

Folklore Fellows' NETWORK



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History bursts into story:
women's tales of war

Narratives across time
and space

Should we search
for shamanism
outside Siberia?

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Cover photo: The growing of leaf and root vegetables is common in Ingrian villages, and by this means food lasts over the winter. Photo: Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj. Photo by courtesy of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS KRA).



A new generation

In Finnish folkloristics departments a change of generations has been under way for some years, which is changing the picture and focus of folkloristics. A similar generational change is taking place in many Western countries. The scholarly generation of the 1960s, which is now giving way to younger people, renewed folkloristics in many respects, taking as its starting point general theories of research into culture and society. A separation was made above all from the historically oriented research of the earlier twentieth century, within which research into epic poetry was particularly important.

Alongside or instead of focusing one's gaze on the content or forms of cultural structures and tradition, a fundamental shift has been to look at the activity which produces and maintains them, which also brings about a culture's historical processes both on a micro- and macrocosmic level. The following concepts stem from theories which emphasise cultural practice: behaviour, agency, interrelationship, activity, experience and performance, which have also been key concepts in Finnish folkloristics of the 1980s and 1990s. A historical perspective took on a new lease of interest in the form of microhistory, through which to observe the life of ordinary people. Static, synchronic analyses gave way to an observation of historical paths of development and of momentary change. In folkloristics this is visible in the form of discussions touching upon folklore processes, changes in tradition, oral history and the history of mentalities.

Research into Kalevala-metre poetry has experienced a revival over the last few decades. The recently nominated professor of folkloristics at Helsinki University, Lotte Tarkka, is a researcher of Kalevalaic epic and thus continues in the line of Kaarle Krohn, Martti Haavio and Matti Kuusi, but from a new perspective. In recent years more scholars of Kalevalaic poetry have arisen within the younger generation of researchers than ever before. Interest has been directed above all at the examination of people as producers and creators of tradition, at the performance and experiencing of poetry and the ways in which it is rendered meaningful, and at the analysis of individual and collective feelings. When it is remembered that performance is processed as an interplay of memory and creativity within the framework of methods relating to the production of poetry, the possibility opens up of examining the

personal styles of rune singers. We can hear the voices of the individual singers better. We approach closer to the motives of the song, and to seeing what the poems mean for the singers.

Although folkloristic analyses of the performance of folk poetry and interpretations of experiences bring to the fore an individual's feelings, attention on the individual need not signify the postulation of an individual outside society and history. Research into specific phenomena of tradition and the activities which maintain them becomes significant only when related to wider social and historical processes. Research into Kalevalaic poetry has in recent years also been directed towards listening to 'the voice of the peasants', to the examination of genres and singers formerly regarded as worthless, for example casual poetry. These songs, which have been considered unappealing and peripheral to nationally directed research, open up a perspective on people's everyday lives and patterns of folk thought.

Although the classic hero figures of the old poetry, the formation of whose images belonged among the central objects of interest to nationally oriented folkloristics, still entice researchers, the women of Kalevalaic poetry have stepped into the limelight more strongly than before. Gender research has stimulated Kalevalaic research into new interpretations. The symbolic meanings of poetry and their cultural background emerge in quite a new manner, for example in research whose critical gaze traverses the genre boundaries of tradition. The strong side of gender-system studies is the investigation of the old poetry within its cultural connections, as reflected in people's everyday lives. In addition to poetry, we can peep into local cultures.

It will be interesting to see how the change-over to the succeeding generation of folklorists will affect the field. There are more research perspectives than ever, and old propositions await further scrutiny. The 'new' folkloristics of the 1960s already belongs to the history of folkloristics, in the same way as Kaarle Krohn and Carl von Sydow, who worked decades ago. They created a strong frontline of research in their efforts to establish a collaborative approach which crossed boundaries. This too was the aim of the generation in between. FF Communications offers a publication channel also for folk-poetry research which strives for something new. ■

History bursts into story

Women's tales of war

ANNIKKI KAIVOLA-BREGENHØJ

In a personal-experience narrative, the narrator deals with some matter of personal importance, interprets what they have experienced and presents a narrative in a form which they feel suits both the oral presentation and the audience. At the same time the narrator speaks about him- or herself.¹ People have many such narratives at different stages of life, and some of these may form key narratives, which have a special significance for the narrator. I will return to this point at the end of the article. In what follows I analyse the reminiscences of Ingrian Finnish² women I have met, which I look upon as snatches from their key narratives. I conducted the interviews in 1992–3 in south-west Ingria, near to St Petersburg, and all the tales considered here relate to the events of the Second World War: the start of the war and the flight from the front, the coming of the Germans to people's home districts, the evacuation journeys to Finland or Germany and the return to the Soviet Union.

In the field

In 1992–3 I accompanied researchers from the Finnish Literature Society, conducting interviews in the villages of south-west Ingria. The purpose of the field-work trips was to meet Ingria's Finnish groups and record their traditions and life histories. Each trip lasted around ten days, and our group travelled primarily around sites selected by our guide, Santeri Mullonen, in the area located to the south-west of St Petersburg. A guide trusted by the local populace was a necessity, for he knew the villages and where Finns were living. Pure Finnish villages were no longer to be found; Finns lived side by side with the Russian population. As our

group consisted of five researchers, who had to be got to the site and brought back thence, a good part of the day was spent on travelling.³ There was no local traffic, so it was not possible to seek out or remain with even a good interviewee on our own steam. We could not plan repeated interviews, such as a folklorists need in their research work. I nevertheless managed myself to meet some interviewees a number of times.⁴

Most of the people I met were old Finnish women, who spoke either Finnish, the Ingrian dialect or a language with an admixture of, for example, Estonian and Russian words.⁵ It was remarkably easy to make contacts, which stemmed both from our guide, whose presence guaranteed our trustworthiness, and from people's hospitality. Our being Finnish was also an advantage, since most of our interviewees had been in Finland during the Second World War, and this was the brightest stage of their evacuation experience. Visitors to Ingria in the early 1990s still held an aura of novelty, and food and clothes brought from Finland, as well as church renovation work, put a stamp of approval upon us.

- 1 A broad international discussion has taken place on the term 'personal-experience narrative' over the years, since the publication of works by Sandra Stahl (1977), Barbara Allen (1989) and Linda Dégh (1995). The discussion has continued in Finland too, e.g. Virtanen (1982). In Finland, the term used at first was 'personal narrative' (*henkilökohtainen kertomus*), but later *kokemuskertomus*, lit. 'experience narrative', came into use (Hovi 1996, Ukkonen 2000). As I am not investigating the terminology here, I do not enter into these discussions.
- 2 Terms for the Finnish population of Ingria vary. The people call themselves Finns (*suomalaiset*), but in Finland the term 'Ingrian Finn' (*inkerinsuomalainen*) came into use during the Second World War. I use both here without any distinction. The term 'Ingrian' on the other hand indicates the whole population of the area, including Orthodox Ingrians and Russians.

- 3 Taking part in the field trips of 1992–3 were researchers from the Finnish Literature Society, Anneli Asplund, Marjatta Jauhainen and Ulla Lipponen, a graduate of Helsinki University, Arno Survo, and the senior researcher from the Finnish Academy, Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj.
- 4 I interviewed during our visits altogether 34 people, born between 1905 and 1976, most of them between 1921 and 1930. Of the interviewees, 26 were women, a preponderance stemming from the fact that war had taken the men. Meetings with older people were conducted upon the basis that they were competent in Finnish, whereas it would have been necessary to use Russian with younger people. My shortest interview lasted just 15 minutes, but most were a good hour to hour and a half. It was possible for me to meet six interviewees a second time. I recorded a total of 35 hours of interviews on tape. Ulla-Maija Peltonen (2007) has been able to attain, in interviewing an Ingrian man living in Finland, to a continuity created by frequent meetings.
- 5 The form of language depended on where the interviewee had been during the long years of the evacuation. The language of my interviewees showed influences for example from Estonian and/or Karelian, but also from Finnish. In addition, the speech of some of them was permeated by Russian words, as people were variably bilingual, speaking, in addition to Russian, their own Finnish dialect among themselves. The linguists Ilkka Savijärvi and Muusa Savijärvi (1999: 43) note that the Ingrian Finns call the language they speak at home 'our own language', which they characterise thus: 'it's Finnish, a sort of mixed language that we have here'. At school, by contrast, was taught 'pure Finnish; Ingrian wasn't taught'.

People's immediacy towards us, the verdant late summer in the Ingrian villages and the beauty of the old buildings were enticing. The interviews were psychologically burdensome, for it was impossible to listen to people's experiences of life without feeling an emotional involvement. At the same time, they were very significant experiences for the researchers. A feeling of closeness to the interviewees was brought about by the interviews touching upon people's lives, rather than, for example, being traditional legends. All my earlier interviews, dating back to the late 1960s, had been connected with narrative traditions or conventions, and I was embarrassed at the start of the Ingrian trip to have to leap immediately into discussing very intimate aspects of people's lives. I gradually came to understand that my interviewees had been young as they left on the evacuation, and over a good decade (the early 1940s into the 1950s) the old local tradition, in the form for example of legends, had lost its function. I adopted the custom of beginning the interview with a short question: 'Could you tell a little about your own life?' Very often the answer was a key narrative, given either right at the beginning of the interview or soon after. My own interest focused to start with on people's formation of an identity, but later I became ever more interested in how and what the interviewees told of their own lives.

Narrators and narratives in context

Although it is approaching a couple of decades since our meetings, each one of the women I present here—Anna, Katarina, Lahja, Lena, Sara—lives on in my mind. I call them by pseudonyms and give no Ingrian localisations when speaking of them, nor any recording references.⁶ This is the best way, even though the narratives deal with well-known events touched upon by many, and are not these days politically delicate. After returning from Finland, these individuals were labelled enemies of the people, and some who had grown used to caution wished to ensure that the interviews would not appear, for example on television.

In reading my recording accounts and transcriptions I noticed that the women's tales form a narrative

⁶ The material is deposited in the Finnish Literature Society's folklore archive.



Map of Ingria. The Finnish Literature Society's field trips took place in villages to the south-west of St Petersburg. (Teinonen & Virtanen 1999: 8.)

continuum, in which the fates of the Finnish populace of Ingria during the vicissitudes of the Second World War are presented in a microcosm. I did not knowingly select the narrators with this criterion in mind. I did not particularly seek out historical reality in the events, as I was interested in the experience and its interpretation, not its correspondence to real events. My notion follows the same path as Vieda Skultans, who has studied Latvians psychologically damaged by the Second World War. She notes that narratives have been criticised as research material, because from the point of view of truth they are either unreliable or give far *too* authentic a picture of truth. Skultans investigates the difference between lived and narrated life: although the narrated deviates from the lived, it may give us even more knowledge of people's values and efforts than anything the lived life offers (Skultans 2004).

In my analysis I present some dates and facts to help in the reading and understanding of the narratives; this forms a framework for the fragments which I regard as key narratives of the interviewees. By a 'key narrative' I mean a narrative which relates an experience of exceptional significance to the interviewee: by relating it, she interprets her life and historical events for the listener (Jauhiainen 2000: 139; Ukkonen 2000: 130). The facts of the war and evacuation help the reader to grasp something of the historical context to which the interviewee's experience relates and to which she returns in a narrative setting. At the same time, in the narrative background is an early 1990s perspective on the past: memories which it had been best to keep silent about for reasons of political sensitivity could now be related

to an interviewer. The past was returned to in terms of the modern situation (Hyvärinen 1998: 324–31; Latvala 2005: 31). The Soviet Union had collapsed in 1991, and Russia's political situation was in flux. Some things, in the opinion of the narrators, were going in an alarming direction in Ingrian villages: the inflation of food prices, the growing hooliganism and theft, or the desire of the *nouveau riche* to buy up land and build expensive luxury apartments in the middle of old Ingrian Finnish settlements. Anxiety about the future was a burden to many. People opened up with memories which in their view were worth remembering and relating. The events of half a century earlier demanded an explanation.⁷ As a listener I could not give one, and one was scarcely expected of me. The important thing was to listen and to try to answer people's need to share their experience.

In what follows, I read the narratives with an eye to relating the interviewees' experiences to the historical facts of the Second World War and the settlements following it. I also keep in mind that the events were related to me in a meeting between two people. A so-called life story, of which my examples are fragments, 'changes and exists in accordance with the narrator's life circumstances' (Hovi 2004: 389), yet I have only one narrative variant to observe. I approach each narrative with an emphasis upon its specific characteristics. In analysing narrative methods (repetition, predominance of verbs, emphasis and metaphorical expressions) I strive above all to understand the significances of the narratives to the narrators and to reveal them to the reader.

Flight from the front

The war began in Ingria on 22 June 1941 with the German invasion of the Soviet Union.⁸ Some of my interviewees remained in their villages between the fronts of the two armies. The overthrow of Leningrad wavered in the autumn of 1941 and changed into a siege. 'The Finnish areas of central Ingria thus became for over two years the battlefield of the blockade of Leningrad, trampled under the foot of total warfare' (Nevalainen 1991: 267).

Sometimes a narrator surprises an interviewer. This happened to me when I met Lena (26 at the outbreak of war) in autumn 1992: I was taking time to get the recording equipment open and ask her for her personal details, when the narration began. I italicize the expressions she repeated, which direct our attention to

the central themes of the narrative. I would like to analyse the reasons for and significance of the repetition. I also divide the rapidly developing tale into sections, to which I attach titles to clarify the content. In her actual narration, no division into sections was audible, as she never paused as she spoke.

The war begins; the forest as a place of refuge

Lena: Well, before the war we lived here at *home*. The war came, we couldn't figure out what would come of it, that war. What would come of it. We all fled to the *forest*. We all took the *cows* into the *forest* and set off for the *forest*. There in the *forest* there was already shooting. They were after shooting everyone. We ate mushrooms there and milked the *cows*. A *cow* stayed [unclear] for me. I left a *cow* there. I left, since death was on its way to the *forest*, hunger.

To Leningrad then home

I left for *Leningrad*. I was there in *Leningrad*. I gave a *cow* to some poor people. We had one woman, she had five children. I gave a *cow* to her.

A. K.-B.: Who were they who were shooting in the *forest*?

Lena: Finns [the name indicates Ingrian Finns] [unclear].

But then Germany came in and the Russians come; the Germans' bodies are already being carried away. I went off, left there. My mother stayed there, my brother and sister there. They all stayed in the *forest*, my father.

A. K.-B.: How long were you there?

Lena: [unclear] . . . fled there. I went back to the *forest* there. I went to the *town*. I was there in the *town* when you could still get a bit of *bread* to eat. But then you got *bread* on a *card*. Everyone was given *cards*. I didn't have a *card*. I came *on foot*, I came *home* from *Leningrad on foot*. A *sack of bread* before me, and a *sack of bread* behind me I carried. Time passed. People were carried off again, the Russians began killing. Where can you go, when the Germans are invading?

Bread-making

So I came *home* in the evening. There is no one in the village. I heated *aunt's stove*, my own *stove*. Now to slicing *bread*, making rusks, drying the *bread*. I dried the *bread*, I saw how they are all coming [unclear], they are all coming *home* from the *forest*. They all came *home*. The *loaves* were dried.⁹ We had flour. I made a tub of dough to bake some *loaves*. The next day my *aunt* was *home*, they all came *home* with my *aunt* from the *forest*. We sit there, and my *bread* is already in the *stove*.

Partisans drive people from their homes

Our own people, [Ingrian] Finn partisans, came to drive us away. But my *aunt* and I were looking for lice. This is how we killed them on our heads. [laughing]

9 The word for 'loaf' and 'bread' is the same in Finnish (*leipä*).

7 Taina Ukkonen (2006) speaks of people's 'own history', which she explains as 'matters and events which these communities or individuals define as worth remembering and recounting, or as requiring explanation'. I myself use the term 'personal-experience narrative' because my interview contact with people was brief. My interviewees conceived events from their own perspective without directly linking them to the historical context.

8 I received this definition from Arno Survo during our first field trip, when I asked how to define the outbreak of war.

A. K.-B.: Aha!

Lena: I'm telling you everything here!

A. K.-B.: Well, just tell everything as it is.

Lena: How they were, yes. We have to go to the *forest*, to *Nearby*. The Germans are coming. We have to go to *Nearby*. But we had *bread* in the *oven*. 'Let the *bread* bake in the *oven*.' They wouldn't allow it. But *aunt*, she held out against them. They grabbed her by the *hair*, and our own people booted her out.

A. K.-B.: How was that?

Lena: We have to leave our *home*. She is not leaving. The *loaves* are in the *oven*. She was thrown out by her *hair*. The children started crying. The children were still small, they started crying. Then they stopped.

Everyone ends up fleeing

And then down there they began driving everyone from the village. It was bucketing down. They gathered everything up. The fresh *loaves* were put in *sacks*. They were baked and put in *sacks*. Mother had a *cow*, I had a *cow*; they were put on the *cows*' backs. And so we went to *Nearby*, ten kilometres through the *forest*. Up to here in mud. It is raining.
[The story continues.]

After meeting Lena I wrote in my fieldwork diary that evening: 'I managed to pose just one rough question about her health etc. when it felt as if the cork in the champagne bottle had popped. It's a good job I had got the equipment out and on. I was almost shocked by the detail and dramatic force with which Lena began to speak of her experience before the evacuation to Finland. A key narrative! Fresh in the mind, as if just awaiting my arrival! Shocking. Lena was trampled under foot by Germans and Russians and forced to flee to the *forest*.'

When we met, Lena took the lead: she chose me and led me unconditionally into her own narrative world.¹⁰ Meeting Lena shows that there are interview situations where there is no need to prepare the ground to make contact, where it just sparks straight off. I had never met a narrator who right at the outset of the interview would relate the one most important memory of theirs. How did this happen? Santeri Mullonen popped in at Lena's and left, so he couldn't have 'reserved' the story-telling session.¹¹ Our working group was on the move for

10 Ulf Palménfelt uses this vivid expression in his thesis (1993: 176–96) of an interviewee who snatches the researcher off with them into their own world.

11 In retrospect it seems unfortunate that I do not know what Mullonen said during those few short minutes which he spent with the interviewees. Scarcely anything other than encouraging them to tell of their lives, but now the verbal form of the request would interest me. In summer 1993 I noted in my diary: 'It became clear that Santeri is pushing ahead to explain our work and to get people to agree. He speaks of recording memories of Ingria.'

four days, so it was quite possible that Lena had heard of the interviewers, and had prepared her ground for the meeting. After her long and complex tale of exile,¹² Lena seemed tired, and the interview continued with questions and short answers. Towards the end of our meeting, Lena related a second significant addition, when she remembered how difficult it was for her as a child to set off on a begging journey to ask for bread.

Lena's speech tempo was very fast, in fact hectic: words tripped from her lips. At the beginning of the tale I interjected some quite pointless questions, since Lena held me firmly in her gaze and immediately looked at me questioningly when I quickly tried to glance at the recording equipment, which I had hurriedly set up. My questions were a sort of minimal response, intended to show that I was listening and wished Lena to continue.

The repetition, continuing throughout the fragment, calls for attention. It is as if Lena wished to put over an emphasis by repeating the happenings of each scene with only small variations, such as: 'The war came, we couldn't figure out what would come of it, that war. What would come of it. We all fled to the *forest*. Into the *forest* we took all the *cows* and set off for the *forest*. There in the *forest* there was already shooting. They were after shooting everyone.' It feels as if Lena is watching a film, which speeds ahead at such a rate that the observer does not wish to stay behind. Margaret Mills had the same experience when, as she relates, she interviewed 'Maryam' in Afghanistan in 1995, who had experienced heavy bombing in Kabul as the Russians withdrew from the region. Maryam suffered deep stress and related that she could not depict the events in Kabul, even though 'the events of the bombardments ran in her head like a movie' (Mills 1996: 4). When I read, and listened to, Lena's narrative, with its feeling of chaos from its very inception, a second time, its film-like fatality began to sink into me.¹³ This is underlined by certain sentences in which the narrator directs even the interviewer's gaze towards the particularities of the events, such as: 'We sit there' or 'This is how we killed them [the lice] on our heads' and 'Up to here in mud'. The chaos is indeed the strength of the narrative, which recounts a conjunction of jumbled events and feelings relating to the events, which Lena does not put into words. The sentences of the narrative are short, like quick glances. Lena's gaze pauses on some detail, hovers there a while and passes on to another.

The tenses of the narrative alternate in such a way that the past tense is the norm, but from time to time it turns into a present. It is then a question of highlighting

12 Lena's 'exile cycle', containing a number of interrelated narratives, is around 20 minutes in length.

13 I have worked up this idea about films; see also Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2003.

the climaxes of the narrative's action, for example: '... and the Russians come; the Germans' bodies are already being carried away' or 'I saw how they are all coming [unclear], they are all coming home from the forest', where Lena appears to be pausing to look in her mind at the procession of events. The alternation in tenses is a sign of the interviewee's empathy with her narrative.¹⁴ The various rejoinders, of which there were several in the course of the narrative, also indicate empathy.

From the point of view of narration, repetition gives Lena a moment to think of how to continue. She concentrates on various central themes, including bread (mentioned 14 times), the forest (11 times) and cows (9 times). These themes represent concrete forms of safety: the forest as a place of hiding and refuge, bread as the most important means of survival, which has to be preserved for the journey,¹⁵ and the cow as a provider of fresh nourishment. It is interesting that the cow appears right at the beginning of the narrative, while family members are indicated just as 'all, everyone'. The narrative scarcely contains any filler words, and just one adjective when Lena is speaking of small children and later of her little brother. The movement and action in the narrative derive from the verbs, of which the commonest are 'come' (usually to indicate movement rather than 'become'), 'go' and 'leave'. Strong verbs depicting events are 'shoot', 'drive off', 'kill', 'hold out', 'grab', 'boot out', 'cry' and 'bomb'.

In a swift-flowing narrative there are some still waters, where things stay in their place. The first is right at the beginning: 'We ate mushrooms there and milked the cows.' The expression is exceptional in that it depicts being rather than moving. The narrative does not really contain definitions of time, but this short description marks the passing of time in the forest. There was no food with them, but luckily there was a cow, but at the next moment Lena is already on a journey towards Leningrad, apparently on a quest to buy food. A similar stationary moment is the start of baking, which Lena describes in the sentence: 'We had flour.' There was again a moment of time, and it was possible to begin making bread, as there was flour. The passing of time is

14 I have analysed a similar empathetic use of the present tense in the story-telling of Juho Oksanen; see e.g. Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1988: 139–40.

15 Bread is one of the recurrent elements in all narratives of flight and evacuation. Bread is baked at the last moment for the journey, and at the same time a sheep, for example, is slaughtered and roasted, if there is time. On the other hand bread is spoken of in the narratives in which the narrators are on the last stage of the evacuation journey in Soviet places of banishment. There is a constant lack of nutrition in these depictions, and people live on the border of survival. For example Lena tells how she gathered up the bread fragments from dead soldiers. A number of narrators repeated in their memories that the taste of bread was forgotten when none of it had been got in time.



A huge pumpkin was one of the gifts the interviewees gave us from their gardens. Photo: Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj. Photo by courtesy of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS KRA).

marked by an exceptional time specification: 'The next day my aunt was home, they all came home with my aunt from the forest.'

It is notable in the narrative that Lena does not speak of fear. Perhaps there was no room for fear then, when the most important thing was to keep functioning and try to stay alive.

The fate of the mentally ill and prisoners of war

Lahja's narrative relates to the same historical context as Lena's: the Germans are on the way towards Leningrad and the local populace is fearful. There is no information in the narrative about date, but it was the time of the blockade of Leningrad, and in August.

I met Lahja (22 at the outbreak of war) in August 1993. Now there was no guide preparing for my arrival, since Lahja's neighbour directed me to the house next door to continue the discussion. We waited a while. Lahja went daily to graze her goats and said that she took a nap with the animals under her arms.¹⁶ Her grand-

16 All the interviewees had animals at home; they kept them because they were a source of nourishment in uncertain circumstances. Milk could not be got every day from a shop, and when bought from someone else it was somewhat cheaper than in the shop.

daughters began making coffee immediately and placed on my plate a large piece of birthday cake. I noted in my diary: 'Lahja a lively but not a lengthy narrator. Outstanding description of how the Germans massacred the patients of a mental asylum. . . . Short interview, very positive atmosphere. We looked at the pets and the garden. I got a big pumpkin.' The narrative given below came right at the beginning of the interview.

A. K.-B.: Were you working [as a cleaner] there in the mental asylum during the war?

Lahja: Up to the beginning of the war. To the beginning of the war. Then when the Germans came, then when [unclear] the Germans came there to the hospital, we all left, everyone wherever they could hide. We didn't know what the Germans were going to do to us. The doors were opened wide. So the patients in the hospital, whoever could leave, they went wherever they could. But whoever couldn't, they stayed there and a German gave them these injections, injections of air here in the big vein, so they were still alive when they were put in the vehicles, in the lorries, and they took them there. There was this sort of thing built there, sort of trenches, great big trenches for those tanks, and they were dumped in there from the lorry. They were still alive. And there were more than a thousand people that the Germans murdered like that.

Well, after that, when the Germans knew that the time had come for them to leave, then they took some Russian prisoners of war, and put them to ground. They buried them there. Well, when they knew they had to leave, then they took the prisoners of war and opened them a bit and lit it and set it on fire to burn the prisoners of war. They did that. They put the prisoners of war in some sort of hay barn there or somewhere, and fed them with porridge mixed with some type of poison, and set the barn on fire to burn them. They burned the prisoners of war inside there.

Lahja began her narrative with her most dramatic memories, which were connected with her work in the mental hospital. What remain in the story are facts: as the front advances the difficult to deal with patients and the prisoners of war have to be cleared from the path. The events are the everyday happenings of war, but whoever experiences them cannot forget them. Once half a century has passed from the time of the events to that of the narration, the details have slipped away. Uncertainty and fear are to the fore at the beginning of the story as people try to hide from the Germans. It soon became clear, however, that the enemy's efforts at cleansing would concentrate on the mental hospital. Lahja's narrative implies that she was, at least initially, an eye-witness, since she worked in the hospital: for example, 'the Germans gave them *these* injections, injections of air *here* in the big vein'. The repeated 'there' indicates a moment later that Lahja is relating what she has heard but has perhaps not seen.

Soon the Germans were in a hurry as they moved the front, and so it was the turn of the prisoners of war. The time definitions, 'after that', 'then', and 'well, when they knew they had to leave', show that time has elapsed between events. Events, not their timing, are central to the narrative.

In an interview situation the listener is shocked and follows the progress of the narrative without stirring, but the subject matter is such that it is impossible to ask for clarifications. Lahja continued with her tale by explaining that her village 'was not far from that place'. At the site there is now a memorial stone relating the events. When I asked if Lahja was afraid, she said she was. She stayed for three days within the blockade, since the battles between the Germans and Russians swept across the area between her home and the hospital.

Leaving home for Germany

Some of my interviewees ended up spending periods during the Second World War in various countries, such as Germany, Estonia and Soviet Karelia. The greater part of Ingria was also occupied by Germans. In December 1941 Germany offered 'to move 50,000 Ingrians to Finland, as they are under threat of starvation in the occupied territories.' Finland rejected the suggestion at this stage (Nevalainen 1991: 268–71). Hence a number of Ingrian Finns ended up in Germany, amongst them my next narrator, Katarina.

Katarina (24 years old at the outbreak of war) was one of the best narrators I met; I noted down a short character study of her in my diary in August 1993: 'I went to meet Katarina, whose savage-looking dog kept us outside the house last year. A small, lively woman, whom I remembered from the church. To begin with, a spontaneous narration to the tape, progressing quickly like a catalogue. . . . Suddenly Katarina came out with a key narrative, a revealing picture of conditions in Germany, where she ended up in 1941 by the Germans' doing. Good, lively, dramatic, detailed narrative. Difficult to direct or interrupt with questions. Katarina beams as she narrates, and the modern situation—old age, loneliness, lack of money—gets her into a grave mood.'

A. K.-B.: Were there many of you Ingrians there in Germany?

Katarina: There were 27 of us there under one master. All Ingrians, other than one Russian. We were all Finns, Ingrians. We were happy when he [the Finnish consul] came to see us, as we were wretched there. A long table, a sort of rough table, yes. And they brought this make-do stuff there . . . coffee and this tea, and then we shared it all out to each other. [unclear] And we had cakes baked from potatoes [laughing] [unclear] and then we ate the cakes. We were all like one family, we were so happy. No one had any ill-will towards anyone.

But at work—a stick. You couldn't raise your head. When you go, when you become hunched up, you are hunched up

so long, until lunch comes, when something is brought out to the fields to eat. If it isn't brought, then you are without it there too. So then at last it started to affect my back. I say 'It's starting to affect my back'. He raised the stick like this, said: 'Is it starting to affect your back?' Oh, but I was afraid, oh, oh, oh. Had to do the work.

A. K.-B.: What work did you do?

Katarina: On the fields we gleaned grain. This long—look. The farmer was really a no-good sort. He gave to us first, he treated us well at first when we were really in a bad way, then he gave us, look, these sort of loaves.

But we had someone there to hand things out, who shares out her own portion [unclear] to everyone. She said, 'Katarina, come and start sharing out bread', so that it would come to everyone equally, so that no one has a bad feeling. So look, when she cuts the bread, look, she can't cut any more. There were glass bits, these glass bits in the bread.

A. K.-B.: Why?

Katarina: She had found out, the one who was sharing out the bread. Well, I helped a bit there. So she said, 'Bring it here, that bread'. We put paper on it and set off to find the farmer. She wasn't afraid in the slightest. She said, 'I have only one time to die, I have: the one that kills me'. And she left.

The farmer blushed so, so he did. He blushed so much that, that, that . . . So, look, when we found out that the Finnish consul was coming, we took it that we'd better not mention anything to him like would he give these people more to eat. Then there was this butter, then there was margarine, then there was milk. Then milk was brought for everyone—cupfulls. He gave out flour. 'Cook some pies for yourselves.' Look what it meant when the Finnish consul came. [The story continues.]

The fragment is a small part of Katarina's German cycle, in which she remembers the change brought about by the visit of the Finnish consul to the farm. It is preceded by a dramatic picture of people hanged from the gallows, at whom it was obligatory to steal a glance to avoid becoming victims to the same fate oneself—so it was believed. Because Katarina was a lively and creative narrator, with an effective use of her voice, who shifted quickly from one memory to another, she is not at her best when transcribed. The farm scene is, however, a skilful example of the effectiveness of the methods of narration. I have divided the narrative into parts, showing how Katarina's opening lists the background individuals in the narrative, but then moves swiftly to the effects of the visit of the Finnish consul: food appears on the table, coffee and tea turn up along with potato cakes, and everyone is in a good mood, quite different from the everyday norm.

The change of scene is effective: at the feast, there is a long table full of food; at work, a stick is in use. In her memory, Katarina feels the back pains from a long day's

work, and the fear of the stick, 'Oh, but I was afraid, oh, oh, oh!'

The work in the fields brings to the narrator's mind an event in which in cutting the bread the knife hit upon bits of glass in the loaf. It had to be decided quickly what to do. Katarina's workmate decided that the loaf with the glass bits in should be shown to the farmer. Katarina takes the scene forwards by means of repartee, which she puts into the mouth of the girl cutting the bread. The farmer's outward reaction, blushing, she characterises through repetition and emphasis: 'The farmer blushed so, so he did. He blushed so much *that, that, that*'. In the end the narrator returns to the Finnish consul's arrival and colours the narrative with a modal *muka*:¹⁷ 'we took it that we'd better not mention anything to him', by means of which irony she shifts the matter onto the farmer: the consul shouldn't be told about everyday food conditions and the deprivation of nourishment. The table was set beautifully when the consul came, and there was plenty of food. Katarina presents this like a list, by means of repetition, where the adverb 'then' indicates the sequence and richness of events in which the food appears: '*Then* there was this butter, *then* there was margarine, *then* there was milk. *Then* milk was brought for everyone—cupfulls'. The narrator caps the scene with a conclusive comment: 'Look what it meant when the Finnish consul came.'

This fragment is part of a key-narrative cycle, containing many memories of Germany, which concludes with Katarina's brief statement, 'Then we came from Germany there to Finland'. The narrative skips from one matter to another, following the flood of memories, and Katarina often returns to what she has related earlier. But in pausing upon some event she thrusts the decades aside and is once again in the midst of events, reporting, relating and presenting her own values through the methods employed by a skilled narrator.

The evacuation journey to Finland

The town of Rauma became the reception site for Ingrian Finns in autumn 1943, when the previous site, Hanko, could no longer cope with the migrants. In October to November 1943 it is calculated that a good 22,000 people arrived in Rauma (Nevalainen 1991: 274). The journey was made by ship from the Estonian coast across the Baltic to Finland. This information helps to date Anna's travel narrative, where dates are not mentioned.¹⁸ The interviewer did not regard it as suitable to interrupt the narrative to ask for details.

17 *Muka*, which occurs twice in this one sentence, indicates the speaker regards the statement qualified by it as somehow suppositional or dependent on an unstated understanding; I translate it as 'we took it that'.

18 I have considered time expressions and their substitution by other narrative methods in Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2001.



Fruit trees, vegetables and displays of flowers filled the yards. Photo: Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj. Photo by courtesy of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS KRA).

I met Anna (13 at the outbreak of war) on both occasions when we visited Ingria, but I interviewed her only during the first summer, in August 1992. The next year Ulla Lipponen videoed Anna and her neighbour having a chat. I noted in my diary concerning the meeting: 'A really outstanding narrator came my way. Weeps well, and at times wistfully, at life's traumas. A nice woman, who plied me with apples and flowers. It was touching that as I began to get the recording equipment ready on the table Anna's daughter came back home from the shop for the meal. She (39) speaks Ingrian tolerably well (Russian husband) and agreed at once to the interview and coped with it with her mother's help. As she left to dash back to work, having first poured Anna and me some tea, she snatched a crystal candle holder from the other room and gave it to me as a souvenir.'

As a narrator, Anna was the best of the interviewees I met in Ingria. The following narrative begins a long cycle, in which Anna remembers the evacuation journey to Finland. The passage in question was presented right at the beginning of the interview. The cycle continues with the return from Finland to the Soviet Union, and ending up in Yaroslav, whence the journey continued via Estonia to Karelia and finally, on Stalin's death, back to Ingria. Any portion of the cycle would serve as an example, but I select for my analysis this passage, in which I can feel all over again the desire to return. I italicize

the passives used in Anna's narrative and I attempt to analyse their significance. This narrative too I divide into sections.

A. K.-B.: Could you tell something about your own life?

Anna: Well, what would you like best, what should I tell you? About my childhood?

A. K.-B: From your childhood and then later.

Anna: Well, when I was a child, we lived over at Virkkilä, with my mother and father. **Sister to Germany.**

The Germans came to us here. They gave us a long time, twelve hours to empty the village and the people all had to go away. Well, in the evening after eight o'clock no one was allowed to go anywhere. And in the morning by six o'clock everyone has to be ready and *is taken* to Estonia. Well, we *were given* one horse there and the children *were put*, the children *were put* in, yes the bags *were put* in there, whatever anyone had. All the food stayed at home and all the goods, it all stayed at home.

Well, so we came to Hatsina, we *were taken* [unclear], the Nazis had us *brought* there. And so we waited until we *were given* wagons and so we *were brought* here to the Baltic coast. [Omitted: a short passage in which the narrator searches for a suitable word for 'tent'.]

First we *were taken*, they were enormous, enormous there, those soldiers' barracks. Well, the enormous mansions, the military mansions, we *were all billeted* there. Well, the Jews were separate. We were in another one. We were there in the soldiers' mansions. We must have been there a week, and then we *were taken* there to the coast, to the Baltic Sea coast there.

And then I remember, it was a German boat, the boat was called the Siilas, and there were sixteen of us on the boat, we *were all put* on board. Well, just then 'Virkkilä' *gets called out* there; all the children and all the adults from Kou-sunkylä, we all got on the boat and then we *were brought* to Rauma, to Rauma we *were brought*, Rauma harbour. [I omit some sentences about the docking of the ship.]

We *were put* in sort of smaller boats. Then we *were taken* there to the villas. There were those beautiful, beautiful villas there. Then we were there a couple of days, it must have been. So we began *to be taken* here and there, so that bigger families who had more workers *were taken* to factories. But whoever had a lot of children, many kids, and adults were fewer, they *were taken* to a master for work. [The story continues.]

Anna's narrative contains many facts, attracting attention from both a content and narrative point of view. I have put in bold the phrase 'Sister to Germany', which is the shortest narrative it is possible to present about someone else. It feels incredible to condense one's sister's fate into a couple of words, but the sister is not the protagonist of this story, so she is left to one side. We never find out how Anna's sister left for Germany, but

she was probably transported as part of a workforce for the Germans.

The Germans' coming to the village put in motion the emptying of the village and the departure on the journey. Anna uses the repeated definition in many of her narratives of 'So they gave us *twelve hours* to empty the village', which indicates how quickly the home had to be abandoned. The officials ordained twelve or twenty-four hours for people to prepare for a complete change in their lives, and many of my interviewees experienced it a number of times.

The narrative may also be read by concentrating on the place names by means of which Anna as it were draws a map of how the journey proceeded. From her home village of Virkkilä the journey proceeds via Hatsina towards Estonia and the barracks on the Baltic coast there, and continues on a boat over the Gulf of Finland towards Rauma. The moves from one place to another also measure out time, whose passing Anna does not specify other than in phrases like 'we must have been there a week', or 'then we were there a couple of days'.

The italicised passive verbs indicate that the resolutions came from above, at the behest of the German military command. Those forced to evacuate 'were given' a horse and wagon, in which children and goods 'were put'. Then people 'were brought', 'were taken', 'were billeted' from place to place, until they 'were put' in a boat and 'brought' to Rauma. The agents were, in the end, the Finns, though that is not made clear in the narrative. There was, however, the specific point that the newcomers 'were taken', some to factories, some to farms to work. An additional perspective is brought to the matter in that Anna was only 13 at the outbreak of war, and at the start of the evacuation just 16. The perspective is that of a child, who had not decided upon the journey, but followed her family.¹⁹

It is also interesting in Anna's narrative that when I asked her to recount something of her own life she used the first-person pronoun only once, when pointing to what she remembered ('Then I remember').²⁰ The protagonist is not 'I', Anna, but 'we', the family, the village, and indeed all who were affected by the move to Finland. Behind the passive forms, the agent of the narrative is only once named as the Germans.

19 Ilana Rosen suggested this perspective to me, when I spoke of Anna's narrative at a presentation at the Tartu ISFNR congress in July 2005. It is true, the perspective is that of a young girl, but in these evacuation narratives no one else was able to move according to their own will either.

20 Taina Ukkonen has noted in mutual discussion that this sort of 'I remember' phrase is a typical introduction when there is a desire to speak of experiences in everyday language. Juho Oksanen also used it to begin his narratives; see Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1988: 109.

From Finland back to the Soviet Union

The truce agreement with the Soviet Union in September 1944 included a demand for the return of Soviet citizens taken to Finland. The Finnish foreign minister interpreted the matter as meaning that the return of civilians would be voluntary, and those who wished could also remain in Finland (Nevalainen 1991: 282–3). Many believed it would be better to leave voluntarily, since otherwise they might be forced to leave. The willingness to leave was strengthened by the hope of getting home and being close to relatives on the front line. Through the border crossing at Vainikkala, altogether 56,869 people had returned by September 1947 (Nevalainen 1991: 285).

Most presentations of the evacuation journey include a stage which I have called 'the Vyborg stop'. There the returners learnt that they would not be taken home but to places of banishment in various corners of the Soviet Union. The Ingrian Finns who had been in Finland were considered enemies of the people, albeit their move to Finland had not been voluntary, but a migration organised by Germany and Finland. Homes were not returned to, and families were scattered: before them lay an uncertain future and the start of a new life from the beginning yet again.

Sara (20 at the outbreak of war) was one of those who, despite the efforts of Finnish employers, friends and church representatives, decided to return. I met her in August 1993, and made the following notes on the interview: 'We drove to the village of N, where I came upon Sara. Stereotypical narrative, enlivened by certain choices of words. Impossible to hold back the narration or break it into individual parts. Having recorded for an hour and a half I had to wait about an hour and a half, and carry on the discussion with Sara, mainly about agriculture. I began to be frustrated: it feels that very little is building up on the tape.' The source of my frustration was not Sara, but that in fieldwork situations there was a lot of the haphazard and hit-or-miss, when one drove from village to village seeking out interviewees. But, as often, good passages of narrative may be found on the tape, in which the interviewee talks of her life. It is also interesting to see where the narrator pauses and begins to deepen her narrative, when she has first settled the account of years of events with a few phrases. The following fragment is one of Sara's key narratives, in which she remembers with all her soul the difficult turning point in her life.

I italicise two central words in the narrative: home and weep. I wish by focusing on them to reveal the meaning of the narrative. I divide the narrative into suitable sections, determined by the content.

A. K.-B.: How long did your stay in Finland last?

Sara: It didn't last long. Then we, well, we were told that we

were going to be taken *home*. Well, then we came to Mikkeli. There was a Russian officer there; we chatted with him. He said, 'Everyone is being taken *home*'. Well, then we were going *home*, if we were being taken *home*. It was always [good] at *home*, always, there was always a yearning for *home*.

Well, everyone really asked us a lot, the matron and manager of the hospital: 'Are you Rus. . ., Russians then?' We said, 'No, we're not Russians. We live there, it's where our house is, our villages are there, near Leningrad. And around Leningrad everyone is Finnish like that.' Well then, [they thought], how much time would pass before we get papers for you, so that you don't have to go. But we didn't listen, we wanted to go *home*. [laughter]

Well, then we came. We weren't brought *home*. No one was brought *home*. Hm. Everyone was taken to Russia, and then all the Russians were brought here instead. Everyone was mixed up.

A. K.-B.: And you were on the way home before you heard this?

Sara: Well, yes, when we came to Leningrad. We bypassed Leningrad and went on, so then we knew we were being taken somewhere else. My mother got sent to Yaroslav, my eldest sister was in Kalinsky oblast. I got sent to Valtai with I girl I knew.

A. K.-B.: Where to?

Sara: Valtai, the town of Valtai. So in the morning, when they opened the doors of the train, they came to fetch us with horses. I got sent to a collective farm five kilometres from the town, with this other girl. We went there. We were placed on a farm. The farmer's wife had three children and a sort of house in two parts—it had a sort of big kitchen and then there was a sort of room there. They said you can have this room. We put all our suitcases in it and *wept*, as we couldn't do anything else. We *wept* so loud, both of us. Then the word got round in the village that two young girls had arrived, so all the boys and girls came to have a look. The farmer's wife said: 'Go away, you can hear they are *weeping*. Go away, and come back tomorrow. Let them *weep*.'

A. K.-B.: So she understood how you felt?

Sara: Yes, she understood, the farmer's wife. We *wept* so much, 'Why did we have to come here? What on earth is there for us here?' [The story continues.]

The beginning of Sara's narrative is concerned with the home theme, and she repeats the key word nine times. The listener is assured that on the one hand the Ingrians were enticed to go home, and on the other they themselves wished to go there. The dramatic turn takes place only during the journey, when it becomes clear that there would be no going home, but 'we were being taken somewhere else'. Mother and sister are taken each to different places, whereas Sara ends up near Valtai on a collective farm together with a girl she knew.

The theme of the latter part of the narrative is bewilderment and weeping. The verb 'weep' is repeated

five times and reveals the eruption of fear, betrayal and tiredness in the form of a powerful outward expression of the emotions.

The repetition of the two key words structures the narrative and lends it force. Sara also uses repartee, which enlivens the memories. The description pauses at the lodgings and the introduction of the hostess, which takes place by means of repartee. The hostess urges the youngsters of the village to give the newcomers some time, and Sara indicated to me that the hostess understood the situation. The fragment concludes with a rhetorical question, 'Why did we have to come here? What on earth is there for us here?' The ending is interesting in that it speaks of despair: there was no choice, but the girls ask what the significance of events was.

A deserted village street and old wooden houses shaded by gardens.
Photo: Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj. Photo by courtesy of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS KRA).



How a narrative becomes a key narrative

All five narrative fragments I have analysed were recorded in short meetings with Ingrian women. When a researcher meets an interviewee, the first few minutes of the encounter are important, since as they pass the atmosphere is created in which collaboration either succeeds or the prerequisites for it are not found. The opportunity to undertake fieldwork in Ingria opened up when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and as I began to carry out interviews it became clear that the subject matter which people wished to speak of was the so-called tale of Ingrian suffering. It was the uppermost topic, and as a Finn I was a suitable listener: the topic was considered to be of interest to me, although I did not set out to ask about it. When I asked people to tell me of their lives, no one tarried on their childhood, but began their narrative with Stalin's banishments or the dramatic turns of the Second World War. But the painful turning points of life were a prominent topic also because it was now possible to speak of the events that had taken place decades before. The same phenomenon was recognisable across Russia; Anna-Leena Siikala too speaks of 'the special time', which offered people the opportunity to relate their own history.²¹ Questions criss-crossed the conversations: why was my father called a kulak, why was my brother banished to Siberia, why were we dragged from our home, why didn't we stay in Finland, why was our family scattered to the corners of the Soviet Union? Most often these questions were not put into so many words, but these were the topics discussed. A direct criticism was offered by no one. When someone has been silent for so long, a reaffirmation of values and of interpretation takes place through narration.

The narratives I have analysed are fragments of longer narrative wholes. It should be emphasised that a full understanding of them would need a presentation of the whole interview and the situation current in the early 1990s (Vasenkari 1999: 66). The narratives have opened themselves up for me, through repeated listening and reading through the transcriptions, but among the most important factors is that I have myself been present during the narration sessions. It is not really possible to pose questions in a key narrative, because the narratives were constructed in the mind from shards of memory as finished articles, and usually they spouted straight out. They were also very personal and usually painful. Drawn-out and repeated interviews create possibilities for their analysis, of how the theme of the narrative begins, how it becomes many-faceted and branches out, forming into a whole or suddenly changing into something else.²² But there was no opportunity for this here.

21 Discussion with Prof. Siikala, 29.7.2009.

22 For example, when I interviewed Juho Oksanen I had materials to make such an analysis; see Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1988: 55–9.

I am sure that repeated interviews would have offered the chance to deepen the discussions or to orient the life-stories in some particular direction.²³ They would also have provided material to investigate the question raised by Satu Apo (1995: 228): what do narrators and listeners do with the narratives in their mind outside the performances and discussions?²⁴

Half a century had passed since the events of the Second World War when I heard the narratives about them. This is apparent in the stories in various ways. The narrative is always a report about the past, and the normal tense used is the past; the narrator either brings the events closer, or distances them (Siikala 1984: 160–73), and she exploits the narrative schemes under her control (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1988: 29–35), thereby presenting her interpretation of what she has experienced or heard (Ukkonen 2000: 129–36). Each of my five narrators dealt with the traumatic experiences of her own life through emphases which suited her own specific narrative method. The sharp edge of the experiences made life both memorable and suitable for narrating in a way that a so-called easy life does not necessarily lend itself to. Although the return home from the place of exile was an important and longed-for turning point, none of the women I interviewed presented it in her narration as a key narrative of her life. When one's own home came back into one's possession after various trying events, the matter was sorted and was mundane.

The years which had elapsed between the events and their narration had pruned various details, such as precise times, from people's minds and from the narratives. They are not important points in a folk narrative anyway. Thus the time that passes between the main events of a narrative is rarely mentioned, and then only cursorily. Lena keeps using 'then' and 'again', and once 'in the evening' and 'the next day'. The richness of events and details in her wide-ranging narrative indicates in itself that time is passing. When Sara relates her return to the Soviet Union, she measures time by repeating words like 'then'. The arrival in the Soviet Union is specified by the repetition of the name of Leningrad. Pauses and rare specifications of time crop up in the narratives, as when Sara and her girlfriend come to their place of exile: the train doors are opened 'in the morning'. The conclusion of the journey and morning are essential in the narrative, not the length of the journey or what day it is. The hostess at the place they are staying for her part rounds on the youngsters who have turned up out of curiosity to look at the girls, telling them to come back *tomorrow*. Tomorrow here is not really a measure of time, but of the

23 Examples of this may be found; see Vasenkari & Pekkala 1999; Rimpiläinen 2000.

24 This viewpoint was the starting-point for a Nordic working group which researched personal-experience narration; cf. Kaivola-Bregenhøj, Klein & Palmenfelt 2006.

hostess's awareness of the situation: she understands the girls' sorrow. But when I ask at the beginning of the narrative how long her sojourn in Finland lasted, Sara answers imprecisely that it didn't last long. Events and time have overlapped over the course of the decades, and the most important thing, the activity, has remained in the narratives as the inessential has been pruned away.

How the Ingrians' situation is envisaged relates to the content of words like 'refugee', 'exile', 'forced migrant'. I pause on Vieda Skultans's definition, where she investigates the dual interpretations of exile/refugee. This may point to an undesired separation from a place where someone may no longer live. It may also include the moral aspect of longing and yearning that characterises absence. For Skultans's family this was central (Skultans 2004), and these characteristics are applicable too to the Ingrians. I considered why the Ingrians I interviewed did not speak of this. Longing for home was certainly a recurrent theme, but the pain of absence or exile was not distinguished. Possibly the women I interviewed were so young at the inception of their long journeys that they did not fix their attention on the matter or were not conscious of it. Perhaps the question of exile is, after all, academic and of interest only to researchers; what was pressing was the matter of saving one's life—hence, instead of any mention of exile, the devastating lack of nourishment recurs in various of the narrators' tales, both at the outbreak of war and later, after the return to the Soviet Union. Some indeed said that their worst experience was hunger.

The experiences of many interviewees were violent, just as with those who on their own instigation flee war, persecution or ethnic cleansing for another country. My interviewees lost relatives into an untrackable oblivion, and only with the fall of the Soviet Union could people find out the fates of those close to them. Many relatives also perished when weakened by hunger. Michael Jackson asserts that in the case of refugees, narrativity runs out because of life: a person has become a problem to the social order, has been side-lined, wrenched from their roots, a refugee without citizenship, but it is difficult to grasp the incessant change. Jackson points to survivors of Stalin's repression, who had no memories relating to the specifics of dates or passages of time. And people's story-telling differs at different stages of exile (Jackson 2002: 92–3, 102). The women I interviewed were survivors who returned home. Their life-stories—of which only fragments have been presented here—had a happy ending, despite the loss of many close to them on the journey.

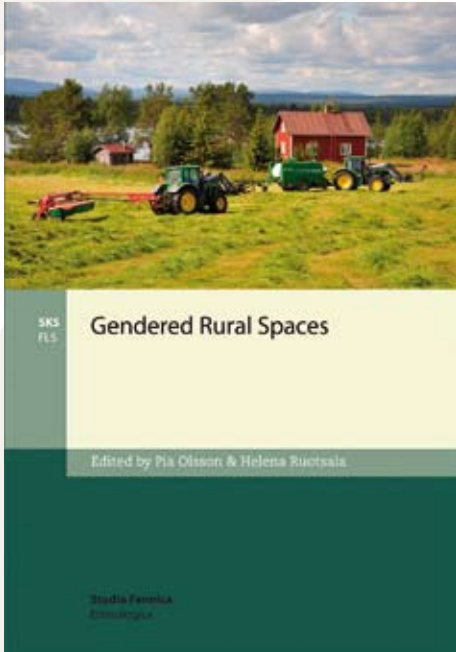
Of the women I have discussed, Anna, Katarina and Lahja burst into sudden outpourings of tears as they recounted their lives, and Sara dealt with weeping in her tale. I am not surprised they wept, but I was startled at the lack of warning: tears burst out suddenly and were

over again in moments. Anna Rotkirch (2002: 70) has spoken of Russian peasant women's 'tradition of weeping and sorrowing'. The observation is interesting and relates to a Russian 'wailing wall', which is the complete opposite for example of Finns' avoidance of weeping and moaning. According to Rotkirch's observations, the Russian woman can and dares to bemoan even small misfortunes. The reasons my interviewees had for doing so were certainly true and speaking of the memories associated with them was painful. One method of explaining the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust, for example, has been to stay silent and to reject the memories (Kirmayer 1996: 187). An Ingrian man interviewed by Ulla-Maija Peltonen kept silent about his memories for almost forty years. 'Keeping silent is linked with protection and is a defence mechanism', she emphasises (Peltonen 2007: 222). My interviewees did not remain silent, nor did they criticise, but instead they wept. Lena was the only one of my five interviewees whose narrative was so tightly bound up with the hectic progression of the forced migration that she did not weep. It was as if there would have been no place for weeping, for Lena threw herself into her experience with such intensity that she seemed to be present in it, in the midst of war, here and now. This was her way of expressing the distress of the experience.

I have spoken of five women's 'key narratives'. It would be easy to find more, and some interviewees have several key narratives. The memory need not be dramatic or well told to be a key narrative: the tale can just as well deal with a moment of joy or it can be scant and fumbling in its methods when narrating a trauma. It should also be asked whether the researcher is actually able to define which one is a key narrative.²⁵ I keep the name, however, because these narratives are charged in their content and in their narrative style, and deal with matters of exceptional importance and trauma to their narrators. Emotion is present in them, even though fear, irritation, anxiety or hate do not break out in words. Taina Ukkonen (2000: 138–9) emphasises how survival

25 Mari Hatakka (2004: 177) approaches this same idea when she notes that 'challenging biographies (incomprehensible for one reason or another, boring, dull, badly written, contentious) may continue to captivate the researcher's mind, so that it becomes a key narrative. The narratives I have analysed have on the contrary been what might be termed good, but the point of view is the same: the narratives have captivated my researcher mind and they have become for me key narratives into the interviewees' lives. Arno Survo (2006: 253) has in fact noted that 'the objects of scientific interest readily vary according to the ideological circumstances. The picture on the field presents itself as loose and fragmentary judged against the (linguistic) reality of the field, but it is genuine and relevant in the mind of the interpreting party.'

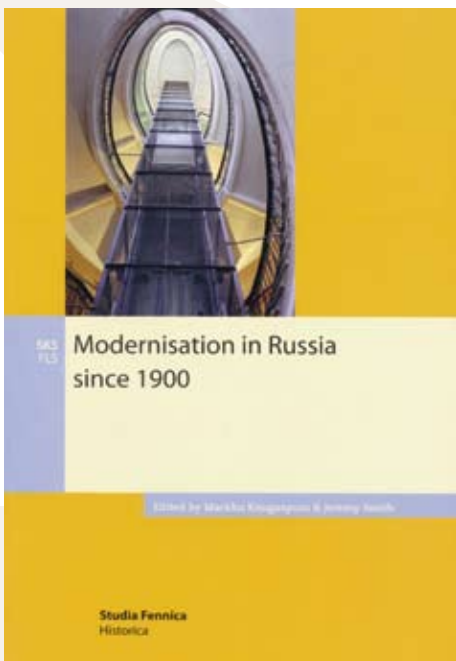
continued on p. 16



Gendered Rural Spaces

Edited by Pia Olsson & Helena Ruotsala.
Studia Fennica Ethnologica 12. 2009. 158 pp. 28 euros.
ISBN 978-952-222-154-4

Rural spaces are connected with different cultural, economic, social and political codes and meanings. In this book these meanings are analysed through gender. The articles concretely show the process of producing gender and the ways in which accepted gender-based behaviour has been constructed at different times and in different groups. Discussion of gendered spaces leads to wider questions such as power relations and displacement in society. The changing rural processes are analysed on the micro level, and the focus is set on how these changes affect people's everyday lives. Answers are looked for questions like how are individuals responding to these changes? What are their strategies, solutions and tactics? How have they experienced the change process?



Modernisation in Russia since 1900

Edited by Markku Kangaspuro & Jeremy Smith.
Studia Fennica Historica 12. 2006. 331 pp. 31 euros.
ISBN 951-746-854-7

Modernisation has been a constant theme in Russian history at least since Peter the Great launched a series of initiatives aimed at closing the economic, technical and cultural gap between Russia and the more 'advanced' countries of Europe. All of the leaders of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia have been intensely aware of this gap, and have pursued a number of strategies, some more successful than others, in order to modernise the country. But it would be wrong to view modernisation as a unilinear process which was the exclusive preserve of the state. Modernisation has had profound effects on Russian society, and the attitudes of different social groups have been crucial to the success and failure of modernisation.

This volume examines the broad theme of modernisation in late imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet Russia both through general overviews of particular topics, and specific case studies of modernisation projects and their impact. Modernisation is seen not just as an economic policy, but as a cultural and social phenomenon reflected through such diverse themes as ideology, welfare, education, gender relations, transport, political reform, and the Internet. The result is the most up to date and comprehensive survey of modernisation in Russia available, which highlights both one of the perennial problems and the challenges and prospects for contemporary Russia.

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**Narrating, Doing, Experiencing:
Nordic Folkloristic Experiences**

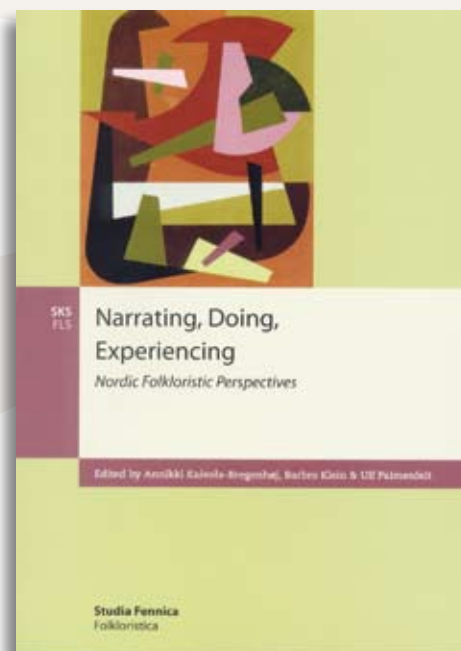
Edited by Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj, Barbro Klein
& Ulf Palmenfelt.

Studia Fennica Folkloristica 16. 2006. 186 pp. 29 euros.

ISBN 951-746-726-5

How are experiences and stories linked to one another? How is story-telling a kind of doing? In this volume eight Nordic folklorists attempt to address these difficult questions in their examinations of orally communicated stories and other forms of verbal art in which people give life to unforgettable or unbearable memories. All the articles are based on interviews in which narrators and researchers collaborate closely and the stories tell us about birth, sickness, war, miraculous cures, the long dead, intergenerational relations and matters that are so difficult to express that they are nearly kept in silence. The articles were preceded by a series of workshops and the analyses complement one another.

This anthology ought to interest anybody who is fascinated by how we as human beings shape the worlds in which we live with the help of stories and story-telling. The book may also be used in university courses.



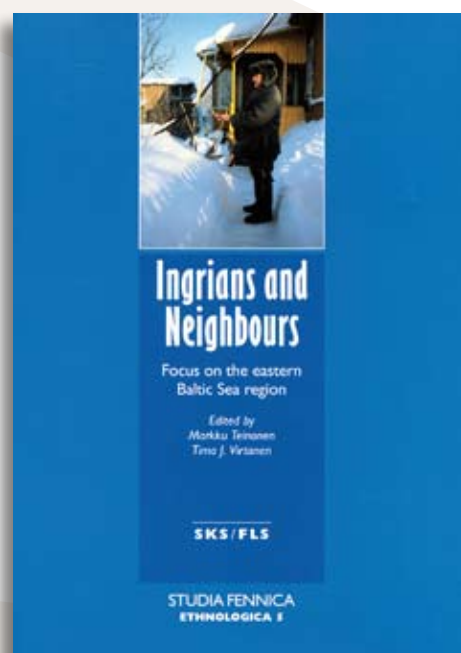
**Ingrians and Neighbours:
Focus on the eastern Baltic Sea region**

Edited by Timo J. Virtanen & Markku Teinonen.

Studia Fennica Ethnologica 5. 1999. 241 pp. 29 euros.

ISBN 951-746-013-9

In the report of their joint project Finnish, Estonian and Russian ethnologists, folklorists and linguists examine the eastern Baltic Sea region with special reference to Ingria and the Ingrians. They also take in cultural encounter with neighbouring peoples. The topics for research have further included the Ingrians in Estonia and Finland, the Ingrian congregation in Moscow and the Tikhvin Karelians.



narratives, which often go hand-in-hand with key narratives, do not express feelings of fear, distress or uncertainty. Those who investigate traumatic experiences know that it is the 'emotionless tales' that particularly call for analysis.²⁶ The stories of my interviewees sprang forth spontaneously as key narratives, and they speak of the desire to share their memory with the interviewer. To me they offered keys to understanding my interviewees and their experiences, but the protagonist is by no means always 'I', but rather 'we'.

When someone remembers the various stages of her life, she can begin in retrospect to see whole patterns, of which in the turmoil of events she was unconscious. An interview can give someone the opportunity to formulate and put in order her own conception of herself (Ehn 1992: 216). If, in the course of narrating, some key question receives an answer, when a narrator notes she is a survivor, then that is the best of outcomes.

I do not claim that these five narratives as such confirm the factual truth of what happened five decades earlier. Nor do I seek to question them, since life memories are always true; the researcher merely has to get at the way in which the memories are true, what their significance is (Passerini 1989: 261). Details have seeped from the stories over the years, but the core of what happened, the actions and emotions, is still there. The narrators indeed could have continued and filled out their stories after our meetings. I can return to them again and again as an interviewer when I listen to them, but I no longer have any possibility of conducting new interviews and making interpretations as a result (Aro 1996: 306–8). The emphasis of the key narratives when told to a Finnish listener was perhaps different from what would be said if the memories were discussed with others who had also experienced them. They are part of a narration which took shape at the moment of our meeting, and within the harmony of our mutual contact, and they show an approach to the past from the perspective of the early 1990s. Narratives interpret experiences which were important to these women. My task as a researcher has been to show how, through the narrative methods they have employed, they have sought to communicate these experiences to me as their interviewer, and through me to the wider world. ■

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Sources

The interview material is deposited in the Finnish Literature Society's recordings archive for the years 1992–3. The interviewer is Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj. Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj, 'Fieldwork diary'. Unpublished, held by the author. Discussion with Prof. Anna-Leena Siikala, 29.7.2009. Discussion with researcher Katja Kurri, 6–7.2.2009 (narrative research days at Tampere).

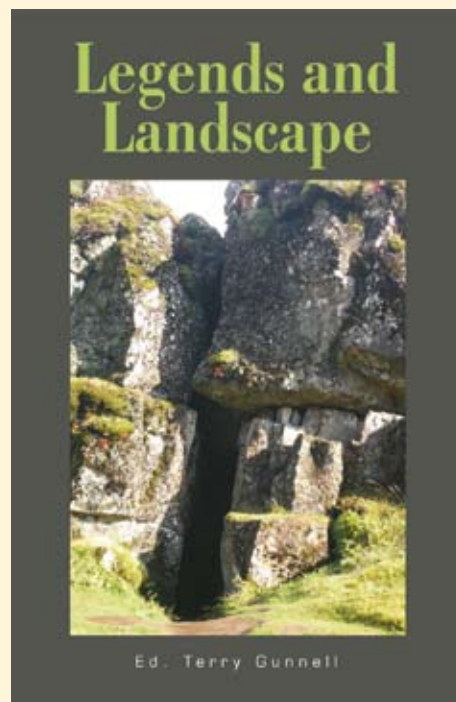
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²⁶ Discussion with Katja Kurri, 6–7.2.2009.

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Legends and Landscape

Plenary Papers from
the 5th Celtic-Nordic-Baltic
Folklore Symposium, Reykjavik 2005

Edited by Terry Gunnell

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the field of folk legends, past and present, and the information that they provide about the people who told them, the societies in which the storytellers lived, the world view that they had, and the spaces they inhabited. This book, based on the plenary papers of the 5th Celtic-Nordic-Baltic Folklore Symposium, held in Reykjavik in 2005, provides a valuable insight into the various ways in which scholars are approaching this material today. Containing papers by some of the foremost scholars in the field in Ireland, Great Britain, the Nordic countries, Estonia and the United States (Jacqueline Simpson, Anna-Leena Siikala, Arne Bugge Amundsen, Séamas Ó Catháin, Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, John Shaw, Bengt af Klintberg, John Lindow, Ulf Palmenfelt, Timothy R. Tangherlini, Ülo Valk, and Bo Almqvist), the book touches on a wide range of material concerning the study of legends, from theory and function, to historical and social analysis, traditional case studies and analysis of the way in which some of the earliest legends were collected, recorded and published as a form of national heritage.

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Narratives across time and space

JONATHAN ROPER

The 15th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR), Athens, June 2009

Though to many of us the word 'Greece' will conjure up images of classical antiquity, for those fortunate enough to attend the ISFNR Congress in June it will now also conjure up images of folklore and folkloristics. As scholars such as Michael Herzfeld have demonstrated, in Greece just as in so many European countries the documentation and cultivation of vernacular culture has been a key element in the nation building and state formation processes of recent times. A national folklore archive was established in Greece in 1918, and it is a sign of the national importance accorded to folklore that this archive was swiftly placed under the aegis of the Academy of Athens eight years later. The archive, in its modern incarnation as The Hellenic Folklore Research Centre, was the host for this gathering of folk narrative scholars from every continent in the warm weather of midsummer 2009. Another sign of the strength of folklore studies in contemporary Greece is that this is the second time that Athens has hosted an ISFNR congress, the first being under the stewardship of Georgios Megas back in 1964. Indeed, in the half-century that the Society has existed, only Germany and Hungary can also lay claim such an honour.

The multiple locations for the Congress were impressive. Few of us get to speak in parliament buildings in the course of our usual daily engagements, but the

former Greek Parliament was the location for a string of sessions. The equally imposing hall of the Parnassos Literary Society was the location for the majority of the plenary papers. The blissfully air-conditioned rooms of the Hellenic American Union and the Esperia Palace Hotel hosted yet other sessions, but the most impressive building of all was that of the Ceremonies Hall of the University of Athens, where the official opening took place. In one sense, there was a price to pay for the geographical spread of such grand locations, namely it was not always possible to slip between sites during the sessions themselves, but this is often inevitably the case at conferences with ten parallel sessions.

Of all the large scale folklore conferences, say the roughly triennial Congresses of the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF) or the Annual Meetings of the American Folklore Society (AFS), the International Society for Folk Narrative Research's quadrennial Congresses are the most international. SIEF, which has 'international' in its title, is in reality mainly comprised of Europeanists. Conversely, the AFS, though it has 'American' in its title, manages to attract a significant number of non-Americanist scholars. But ultimately it is the ISFNR which offers the most global folkloristic fare—for example, scholars attended the Congress from France, Bangladesh, Kenya, Greece,

Athens: ancient and modern. Photo by Pekka Tolonen.



Denmark, Australia, Finland, the USA, Israel, Estonia, Sweden, Iran, Slovakia, Italy, India, Serbia, England, Romania, Germany, Lithuania, Portugal, Thailand, and Turkey (to take just the scholars whose surnames began with A, or B, or C—surnames beginning D–Z represented a large number of additional countries). To be sure, there were a number of cancellations, no doubt due to the current financial situation, but sometimes these were turned to advantage, as when a no-show in one session meant that N. C. Gxowa-Dlayedwa (Belleville, South Africa) was not only able to deliver her paper on promoting cultural values by storytelling, but was also able to use the extra half-hour to perform a traditional narrative to the delighted audience.

Given the scale of the congress is such that every scholar is likely to have a very different experience of it, so the account that follows will be only one of many possible slices of that folkloristic cake. The Congress had as one of its chief themes ‘the History and Future of Folk Narrative Research’. Indeed there were 38 papers within this strand. But it is noticeable that the majority of them were concerned with the history rather than the future of the discipline. This preponderance could be seen as a sign of a positive and overdue reexamination of our disciplinary history, and a welcome absence of programmatic manifestoes, yet, all the same, it is still somewhat remarkable situation, especially given that this Congress comes in the wake of both Alan Dundes’ call for new folkloristic theory and the special issue of the *Journal of Folklore Research* (45:1 Jan–April 2008) guest-edited by Lee Haring on grand theory. For better or worse, folk narrative scholars mostly get on with it, without history or theory emerging as central concerns, as is evidenced by the fact that there were twice as many papers in the section on ‘Storytelling and story tellers’.

It is instructive to consider how various folklorists do get on with the study of narrative in a variety of sometimes straitened circumstances. Some scholars have great fieldwork material, even if that material is only notes of what an informant will not permit the recording of. One such was Lina Bugiene (Vilnius), who in her survey of belief legends in contemporary Lithuania related the following fieldwork experience. In one village, there was an elderly woman of the ‘mystically-minded’ type noted by Linda Dégh, who related some traditional memorates about frightening experiences, and who the fieldworkers were allowed, indeed encouraged, to record. But a younger relative, a middle-aged man, who had hosted the folklorists for lunch, turned out to be a more skilful narrator, with a repertoire of joking tales making fun of the credulous. Though such tales ‘balancing on the verge between joke and traditional legend’ are certainly part of living tradition of the community, their teller, who had helped arrange the recording of his elderly relative, could not conceive of his



Ülo Valk (outgoing ISFNR president) presenting flowers to Aikaterini Polymerou-Kamilaki (chief organiser of the congress). Photo by Jonathan Roper.

anecdotes as folklore or national heritage, and would not allow himself to be audio-recorded.

Other scholars get on with folk narrative research by continuing to mine their own earlier fieldwork, garnering fresh insights as they do. One such was Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj (Turku) who spoke about her now well-known informant Juho Oksanen in relation to the question of whether a particular narrator can be considered to report or to perform their narratives. In critiquing the uncritical adoption of the term ‘performance’, she reminded us that there is little narrative proper in everyday discourse. She proposed that we should think of a continuum running from presentation to performance, or from telling about an experience to dramatising it, in order to more accurately describe the verbal expressions that find their way on to field recordings. Yet other scholars make the most of what on the face of it are unpromising field materials, redeeming the trivial as Thoms (and many since) have dreamed of doing. One representative of such an approach was Kristiana Willsey (Indianapolis), who presented her work on the retelling of childhood fairy tales by adult women. Her linguistically-informed discussion of their improvised (not in the good sense of the word!), ‘hedged’ and incomplete narrating was a sensitive study of ‘a series of strategic retreats from the intimacy of performance’, clearly and benignly influenced by the work of Richard Bauman.

Some scholars revisit the archival materials of others. Two examples of this in Athens were provided by Rosa Thorsteindottir (Reykjavik) and Asa Ljung-

ström (Uppsala). Thorsteindottir is researching eight Icelandic tellers of fairytales (ATU 300–1199) who were audio-recorded in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to paying close attention to the tapes in the archive, she has interviewed people who remember the storytellers, and claims that from such interviews she has been able to identify traces of the tellers' own natural surroundings and biographical (usually traumatic) experiences in their fairytales. One particularly convincing example was the comparison of the space depicted in a story to the geography of the storyteller's own fishing hamlet, illustrated by an especially dramatic photograph. Ljungstrom's paper took as its starting point Petrus and Johannes Gasslander, Swedish folklorists and church ministers (a combination common in the early days of interest of folklore in Europe). But they were very much only the starting point for her exploration of an ever-expanding web of connections which embraced items in the Gasslanders' surviving collections, stories that their descendants told about those collections (e.g. about a stolen book of charms), local historiography and local historical novels. Ljungstrom's study is a work in progress that continues to ramify, and which promises to be, when finally published, an intriguing examination of (amongst other things) the folklore pertaining to folklorists.

Last but not least, some scholars, such as Hans Kuhn (Canberra), work by expanding on hints in manuscript and printed texts as to the nature of the relationship between performer (in this case the performer of Icelandic *rímur*) and audience. Kuhn gave us a series of examples dating from the late middle ages to the nineteenth century of the *mansöngur* which precede each *ríma*, and also of the unnamed brief end sections which

return the audience from the fiction to the real world. In these sections, the singer of the poem has room to express his convictions, his grievances and also his sense of humour, personal attributes which are absent in the impersonality of the 'poem proper'. Kuhn drew the revealing parallel between these openings and the oral remarks that often precede conference presentations but are absent from the printed version of that paper.

The ISNFR section for Charms, Charmers and Charming organised an 'international symposium' over the last two days of the congress, consisting of four sessions and a round table. The first of these sessions was, suitably enough, dedicated to charms in the Hellenic speaking world. In a strong and fascinating paper, Haralampos Passalis (Thessaloniki) spoke on the ritual restrictions and taboos surrounding the transmission of verbal charms in traditional Greek society. As he reminded us, such rules relating to secrecy, access and transmission are a common feature of hidden knowledge in many societies, but that as far as Greek charmers are concerned is it the words of the charm, rather than the actions of the charming, that form the key part of their secret knowledge. Drawing on the ethnographic record, Passalis adumbrated how age, gender, and kinship shape the context in which charms are transmitted, and went on to suggest that the variation observable in collected Greek charms (and indeed some of their unintelligible passages) may be due primarily to the vagaries of the transmission situation: the muttered charm being either 'stolen' (i.e. overheard) from the older charmer, or communicated by them to their successor for the first and only time when on their deathbed.

Outstanding papers from the other sessions included one provided by James Kapalo (London) on charming among the Gagauz, an Orthodox Turkic people living in the south of Moldova. His focus was on how the Gagauz healers establish social relations with divine agents both in the words and performance of their charms and in their visions and dreams. By means of a fortuitous piece of ecclesiastical tourism, Emanuela Timotin (Bucharest) was able to refer out from her own learned presentation on the role of Saint Photeine and the Forty Martyrs in Romanian fever charms to images of Saint Photeine found in church icons in Athens. Lea Olsan (Monroe/Cambridge) noted the appearance of specific late



Charms scholars in discussion: Barbara Hillers (Harvard) makes a point. Photo by Jonathan Roper.



Andrei Toporkov (Moscow), and Gyula Paczolay (Veszprem) on the conference excursion. Photo by Jonathan Roper.

antique elements in Old English medical texts, such as the enumeration (counting down) formulae and abracadabra words to be found in the work of Marcellus of Bordeaux. Typically, Olsan was not concerned simply to identify parallels but also to discuss the transformative (in this case Christian) context in which these pagan elements took on a new character.

The section also hosted a seminar dedicated to the charm-type known as *Bone to bone*, the most famous example of which is the Second Merseburg charm. This tightly-focussed session really did take on the character of a symposium, with a significant degree of discussion and participation from the floor, and will serve as the basis to go deeper in our discussions of this type, its forms, history and distribution. The congress also witnessed the birth of two other new sections: one on Folktale and the Internet, headed by Theo Meder (Amsterdam), the other on Belief Legends headed by Willem de Blécourt (London), which is planning its first official meeting in St Petersburg this May.

Among the more notable plenaries were Gary Alan Fine (Evanston)'s provoking discussion of the politics of joking cultures, specifically on what has happened to the joke in the age of political correctness and increasing social fragmentation, and Ulrich Marzolph (Göttingen)'s paper on 'Intellectual Property and the Power of Interpretation'. Though Marzolph's case study was Iran, the issues he raised about the interests and involvement of

foreigners, native scholars and the State in folklore collection and its (non-)publication are relevant in many other countries. Marzolph now succeeds Ülo Valk (Tartu) as president of the society. For Valk, the most memorable part of the event will not have been any of his outgoing official duties, but rather the birth of his daughter Marta, which coincided with his time at the congress. At the same business meeting where Marzolph was elected President, the Society chose Lithuania as the site of its next main congress in 2013, and Assam in north-east India as the site of its interim meeting in 2011.

The size of the congress and the amount of what was on offer has been emphasized in this report, but this unusable wealth of materials can also be framed in another way—anyone attending the congress will also have *missed* more than 200 papers. And like all multi-session conferences, the programme had an unintended knack of throwing up excruciating clashes between enticing papers and compelling speakers which the conference-goer is left to decide upon solely on the basis of semi-fictional abstracts and rumour. To be sure some of the papers are subsequently published in *Fabula* (<http://www.isfnr.org/files> <http://www.isfnr.org/files/ISFNR%20papers%20published%20in/%Fabula.pdf>), and there have also been selective Proceedings published for some previous congresses, such as the one for Athens 1964 (which the participants of Athens 2009 were lucky enough to receive in their conference packs in the shape of a CD-ROM). But welcome though these publications are, they still constitute a mere fraction of what has been on offer. In this regard, Vilmos Voigt (Budapest)'s suggestion that the ISFNR as a contribution to folk narrative research should put online all of the conference papers delivered at its main and interim congresses is a particularly attractive one, worthy of serious consideration.

As well as being a time for attending and delivering papers, the congress was also a time for meeting old friends, visiting fabled sites in Athens and elsewhere in Greece, for attending the conference concerts, for examining the recently publications at the conference book exhibition, for drinking wine late at night on the Plaka and discussing future projects. It was also a time for exchanging and receiving gifts—the organisers placed a welcome bottle of olive oil in each conference pack, and each conference-goer could also choose a book from the Proverbium stable thanks to the generosity of Wolfgang Mieder (Vermont). Although there was little sign of the new folkloristic theory that Dundes looked forward to, to judge by our days in midsummer Athens, the field is in good heart. ■

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Should we search for shamanism outside Siberia? The Nordic dilemma

CLIVE TOLLEY

Shamanism has been a long-standing source of fascination to scholars of ethnology and comparative religion, and not only to those concerned primarily with the classic shamanic societies of Siberia. Knowledge of shamanism reached the West through various channels, but one of the most abiding has been from its westernmost practitioners, the Sámi of Lapland. Writers such as Olaus Magnus in the mid-sixteenth century brought some of the strange customs of the Sámi to the attention of a wider European audience, but the classic work to open the eyes of an increasingly urbane Western society to the primitive *barbaritas* of ‘Lapland magicians’ on their very doorstep was Johannes Schefferus’s *Laponia*, published in 1673: the work was an immediate success—to the extent that, even in this pre-industrial age, when books were a luxury, an English translation appeared the next year. Yet this fascination with the religious practices of a people who lived so close to sophisticated European societies and yet were so alien stretches back much further among their immediate neighbours, the Norsemen of Scandinavia. Indeed, the earliest account of a Sámi shamanic séance was recorded in Latin in an early history of Norway, composed in the late twelfth century, the *Historia Norwegie*. This recounts, in some detail, how some Norwegian merchants observed a shamanic séance in which a woman was ‘stolen’ by alien shamanic spirits, and had to be retrieved by a shaman—the first shaman who tried failed dramatically, his stomach being ripped open by an enemy spirit on his soul journey, but the second was successful.

Given this long-standing fascination in Sámi practices, the question naturally arises of how far the Norsemen themselves may have practised some form of shamanism. The evidence which remains to us is largely in the form of the corpus of medieval Scandinavian texts which describe mythological and sometimes religious practices apparently derived from pre-Christian traditions, and it is these that form the main focus of my own work. These texts, the earlier ones mainly Norwegian, and the later Icelandic, range in date from the ninth to fourteenth centuries. Sometimes they describe what may be broadly termed magical practices, attributed both to divine and to human beings. Since at least the 1870s, when scholars of Nordic philology became aware of Sámi traditions, comparisons have been made between these Norse traditions and ostensibly parallel practices of the shamans of Siberia and Lapland; such comparisons have continued sporadically ever since. At times these have amounted to little more than lists of

supposedly shamanic features found in Norse texts; my own approach has been to attempt something more holistic, to consider a broad spectrum of Norse myths and the network of meanings which can be inferred from within a Norse tradition. It is only within such a contextual study that considerations of shamanism begin to have any bearing.

Investigating the possible presence of shamanism among the pagan Scandinavians poses a dilemma in various senses.

The first dilemma we face in determining anything about ancient Norse beliefs is that we rarely have sufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions at all. A few poems from the pagan period, handed down orally, were written down after Christianity had introduced the norms of a written language; otherwise, we are reliant on the sparse records that Christian writers like Snorri Sturluson in the mid-thirteenth century wrote down on the basis of an ever withering tradition, and one that was increasingly under the influence of Christianity. Hence we can never hope to reconstruct anything more than a patchwork of fragmentary beliefs that may have been held in pre-Christian times. The problem is that, in order to suggest that shamanism or something like it existed, we need to be *systematic*—a point made forcefully by Vajda in the 1950s in his proposed definition of shamanism—yet the lack of Norse evidence precisely precludes any fully systematic conclusions: we are left with no choice but to plead that certain features of Siberian shamanism, although not evidenced in Norse, *could* have been present. Nonetheless, I believe that we do have enough literary monuments to at least point us in certain religious directions. What, for example, are we to make of the god Óðinn’s self-immolation on the world tree, recounted allusively in the poem *Hávamál*?

Veit ek at ek hekk
vindga meiði á
nætr allar níu,
geiri undaðr
ok gefinn Óðni,
sjálfr sjálfum mér,
á þeim meiði
er manngi veit,
hvers hann af rótum renn.
Við hleifi mik sældu
né við hornigi;
nýsta ek niðr,
nam ek upp rúnar,

I know that I hung
on the windy tree
all of nine nights,
wounded with a spear
and dedicated to Óðinn,
myself to myself,
on that tree
that no one knows
from the roots of what it rises.
With bread they did not bless me,
nor with the horn;
I peered down,
I took up runes/secrets,

œpandi nam, screaming I took them,
fell ek aptr þaðan. I fell back from there.

This has a smattering of Christ's sacrifice to it, yet its roots, like those of the tree on which it takes place, lie deeper. If we view things from a shamanic point of view (or at least from certain, mainly far-northern, shamanic points of view), we may expect an initiate to be violently remade in the deathly realm of the spirits, where he learns his shamanic craft and the structure of the cosmos and its spirit beings. Óðinn's immolation can be made to fit this sort of northern initiation rite, but not comfortably, and only by special pleading; it is not clear, for example, that his magical and healing skills, which are indeed evident in other texts, derive from this experience. A closer look at other Indo-European parallels, in particular Indian ones, suggests rather that an ancient Indo-European tradition of sacrifice underlies this myth. The world tree, so characteristic of certain shamanic rites, where its material representative may be set up in the chum for the shaman to climb to other worlds, is itself no sure indicator of any Siberian heritage or link: the world tree is, again, a central feature of Indian myth. Its ancient origins perhaps lay on the steppe and neighbouring steppe-forest, in the vicinity of which both proto-Indo-Europeans and proto-Uralic peoples dwelt.

The second dilemma we face in interpreting Norse written records is that virtually all of them are poetic or literary. This important observation on the nature of our evidence is one that, I am sorry to say, many researchers fail to appreciate sufficiently. We have no actual religious verse from pagan Norse times: Christianity ensured that. All we have—with some very sparse exceptions—are poetic manipulations of traditions relating to erstwhile religious entities or themes, often expressed in the form of allusions to ever-shifting mythic traditions. In the verse and prose that we have left to us, the poets are interested primarily in communicating poetic truths, not religious ones. Any religious beliefs or underlying practices have to be dragged from this perilous poetic quick-sand. It is always difficult to determine if a poet is relaying a well-accepted tradition in any particular instance, or is being innovative. Take, as an example continuing the theme of the previous paragraph, the image of the world tree, this time in the great poem *Völuspá*. It is presented—or so it would appear, for little is directly obvious in this allusive poem—as an embodiment of the fate of the world, and of man (named Ash, like the tree): it appears first under the ground at the world's arising (presumably as a seed waiting to sprout):

nío man ek heima, nine worlds I remember,
nío íviðior, nine giantesses,
miötvið mæran the famous tree of measure
fyr mold neðan beneath the earth

then as a full-grown flourishing evergreen at the first

coming of mankind, a sacred tree with libations poured upon it, overhanging the spring of Urðr, the female personification of Fate:

Ask veit ek standa, I know an ash stands,
heitir Yggdrasil, called Yggdrasil,
hár baðmr, ausinn a tall tree, spattered
hvíta auri; with white loam:
þaðan koma döggar, from there come dews
þærs í dala falla; that fall in the dales.
stendr æ yfir, grœnn, It stands forever green
Urðar brunni. over Urðr's spring.

As the world perishes, it appears as a shuddering, ancient thing:

skelfr Yggdrasils the ash of Yggdrasil
askr standandi, shudders as it stands,
ymr it aldna tré, the aged tree quakes,
en iötunn losnar. and the giant breaks free.

The tree in *Völuspá* is tantalising: we cannot be sure how far the linking of the tree to time and fate is traditional; whatever the traditional understanding was, this poet is not interested in any ritualistic *use* of the tree, comparable to the Siberian shaman's climb up to heaven or down to the underworld, but rather to a sophisticated poetic image; the name *Yggdrasil*, 'Óðinn steed', must link this tree in tradition with Óðinn's self-immolation mentioned above, yet the poet does not wish to delve into this topic. Similar points, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to many broadly religious precepts we may deduce from Norse poetry. Hence, any systematised view of the Norse magician as a shaman-type practitioner relies on an assemblage of fragments, many of them doubtless ad hoc images of the poets, or half-understood allusions to older tradition.

Furthermore, some of the classic texts of supposed Norse shamanism are not even this reliable: put bluntly, they appear to be antiquarian fabrications from an age when pagan practices had long ceased. One such text is *Eiríks saga rauða*, where, in the fourth chapter, a *völva*, that is a wandering seeress, turns up at a farm in Greenland and utters her prophecies. She is described in great detail: she wears a dark mantle with straps and adorned with gems to the hem, she has a staff with knob, again adorned with gems, she has a purse to hold the instruments of her craft, she wears shaggy boots with long laces culminating in brass knobs, and so forth. The setting is around the year 1000, but the saga was written only some 220 years later. Despite this, many scholars have regarded the description as encapsulating an accurate tradition of what a pagan seeress was like. This, I argue, is to underestimate the creative, verisimilitudinous powers of a masterly saga-writer of the classic period of saga composition, and amounts, in fact, to scholarly obtuseness: the remarkable detail must be viewed as a sign of invention, not of something that could be hand-

ed down unchanged in oral tradition, particularly when there is absolutely no other evidence to indicate its reliability as a description of a *völva* from around 1000. One of the aspects of an apparently shamanic nature in the account—and one that shamanic enthusiasts have seized upon—is the calling of *náttúrur*, lit. ‘natures’ but seemingly used in the sense of ‘spirits’: this latter sense I argue is the result of a misunderstanding; the word refers rather to the ‘natural strengths’ of the girl who is chanting. The result is that any reliability for the text as pointing towards shamanism in pagan Norse tradition evaporates—or, at least, it almost does: as often, the situation is a little more complex, since the writer appears to have used some elements from a more genuine tradition; at least, I argue this is the case with the word *varðlokkur*, which may originally have referred to charms sung to increase the powers (somewhat like the Finnish *luonto*) of the *völva*, though the saga-writer has misunderstood the word he has chosen to spice up his account with.

Another classic Norse ‘shamanic’ text is Snorri’s description of Óðinn in *Ynglinga saga*. His body lay as if dead while he wandered to far-off lands. The whole passage is an amalgam of citations from various poems, but the shamanic trance-state is found nowhere else in precisely this form in Norse—and where something similar is found, it is ascribed to the *Finnar*, the Sámi. At this point, I suggest, Snorri is making use of traditions of the Sámi, possibly in the form of the *Historia Norwegie* where a Sámi shamanic séance is described, to turn his ‘god’, here euhemerised into a human hero, into a wandering magician. It is not derived from ancient Norse tradition.

All these considerations point away from pre-Christian Norse tradition as having been markedly shamanic. Yet a third dilemma remains, perhaps the most profound, and that is: what *is* shamanism? Shamanism is a word that nowadays is bandied about with néer a thought about its actual meaning, what it refers to. The unthinking see shamanism everywhere, both in ancient traditions like those of the Celts or Anglo-Saxons who were utterly remote from Siberia (whence the word shaman derives), and in modern neo-religious or spiritualist practices. Oddly enough, I think there is a grain of truth in this conviction of shamanism’s ubiquity. Yet it needs far greater refinement, and it is the lack of such refinement that has dogged investigations of supposed Norse shamanism. In short, what often appears to have happened is that the



Sketch of the *völva* as described in *Eiríks saga rauða*: does she represent a shamaness of ancient Norse tradition, or a medieval literary fabrication?

term ‘shamanism’ has not been sufficiently delimited, something vaguely or fragmentarily like classic Siberian shamanism has been detected, and a conclusion drawn that ancient Norsemen had shamans (whatever may in fact be meant by that). To delimit the meaning of ‘shamanism’, or better ‘shaman’, is tricky: no two societies had precisely comparable spiritual practitioners, and one society could have several distinct practitioners who tend to be lumped by researchers together as shamans. Yet there is a remarkable congruity of practice and world-view across Siberia, as has been amply demonstrated by works such as Anna-Leena Siikala’s *The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman*. Such congruity gradually dissipates when we move away from this area, for example into America. I have attempted to put the Norse mythological traditions into some sort of context by briefly considering magical traditions of western Europe, from the medieval period and from ancient Greece. Interpreting such traditions can be perilous, yet many features, I argue, indicate a sort of broader, more nebulous form of—for want of a better word—shamanism. Such shamanism, by which is meant in particular the presence of spiritual practitioners able to commune directly with the spirit world for the benefit of the community, was certainly widespread; my investigations have not proceeded so far that I can venture to say it was necessarily

universal. It is clear that such an underlying, general form of shamanism was particularised in specific areas or blocs like Siberia, taking on forms which reflected the local cultural traditions. The classic form of Siberian shamanism is most associated with hunting societies, but I argue that it may be chance or the vicissitudes of history that have determined this, and that other forms of shamanism could well have existed in, for example, agricultural areas, as was the case for many centuries in (for example) Japan. There seem, in fact, to be only sparse connections between the belief-systems of the developed and largely agrarian Scandinavia and the more nomadic hunting societies of Siberia—or ancient Lapland—with their classic forms of shamanism. Areas like ancient Japan, more comparable in societal and livelihood terms with medieval Scandinavia, in fact offer better parallels to many of the Norse magical practices and myths, for example in the emphasis on female practitioners. Thus, on the whole, it seems inappropriate to speak of Norse shamanism, if by that we mean something akin to what is found among the northern hunting peoples of Siberia;

yet it is likely that Scandinavia had something based upon a more general form of shamanism, which is found in a variety of particularised forms from western Europe over to Japan and elsewhere. The Norsemen themselves, I believe, were well aware of the differences between their own traditional practices and those of their close neighbours the Sámi, who did indeed carry out rites of a distinctly classic shamanic type, since most instances of such practices which might be deemed to approximate to those of classic shamanism, such as acting as spies over distant lands and returning thence in a jiffy, are in fact ascribed in the Scandinavian sources to the *Finnar* (Sámi).

The debate over the presence and nature of Norse shamanism will no doubt continue. Scholars involved in the debate tend either to see a strong connection with Sámi practices (a line formulated in detail by Dag Strömbäck in 1935, and followed in essence much more recently for example by Neil Price), or to find the presence of shamanism to be minimal or non-existent, or at best to have parallels in a scattering of traditions other than the Sámi (thus Åke Ohlmarks argued against Strömbäck in his work of 1939, and others such as François-Xavier Dillmann have followed this with more circumspect or even wholly negative views). To me the pro-Sámi-type shamanism arguments have increasingly appeared to lack weight, but I do emphasise that the ancient Norsemen were certainly familiar with and fascinated by Sámi practices, though rather as something alien to them; in some instances—and here I cite the example of Sámi bear rites (*karhunpeijaiset* in Finnish) as an apparent underlying influence on *Hrólfs saga kraka*—it seems likely indeed that Norse tradition borrowed from the Sámi. However we look at the matter, what is perhaps more important is that not just “shamanism” but the whole field of traditional pre-Christian religion in the Scandinavian area is to a very large extent communicated to us through primarily poetic or literary works, and hence the image we deduce of practices such as shamanism is in large part a literary construct, divorced to a degree which cannot really be determined from any actual social practices or beliefs.

Medieval Scandinavia was, of course, in transition, looking back to a past rich in oral traditions and forward to an increasingly international, European and written future, which formed an intellectually complex cultural arena but one which is fascinating to try and fathom. In my research I have attempted to unravel a little of this complexity in one small area. ■

This presentation is adapted from that given in Helsinki University's Dept. of Folkloristics at the launch of Clive Tolley's *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, FFC 296–7, in May 2009.

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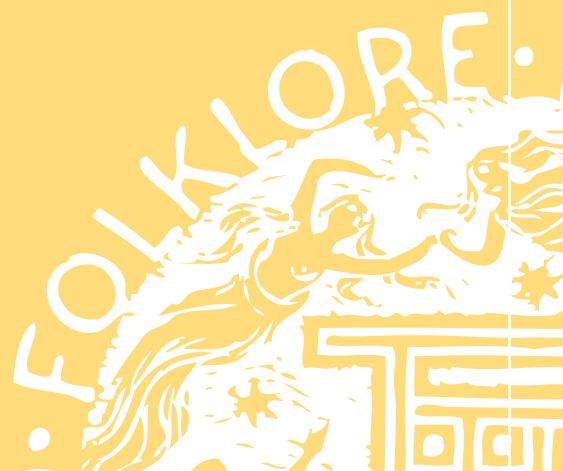
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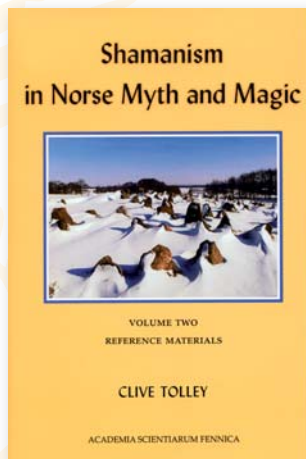
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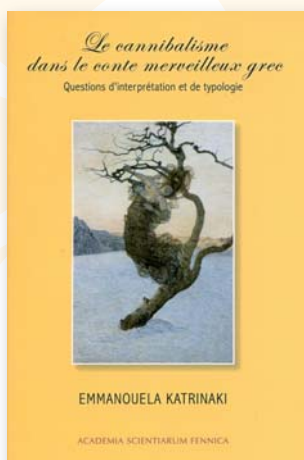
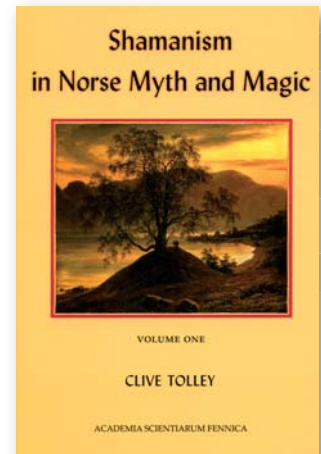
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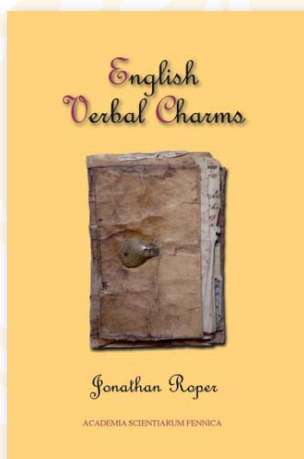
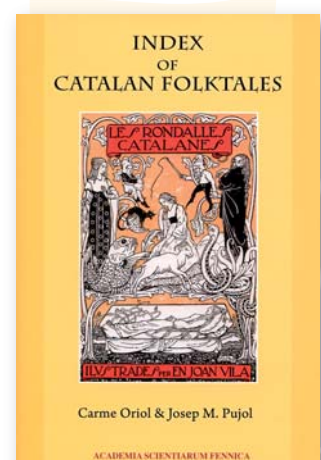
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