarm of late gospels, "acts," and "revelations" which are branded as apocryphal, to the books of martyrdom, the legends of saints, and pilgrimages-from the postils, consolatories, and tractates down to the vast modern polyglot of missionary and edifying literature.* (*Ibid.*: 249)[15]

Rudolf Bultmann confirms that there

> *are analogies to hand for both the form and history of the [New Testament] tradition. For the former we may take especially the sayings and the stories of the Rabbis, but also Hellenistic stories, and for both there are the traditions of proverbs, anecdotes, and folk-tales. Fairy stories are instructive in many respects, and in some ways folk-songs even more so, because the characteristics of primitive storytelling are even more firmly preserved in their set form.* (Bultmann 1963: 6–7)[16]

But, even though New Testament scholars have long recognized the popular and folk cultural roots of the New Testament stories, and their continued existence in popular and folk culture after the establishment of the New Testament canon, they have considered these narrative traditions mostly as aids in reconstructing the oral precursor texts, or for finding the oral characteristics, of the written New Testament.[17] Martin Dibellius writes that the purpose of form criticism is "to rediscover the origin and the history of particular units and thereby to throw some light on the history of the tradition before it took literary form" (cited in Bultmann 1963: 4; see also Bultmann 1934, one of the key texts in form criticism and for the study of folkloric aspects of the Gospels). Bultmann too "sets out to give an account of the history of the individual units of the [New Testament] tradition, and how the tradition passed from a fluid state to the fixed form in which it meets us in the Synoptics" (Bultmann 1963: 3–4).

By ignoring the meaning of variation in the texts, then New Testament textual criticism both leaves us with reconstructed composite texts that bear no resemblance to any of the attested versions of a text and cuts us off from understanding later Christian narrative traditions as well. As D. C. Parker observes, the Gospels were first part of a manuscript tradition and in such traditions, it is difficult "establishing a fixed point in the tradition that has any unique "authority". In fact, as he continues, there is "no evidence that the evangelists or their successors believed such a form to exist." Thus, "the recovery of a definitive "original" text that is consequently "authoritative" cannot be presumed to be an attainable target." "The concept of such a text," he concludes, "essentially the "ecclesiastical text" of a modern printed book, is present to modern minds, but was foreign to those of early Christians" (Parker 1997: 91). Through their effort to reconstruct the original New Testament, then, the work of New Testament scholars leads us away from an understanding of the New Testament as a book that had its origins in oral tradition and that has existed in literally thousands of manuscripts and oral variants in Greek and in other languages since the early Christian period – and from an understanding of the culture and people who produced it.

The problem of ideology and tradition in textual studies is not confined to editions of Biblical texts. Scholars working on mythological traditions in Scandinavia also look for the *Urform*, and in this way try to rid the mythological texts of any Christian influences they have acquired. Convinced of the greater authenticity of pre-Christian cultures over Christian cultures, and guided by ideas about the recoverability of ethnic religious beliefs and mythologies from the extant texts, scholars have sought for pagan Scandinavian mythology in a variety of sources. Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* (1835) is the key work in creating this style of editorial and scholarly reconstruction of the Germanic past. Grimm's work attempts to recreate ancient Germanic mythology, especially that of the West Germanic peoples. But in doing this he faced the same lack of pre-Christian sources as all other students of non-Classical Northern and Eastern European mythologies. Both Snorri Sturluson and Saxo Grammaticus, the two major sources for the mythology, were Christians who euphemerized the myths, preserving them, in Saxo's case, as part of the traditional history of Denmark, and, in Snorri's case, as part of a handbook for writing poetry.[18] Grimm, however, found a solution for this problem. He argued that the ancient traditions had not been obliterated by the coming of Christianity; instead, they took on new forms (Grimm 1883–1888: 4). The missionaries and converts had incorporated parts of the older ethnic religion and mythology into Christianity as "hostile malignant powers [such as] demons, sorcerers, and giants" (*Ibid.:* 5).[19] Grimm insisted that because Christianity "was not popular" it could not completely displace "the time honoured indigenous gods whom the country revered and loved." "These gods and their worship" he continues, "were part and parcel of the people's traditions, customs, constitution." Combined with the further evidence of the

> *the gradual transformation of gods into devils, of the wise women into witches, [and h]eathen festivals and customs into Christian [festivals and customs], and [t]he evident deposit from god myths, which is to be found to this day in various folk-tales, nursery-tales, games, saws, curses, ill-understood names of days and months, and idiomatic phrases,*

Grimm had the assurance to declare that in order to recreate ancient Germanic mythology all the scholar had to do was to

> *faithfully and simply ... collect what the distortions early introduced by the nations themselves, and afterwards the scorn and aversion of Christians, have left remaining of heathendom....* (Grimm 1883–1888: 10–12)

In this way Grimm rationalized both turning to a variety of ancient and modern sources that are often, in fact, of dubious connection to the ancient Germans, and editing away Christian elements in the texts he considered to be the sources of Germanic mythology. He has been followed in his beliefs and methods by scholars in Germanic studies since.

In her recent edition, translation, and commentary of the Eddie poem *Völuspá* Ursula Dronke presents her version of the most important mythological poem in Old Icelandic.[20] The editorial problems associated with *Völuspá* have always, in one sense, been simple. The number of early texts is small, and scholars have generally agreed about which of these are the most important. The manuscript called the *Codex Regius* preserves what is by all accounts the best text of the poem. Dronke follows scholarly tradition in taking the *Codex Regius* text as the basis for her edition. She also follows scholarly tradition by using the stanzas preserved in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*. The texts she rejects as sources for her edition are also traditionally rejected – the text in *Hauksbók*, another medieval manuscript, is not used, nor are any of the late paper manuscripts or early printings of the poems. In eliminating these texts Dronke is following the traditional notion that the earliest manuscripts preserve the best readings, whereas later manuscripts and early printings are corrupt or irrelevant to the study of the text. Not only does she eliminate large parts of the tradition from consideration, what is left has been subjected to various forms of emendation, where attested readings are replaced by others that Dronke argues are the original readings, and readings that conflict with Dronke's assumptions about the original form and meaning of the poem are deleted. As with all critical editions, the version of *Völuspá* in Dronke's edition is a scholarly construct that is intended to take the place of the attested texts of the manuscript and printed traditions, and an interpretation of the attested texts that follows a particular scholarly tradition. For Dronke, *Völuspá* is a pagan Germanic apocalyptic poem with some Christian elements and influ-

ences, and so her edition creates a text that is her version of what a pagan Scandinavian poet would have chanted.

Though the desire to reconstruct the old pagan worldview has long dominated studies of *Völuspá*, the facts of the text allow for a Christian interpretation of the poem. The evidence for this reading comes from the Christian allusions in the attested texts of the poem. The most obvious Christian element in the texts is a stanza in the *Hauksbók* text. According to Dronke, the lines "proclaim the coming of an unnamed "Powerful One," all ruling, from above, to the Great Divine Judgment." [21] She goes on to say that "some scholars have accepted this stanza as the Christian keystone of the poem. I see good reason to discard it as an interpolation" (Dronke 1997: 22–26). Though Dronke promises a "good reason" to reject this stanza, when she finally explains her rationale it is hardly convincing – she rejects them "basically on the grounds that it is saying in overt Christian terms what the poet has already subtly expressed in [stanzas] 61 [and] 62" (Dronke 1997: 152). This is a poor reason for deleting the stanza, yet it makes sense when considered within the scholarly tradition in which Dronke is working, which follows Jacob Grimm's method and ideology in the reconstruction of ancient Germanic mythology. Even so, Dronke does recognize the rather surprising number of Christian allusions in the poem. The poet "has external effects in his poem that could have come from eschatological homilies or apocalyptic visions of sinners in hell. The image of the bleeding Baldr, and of the weeping mother, [also] recall Christian stereotypes" (Dronke 1997: 93).

Other aspects of the poem and its imagery also have Christian origins and influences. The Baldr story, for instance, has parallels the story of Christ. And if Dronke's suggestion that Baldr's death is a payment for the oathbreaking of the gods at the building of Valhöll is correct, then the story of Baldr even more clearly parallels that of Christ, whose death, like Baldr's, cancels out a sin committed when the world was new. Like Christ, Baldr will be reborn into a new creation after the apocalyptic destruction of the earth (*Ibid.*: 46–48). The poet of *Völuspá* appears to have known the Book of Revelations as well – the stories of the binding of Loki and his escape, for example, are influenced by *Revelations* XX, 1–5 and 7–8; and Revelations XX, 11–15 is the probable source for the *Hauksbók*

stanza.[22] Dronke explains the Christian elements by proposing that "the poet of *Völuspá* must have lived at some time in his life in a community where Christian thought was familiar and he had come to comprehend at least certain aspects of it well" (Dronke 1997: 93). But the poet's knowledge and use of Revelations and Christian eschatology are more extensive than would be expected of a pagan poet with only an interest in, or superficial knowledge of, Christianity. The cumulative effect of the many Christian allusions and direct references to *Revelations* is to suggest the kind of knowledge that a committed Christian would have had, and make the proposition that the poet of *Völuspá* was a Christian using the old mythology for his own ends – a very reasonable solution to the problem of the religious affiliation of the poet.[23]

Which interpretation is correct? Was the poet a pagan well versed in Christian symbols and texts, or a Christian well versed in pagan myths and stories? We have more evidence for the occurrence of the second combination in medieval Scandinavia, but in fact the evidence does not allow us to make a definitive statement one way or the other about the poet and his poem. The answer that an editor gives will depend on how the "facts" of the texts are edited, what supporting evidence is used in the commentary, and how the text is translated – and how the scholar does all that will depend on the interpretive tradition within which the editor is working. Arrange the "facts" within the traditional assumption that the poet was a pagan and the Christian elements become influences or interpolations that can be justifiably removed; arrange the "facts" with the assumption that the poet was a Christian and the same elements become an essential part of the poem.

It is only in recent years that editing has been a major topic of discussion for folklorists.[24] Since the rise of the performance school of folklore research greater attention has been given to what happens in performances and how this might be represented in printed editions. Because the performance school's most striking textual innovation has been the creation of editions that are supposed to mimic the oral performance on the written page, it might be thought that these editions would mark a break with the dominant editorial traditions. But, while the emphasis on what to record in an edition is different, the same tendency to reduce the constantly varying

versions of a traditional text to a single standard text remains. Elizabeth Fine writes, for example, that the

> *making of the performance record involves critical and aesthetic judgment [on the part of the editor] [--]. In the first step [--] the textmaker must* experience *the aesthetic transaction of live performance. This initial aesthetic experience provides a standard to measure the text against. The next step [is] the dissective analytical stage in which the textmaker selects what to record [--]. The third step entails choosing what to project and locating appropriate projection devices in the print medium. [In the fourth step] the textmaker compares performances of the text to the video or film recording and the qualities present in the aesthetic transaction of the original performance* (Fine 1984: 165, emphasis in original)[25]

Though Fine obviously views these procedures as a break with the traditions of textual editing, they are largely restatements of the traditional mode of editing. In producing the final printed form, the editor of the performance text (or textmaker, as Fine prefers to call the editor) determines what parts of the performance to include or exclude, how the text will look on the printed page, and corrects the text, if need be, using collation and emendation, using the same editorial techniques as nineteenth-century textual critics like Westcott and Hort, just as in any other style of editing. The final printed form – or, alternatively, Fine suggests, the form of the text that is first experienced in performance by the researcher – becomes the focus of research, a standard text against which other forms and variants of the text are measured. The difference then between performance editions and other editions is not in the process of creating a highly edited standard text to be the object of study, but rather in the sort of commentary that accompanies the standard text.

The influence of traditional collection and editorial practices can still be found in obvious ways in the texts presented in performance studies. In her study of the context of Cree storytelling, for instance, Regna Darnell tells us that she "will discuss in detail a single instance of a creative performance by an old Cree man recognized by his community as a carrier and performer of traditional Cree mate-

rial" (Darnell 1989). From this one instance she proposes to demonstrate "that the old man organized the event in a traditional manner, was responded to as an authentic performer in his narration and accompanying conversation, and freely adapted his traditional material to the presence of outsiders (investigator and spouse, plus tape recorder)" (*Ibid.*: 316).[26] In his recent work on Egyptian epic Dwight Reynolds too insists that unusual circumstances created by a fieldworker do not affect the nature of the performed text (Reynolds 1995). Reynolds tells us that the "most important step I took in soliciting performances was to request, at the outset of my fieldwork, a complete performance of the epic in sequential order from Shaykh Biyali Abu Fahmi" even though, as Reynolds himself notes, "in living memory no poet of the al-Bakatush had even undertaken to perform the epic from 'beginning to end" (Reynolds 1995: 19). His informant "agreed to make the attempt, which resulted in a thirty-two-hour version of the epic recorded over eleven nights." Reynolds is, however, sure that his elicitation of the epic, and his presence at performances had no effect on the performers, writing that "although performances I solicited were in a number of ways different from 'natural' performances, I could detect no major differences between the natural performances I recorded and those I did not." "Quite simply," Reynolds insists, "the poet was concerned with the response of his patron and audience in these situations and had little time to worry about the presence of the tape recorder" (Reynolds 1995: 41–42). But, even so, as Reynolds makes clear, he did interfere with the course of performances:

> *I solicited and recorded performances held in the Bakhati house where I lived. Here I could request specific portions of the epic, and although an audience was always present, it as if understood that I might ask to have a section sung over again or to otherwise alter the course of the performance [--].* (Ibid.).

Could texts recorded under the non-traditional circumstances Darnell and Reynolds describe have been received by the Cree or Egyptians present at the performances in the same way as one told in a traditional setting to speakers fully fluent in Cree or Arabic and native to the culture?[27] "It is not easy" as Ruth Finnegan writes, "to delimit the specific purpose of a set occasion (even in our own culture people have a variety of reasons for attending such per-

formances), still less all the possible functions" (Finnegan 1977: 229). Though Darnell and Reynolds insist that the audiences received the performances as traditional performances, they make no mention of any interviews of the audiences. Without having studied the audience, it is obviously impossible to determine what they thought about the performance or how they received the performed materials. The roles of the performer and the audience are in fact very different, and understanding one does not allow one to understand the other. When we consider too that

> *the effect of a piece of poetry is likely to have depends not on some absolute or permanent characteristic of the text itself, but on the circumstances in which it is delivered, the position of the poet, and perhaps above all on the nature and wishes of the audience, [--] the same poem delivered in different circumstances or to different audiences may well have a correspondingly different effect.* (Finnegan 1977: 241)

then it seems likely that neither the performer nor the audience were affected in the same way by the performance as they would have been by a traditional one.

In their assumption that the unusual circumstances of this performance did not make the performance any less traditional Darnell and Reynolds are calling on the common knowledge of anthropological tradition for support, not objective scholarship. Indeed, their goals and methods in producing texts are very much within the Boasian anthropological tradition; a tradition which, in its handling of textual matters, was definitely part of the nineteenth century.[28] Although Darnell (1989: 315), for example, remarks that

> *many students of traditional culture have learned to expect and value different versions of the same story told by different individuals or by the same individual at different times depending on the nature of the social occasion*

she does not discuss the variability of texts and performances in traditional settings. Instead, she focuses in her work, as would any other Boasian, on her

informant's recollections of past customs and ignore[s] a century or more of European contact, even [though] such contact had quite striking consequences in the life of the people [she was] studying.[29]

She and Reynolds rely as well a single key performer giving a single performance in a clearly non-traditional setting that produces a single text for study, just as in the Boasian tradition of collecting.[30] The texts both produce are in fact as heavily edited as any text produced by more traditional methods of editing, and so as distant from a living performance as any of the older editions of folklore. Thus, even though they include more contextual data, their methods for producing and editing texts for study are those of the traditional Boasian anthropologist, and, as such, their methods are a continuation of nineteenth-century methods and assumptions in editing and interpretation, not a radical break with them.

Because of their importance in shaping the materials we study, and thus the ways we study these materials, the processes and traditions involved in making scholarly editions have a special claim to our attention. The creation of an edition is not an objective, neutral act. It is an argument for a particular reading of the text set within a particular scholarly or intellectual tradition. These texts and readings, whether they are reconstructed texts like those of the New Testament or single texts extracted from the complexity of variants in oral tradition, are the source materials for our studies of religion, mythology, and folk narrative – and because of this, textual criticism and editing has implications beyond the creation of texts. Our understanding of concepts like mythology and religion, and even of the existence and nature of whole communities, relies on texts that have been filtered through the traditions, assumptions, and reconstructions of textual critics.[31] Because we depend on these editions for our research, we need to be aware the traditions and ideologies that have gone into their making.

Comments

This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the NEFA seminar "Research Strategies and Traditions of Folkloristics and Ethnology in the 1990s" in Kiidi, Estonia, August 1–8, 1999.

[1] In this way the work of the folklore researcher is like that of the historian, whose work gives shape and meaning to the empirical facts of historical events. As E. H. Carr (1961: 24) writes, "the reconstitution of the past in the historian's mind is dependent on empirical evidence [but] it is not in itself an empirical process, and cannot consist in a mere recital of facts. On the contrary, the process of reconstitution governs the selection and interpretation of the facts: this, indeed, is what makes them historical facts."

[2] The editors of the recent critical edition of Thomas Carlyle (1993), for instance, refer to themselves as having "constructed" the edition (p. Ixxv). Their "Note on the Text," pp. Ixxi–ciii, outlines nicely the problems of working with a text with multiple published versions.

[3] Surveys of the variety of ancient manuscripts can be found in Kümmel 1975 (pp. 513–540) and in more detail in Metzger 1968 and 1977.

[4] For a concise account of the history of editing the Greek New Testament see Metzger (1995).

[5] See Metzger 1987 for the history of the canon in Christian tradition and of research on the canon.

[6] Metzger (1987: 129) refers to Westcott and Hort's edition as "the most noteworthy critical edition of the New Testament ever produced by British scholarship" and to their introduction as "the classic introduction." See also Neill's comments (1989).

[7] For example, Metzger (1987) and Aland & Aland (1989).

[8] The American Bible Society's *Greek New Testament* (Aland, *et al*. 1985) is one of these editions. Careful selection and emendation of readings from several thousand manuscripts has produced a single text that is unlike that of any extant manuscript. For more on the editorial committee's decision making process and other textual matters see Metzger (1994).

[9] On the methods and goals of this school see Kaarle Krohn (1971).

[10] Indeed, constant revision of the texts of the most commonly used editions has created substantial variation between the different printings-variations that mimic the variations in manuscript and oral traditions that the editors are attempting to overcome. For a history and critique of the different editions of the Greek New Testament see Clarke (1997).

[11] Ehrman 1993 is an important study of one kind of variation in the texts – those intentionally introduced by Christian scribes and theologians.

[12] The vast apocryphal literature, both ancient and modern, points out how important these variants are for people. Elliott (1993) provides a useful guide to the ancient apocrypha, an important source for popular and folk traditions about the New Testament. "The Cherry Tree Carol" (Child 54), for instance, and verse 20 the "Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew" are variants of the same story. Vance Randolph (1946–1950: 88), for example, remarks on the connection. The relevant portion of the "Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew" is translated in Elliott 1993 (pp. 95–96). For a British text of the ballad see Kinsley 1969 (pp. 1–2). Though it does not include stories from oral tradition, a sense of how widely spread and important apocryphal versions of the Bible have been in popular and folk tradition can nonetheless be gotten from McNamara 1975. An example of the many transformations of New Testament stories in Irish folk tradition is found in Hyde 1906 (pp. 192–207). Examples from other traditions will be found in Järvinen 1982, a collection assembled from Finnish and Karelian traditions, and in Ramsey 1977.

[13] On variation as an aspect of the transmission of folk literature see Sharp (1965: 24–41) and Ortutay (1972: 132–173)

[14] The subtitle of Metzger 1968, one of the basic introductions to New Testament textual criticism, is *Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*. His *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Metzger 1977) focuses on the uses and limitations of the early versions of the New Testament in their various languages as sources for the reconstruction of the original Greek New Testament. In both books variation is seen as corruption of the text.

[15] Deissmann recognizes as well how ephemeral popular literature was in early Christianity. "Even today," he writes, "the greatest pan of this popular literature perishes after serving its purpose, [and] books of prayer that served whole generations for edification become literary rarities after a hundred years. Thus of the whole mass of Christian popular literature of all times only a scanty proportion comes down to us...." (1927: 249).

[16] Bultmann also noted the similarity of the Synoptic Gospels to popular literature of their time (1963: 372–373).

[17] Kelber (1983) is typical in its focus on oral aspects of the reconstructed Gospel texts – including the entirely hypothetical "Q" text – and not the Gospels in Christian tradition.

[18] Saxo's *History* was translated in part by Oliver Elton (1893). The best translation of Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* is by Anthony Faulkes (1987).

[19] Many of beings of the Christian lower mythologies throughout Northern Europe are in fact often traceable to pre-Christian beliefs, but it is rather a large step from this knowledge to the idea that this means that the people did not accept Christianity in any deep way.

[20] *Völuspá* tells the story of the destruction of the Norse gods and the rebirth of the world (Dronke 1997: 3–153).

[21] The Neckel & Kuhn (1983: 15) edition of the poem includes the lines:

Thar kømr in ríki at regindómi,	Then the all-ruling one from above comes into the kingdom
öflugr, ofan, sá er öllo rædr.	in judgment, so that he can judge all.

[My translation.]

[22] *Revelations* XX, 1–5 and 7–8: "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. He seized the dragon, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended. And after that he must be let out for a little while. [--] When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them up for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea" (Bible 1993: 2334). Sigurdur Nordal also notes the influence of these verses (1970–1971: 78–135, 114).

[23] Bernard McGinn's remarks about Muspilli might also be applied to *Völuspá*: "Claims have been made that the Muspilli may enshrine some elements of pagan doctrines of the End; but even if this is true, they have been recast in a Christian fashion" (1979: 80).

[24] On the history of folklore editing see Fine (1984) and Foley (1995: 600–626).

[25] For a summary of limitations of performance transcriptions, many of which also apply to performance editions, see Duranti (1997: 161).

[26] She also notes that her contact told her that she "would have to pay him to sing and tell stories," which is hardly traditional. Darnell "agreed, primarily out of curiosity about the relationship of the old men, representing different generations, but to the outsider both "old" and therefore both appropriate teachers and performers of traditional Cree materials." She also insists that the "old man was successful in this situation in maintaining the performance to the secondary audience – his Cree hosts and part of his own family – as a validation of his own status of traditional

performer." Indeed, she says that this validation was in fact "enhanced, for the Indian portion of the audience, by the fact that he as performing in front of outsiders who wanted to know 'what it was really like' in the old days" (Darnell 1989: 315). Her assumption here is that she can determine who is an appropriate teacher and performer is, of course, a traditional rhetorical stance in anthropological and folkloric studies, not an objective evaluation of the performers as traditional Cree performers.

[27] Darnell (1989: 317 ff.) makes it clear that she relied on a Cree translator to get the material since her Cree language skills were not sufficient to understand all that was said. There was thus a fairly constant stream of interruptions in the storytelling for translations by the translator, the old man's daughter.

[28] On the methods and goals of Boas and his followers see Boas (1940) and Stocking (1974; 1996, especially the essays by Judith Berman, *The Culture as It Appears to the Indian Himself: Boas, George Hunt, and the Methods of Ethnography*, and Thomas Buckley, *The Little History of Pitiful Events: The Epistemological and Moral Contexts of Kroeber's California Ethnography*).

[29] Adapted from Duranti (1997: 54), who is describing the work of the Boas and his followers. Darnell does give some attention to the problem of European contact and influence in her essay, but it is not to her a major problem (see especially Darnell 1989: 335–336).

[30] As Duranti notes of Boas and his followers, their "texts were often produced by one key informant and were not checked against other sources or versions" (1997: 54).

[31] Two recent books raising questions about traditions, assumptions, and reconstructions in research on the Dead Sea Scrolls and Gnosticism are Golb 1995 and Williams 1996.

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