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New Dissertations

The Genre of Trolls

Camilla Asplund Ingemark, *The Genre of Trolls. The Case of a Finland-Swedish Folk Belief Tradition*. Åbo Akademi University Press, Åbo 2005. 328 pp. Ill. Diss. ISBN 951-765-222-4.

■ Camilla Asplund Ingemark's recent study of folk narratives from Finland-Swedish tradition concerns encounters between humans and trolls. Although the title of the work proposes an approach to understanding figures from folk belief as "genre," that is not what Ingemark focuses on in this challenging work. Rather, she explores the construction of the image of the troll in traditional expressive genres and how that image is influenced, and in turn influences, other modes of cultural expression. She bases her theoretical approach to the question of how the image of the troll is constructed on theories of intertextuality, primarily those of Lotte Tarkka (1993) and Laura Stark (1998). These theories derive from the earlier work of Julia Kristeva (1978) and other, predominantly French, literary scholars. Ingemark wedges her discussion of intertextuality and the impact of "intertexts" (particularly Biblical intertexts) with discussions of power based on the theories of Michel Foucault (1980), discussions of dialogism and discourse based on the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin (1986), discussions of genre based primarily on the work of Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (1992), and discussions of parody based on the theories of Linda Hutcheon (1985). The resulting study is one of significant theoretical complexity that pushes the boundaries of earlier considerations of traditional narratives about human encounters with supernatural beings. The underlying premise that these texts exist neither in a cultural or historical vacuum, nor in generic stasis is a sound one, and one that Ingemark is able to document quite thoroughly.

Trolls are an ill-defined group in Nordic folk belief because of both (a) the different features that accrue to beings that have similar names in the various Scandinavian languages and dialects and (b) the different names used in these languages and dialects for beings that exhibit similar features. Early on, Ingemark explores some of the conflicting characterizations of these supernatural beings throughout Scandinavia, pointing out scholars' continuing inability to reach consensus on what characterizes these beings both

across genres and across cultural and linguistic boundaries (pp. 6-10). Recognizing the complexity of the taxonomy of these supernatural nature beings, she relies on the work of Elisabeth Hartmann (1936) and Jan-Öjvind Swahn (1984 and 1995), and situates the beings as essentially cognate with the *bjærgfolk* of Danish tradition (p. 7). In passing, she notes that these beings are not witches (p. 8); given that Danish law used the term "troldom" to designate witchcraft, this is an important distinction to make. Ultimately, she decides that the "troll" of her study is "a supernatural creature inhabiting the forest and bearing this specific name" (p. 86).

The book is organized in a manner that is fairly standard for academic dissertations. The first chapter presents the overall research question, and suggests a series of theoretical frameworks that are taken up in later chapters. The second chapter provides a wonderfully thorough overview of folklore collection in Swedish Finland, and includes a well informed and useful critique of each of the collections that she uses as her empirical data in subsequent chapters. Ingemark explains how she has selected narratives that most closely align with Honko's notion of a "thick corpus," an idea that derives from Clifford Geertz's anthropological refinement of Gilbert Ryle's concept of "thick description." In a "thick corpus," the tradition participants are readily identifiable, a great deal is known about the historical and social context in which the collections were made, and multiple variants of stories were collected. Ingemark uses the few thick corpora that she is able to identify to explore the "intertextuality" that is the linchpin in her theoretical approach. Overall, Ingemark is able to identify 123 primary records, and 98 secondary records as the core of her empirical research material (p. 46). The overwhelming majority of these stories are legends and folk tales.

The third chapter describes the various types of encounters between humans and trolls that occur in her narrative material. Ingemark proposes that in these stories "the troll and the supernatural sphere may be viewed as instruments for thinking about one's identity and place in the world, and for orienting oneself in a larger, complex reality" (p. 86). Ingemark does some excellent and necessary descriptive work in this chapter, detailing the time and place of encounters with trolls and the differences between men's, women's and children's encounters with the trolls. Her discussion of the different types

of interactions with the trolls is well documented; she maps a continuum defined by two poles of conflict—and includes a discussion of how the boundary between the two realms moves from tolerance to conflict. Ingemark notes that in general the conflict between trolls is initiated by a transgression separating the two realms. The boundary is reinstated through a process of negotiation in which the boundary separates the two realms is restored. Dissociation is more common among men (p. 120). Ingemark emphasizes the importance of encounters with the supernatural beings to each other, and tradition participants. She notes the rich and diverse array of encounters in these encounters. Summing up the book, she proposes that, "[t]he corpus of encounters here can be regarded as a network, and as such the intertextuality of the texts constituting it is characterized by a degree of disagreement" (p. 135).

Chapters four through six explore the weight of the work. In chapter four, she discusses the discussion to intertextuality between stories of encounters with trolls and folk stories. The underlying premise is that tradition participants were aware of the boundaries between the two realms and that this awareness motivated them to comment on the boundaries between the two realms in their stories of encounters with trolls. She notes that tradition participants in informal and formal religious settings lay preaching formed part of the negotiation of cultural identity. In chapter five, Ingemark discusses the narratives about encounters with trolls and the blinding of the human protagonist. She notes that these narratives interact with other narratives that deal with illness and that the goal of the chapter is to show how the relations between the folk stories and the texts constitute a network of several thematic clusters: "vanity, shame, illumination, fratricide" (p.176). Ingemark notes that the evidence that the particular narratives are chosen as intertexts for the stories known by the tradition participants in which the stories were used in the preaching

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of interactions with the trolls is both thorough and well documented; she maps the interactions onto a continuum defined by two poles—tolerance and conflict—and includes a discussion of narratives that move from tolerance to conflict and vice versa. She notes that in general the contact between humans and trolls is initiated by a transgression of the boundary separating the two realms. Order in the two worlds is reinstated through a process she labels "dissociation," in which the boundary separating the two realms is restored. Dissociation is most commonly initiated by men (p. 120). Ingemark emphasizes that these stories of encounters with the supernatural often inform each other, and tradition participants are aware of the rich and diverse array of stories that describe these encounters. Summing up her material, she proposes that, "[t]he corpus of material presented here can be regarded as a large-scale intertextual network, and as such the interrelation between the texts constituting it is characterized by association and disagreement" (p. 135).

Chapters four through seven carry the theoretical weight of the work. In chapter four, Ingemark turns the discussion to intertextuality and the relationship between stories of encounters with trolls and Biblical stories. The underlying premise is that tradition participants were aware of both groups of narratives, and that this awareness meant that narrators used the stories to comment on one another; in short, the stories of encounters with trolls and the Biblical stories that tradition participants encountered in church, in informal and formal religious education, and in lay preaching formed part of a complex, on-going negotiation of cultural ideology. Drawing heavily on the work of Tarkka, Ingemark focuses on narratives about encounters with trolls that include the blinding of the human protagonist and examines how these narratives interact intertextually with Biblical narratives that deal with illumination. Although the goal of the chapter is to show that "the intertextual relations between the folk narratives and religious texts constitute a network of associations spanning several thematic clusters: paradisaical existence, vanity, shame, illumination, reform, captivity and fratricide" (p.176), Ingemark provides little clear evidence that the particular Biblical stories that she chooses as intertexts for the troll narratives were well known by the tradition participants in the communities in which the stories were collected, that they were used in the preaching of local ministers or lay

preachers, or that they were stories with which the narrators were intimately familiar.

In the fifth chapter, Ingemark continues along the same theoretical path, but directs her attention to stories about clergymen who fail in their attempts to banish trolls. She indicates that, in these stories, the intertextuality forms the basis for a social, rather than ideological, critique. Most of the stories that she explores in this chapter are well known variants of ministers' encounters with the Devil or ghosts, and the role of the trolls in these stories seems to suggest an intriguing degree of motifemic equivalence between all of these supernatural beings in Swedish Finland folk belief tradition. Ingemark does not explore this equivalence to any significant degree, but rather reads these stories against another set of Biblical stories. She departs, however, from the structural schemes that were at the basis of the intertextual analyses in the preceding chapter and instead situates the stories and their intertexts against the shifting terrain of power relationships between the rural populace and the church.

Ingemark switches theoretical gears in the sixth chapter, and engages a discussion of genre and parody in her analysis of Johan Alén's stories, all of which were collected in the nineteenth century by Jakob Edvard Wefvar. The theoretical discussions of genre, parody and Bakhtin's notion of chronotope and novelization that form the theoretical core of the chapter are quite dense. While the discussions of parody and intertextual gaps are thought provoking, as is her exploration of the applicability of Bakhtin's chronotopes and novelization to oral narrative, they could perhaps have been developed in a slightly clearer manner.

Early in the chapter, Ingemark uses a theory of parody to explore a variant of "Three Princes." She considers the story parodic based in large part on a single interjection at the close of the narrative that reveals that the prince has married a troll. Although the argument is quite interesting, Ingemark does not consider the possibility that Alén's seemingly parodic remark may not be his own. In her discussion of Wefvar's collection methodology, she notes that, "his field notes were often imperfect and vague drafts, while the submitted manuscripts were clean copies and edited to some degree" (p. 49, citing Häggman 1992:81). This characterization of Wefvar's methodology also undermines Ingemark's proposition that Alén's storytelling is marked by "carefully selected

phrases" (p. 243).

In her final theoretical chapter, Ingemark brings up Bakhtin's concepts of "unfinalizability" and "finalization." In densely argued prose, she suggests that these concepts help elucidate the relationship between humans and the trolls. She concludes that "unfinalizability is an important ingredient in the construction of the troll," (p. 277) and that this indeterminacy in the nature of the troll is a source of anxiety for humans who long to "finalize" the troll. The best way to "finalize" the troll appears to be to kill it.

There are a few unusual features to Ingemark's work that should be noted, but that do not detract from the overall theoretical scope of the work. The title of the work seems poorly chosen, since genre is only a small part of her overall discussion of troll narratives; perhaps "The Image of the Troll," would have been a more fitting title. Also, Ingemark's writing style is at times awkward, although this may be an artifact of the complexity of the arguments she presents. Finally, even if one appreciates her attention to detail in the bibliography, the use of no less than four separate spellings of Mikhail Bakhtin's name could have been handled in a more orderly fashion.

Although Ingemark provides an excellent summation of her general arguments in a concluding chapter, the book does not end there. Rather, there is some intriguing material in the appendices and the figures that are printed at the end of the book. The long Appendix B, selected narratives from the repertoire of Johan Alén, is interesting for two reasons. First, she includes the Swedish language originals of the stories, allowing one to get a sense of word choice and language use over a series of his narratives—of course, this might be the word choice of Wefvar and not Alén. Second, the narratives as a whole provide an interesting glimpse into the overall repertoire of Alén, whose stories form the core of chapter six. In this context, one perhaps could have hoped for an exhaustive presentation of the repertoire, perhaps in the order in which the stories were recorded. Nevertheless, the materials in this appendix could well be the basis of a larger, more substantive repertoire analysis of this engaging narrator. The pictorial materials that follow the appendix are equally fascinating. Ingemark provides little discussion of these engravings of Biblical scenes, restricting herself to short captions. These pictures, as she notes, clearly provide additional "intertexts" to the written intertexts that inform her discussion of the relationship between

Biblical stories and stories of human encounters with trolls. A consideration of the differing impact between written and pictorial intertexts would have been an interesting addition to her argument, allowing an exploration of the interplay between the oral, the written and the visual.

Ingemark's study opens numerous intriguing avenues of inquiry concerning folk belief, genre, the image of supernatural beings and the applicability of modern literary theory to the study of traditional storytelling. Although some of the theoretical discussions are burdened by elaborate, and at times obscure, terminology, the underlying propositions are worthy of consideration. The notion that stories of trolls were greatly informed by other aspects of contemporaneous cultural endeavor—in particular, the religious expression of ministers and lay preachers—is likely correct. According to Ingemark, "narratives of trolls and Biblical texts [were] part of the same network of associations" for the tradition participants (p. 76). Furthermore, the notion that stories of supernatural beings, particularly trolls, stand in a complex relationship to other narratives and representations external to folk tradition is an important one. Finally, Ingemark should be lauded for her engagement with an individual repertoire, a repertoire in which a playful attitude toward tradition underscores that folklore emerges in the dialectic tension between the individual and tradition.

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On the Borderlines

Jari Eilola, *Rajapainnoilla. Sallitun ja kielletyn määrittelemisen 1600-luvun jälkipuoliskon noituus- ja taikuustapauksissa.* (On the Borderlines—Boundaries between the Accepted and the Forbidden in Finnish and Swedish Witchcraft and Magic Cases in the Latter Half of the Seventeenth Century.) Bibliotheca Historica 81. SKS, Helsinki 2003. 381 pp. English summary. Diss. ISBN 951-746-550-5.

■ The Witch-hunts belong to the classic research subjects of European cultural history. They have been the objects of serious analysis since the latter half of the 19th century. Special attention has been paid to the court proceedings against so-called witches that ran rampant in various parts of Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. These events have been associated with terms such as witch epidemic, hysteria, and

doctrine as well as witches' in general. The phenomenon as its occurrence and the judicial and psychological evaluation matters. This offers the opportunity of study of, for example, the court proceedings and life strategies derived from the world-view of the 17th century.

After all, in 1678, the author Urban Hjärne had a court proceedings against witchcraft under the scrutiny and spotlight of the Witchcraft phenomena have been at the centre of attention in research such as cultural history, history, psychology, legal sociology, and ethnology. As early as psychiatrist Bror Gadelius' analysis of the phenomenon of study of the well-known case against the wife of the vicar in no. 5, Gadelius, new version.

Eilola has therefore had a critical analysis and interpretation of the court proceedings, disposal. This includes the case of Rafael Hertzberg (as early as Heikkinen (1969), and Markku Bengt Ankarloo, Linda Ojamaa from Sweden, Gustav Henningson, Bente Gullveig Alver from Norway. Alver are folklorists and the author's doctoral thesis *The Witchcraft and the Spanish* (1980) is still one of the most important and interpretations pertaining to the main emphasis here, however, a critical examination of the court proceedings in the research in the field dealing with the consequences, and prevalence of witches as a collective phenomenon. Gadelius critically evaluated the phenomenon as Wolfgang Behringer, Robert Kieckhefer, Brian Lane, Robert Muchembled, and Robert W. Scribner. This is his own viewpoint.

Eilola's idea is to use the court proceedings in the form of the proceedings as a key to exposing the world-view (i.e. 'the contemporary be-