

COMMENT

1846 And All That

A New History of Folkloristics, Including Good Things, Bad Things, and One or Two Really Weird Things

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"History is not what you thought. It is what you can remember."

--W.C. Sellar

I. In the Beginning: The Chief Causes of Folklore, the Folk, etc.

The First Folklorist was really Herodotus. The reason we know this is because he was educated and wrote in Greek; therefore he could not be a Folk. This was in the Mythopoetic Age when everybody else (Hesiod, Aesop) was writing in Mythopoetic Speech. He was the First Folklorist and the main cause of Folklore.

Although Herodotus was the First Folklorist, after him Folklore became dormant for many years. The chief cause of this was Classical Civilization, or the Golden Age, in which everybody spoke Greek or Latin and there were no Folk. However, this was not entirely a Bad Thing, as Folklore was later resurrected and became Survivals.

The real history of Folklore began with the discovery of the New World and the invention of Savages. Savages were very different from Europeans because they wore almost no clothes and had Rites and Rituals. Also, they were not Christian, but worshipped Animism instead. The explorers thought that this was a Bad Thing, or at least a Weird Thing, because everybody should be Church of England; so a movement began for

Europe to conquer all the Savages and make them wear real clothes. This was an Important Movement and the cause of many other things.

One of these things was the discovery of the Folk. This occurred when people started looking around and realizing that pheasants were not that different from Savages, when you stopped to think about it. They also had Rites and Rituals, though they did wear clothes. What was worse, a lot of these Rites and Rituals were not Church of England, and thus were Pagan (i.e. Catholic) and a Bad Thing. The chief discoverer of this fact was Henry Bourne, author of *Antiquitates Vulgares* ("Vulgar Antiquities"). After him, lots of other people, especially Francis Gross (who was fat), wrote books to show how the Rites and Rituals of the Folk were Bad Things and ought to be gotten rid of. These writers were the cause of the next group of writers, the Antiquities.

The Antiquities were the first group of people to collect Folklore because they thought it was neat. They started out collecting old things, like old buildings, old pottery, old art, etc., until they realized that Folklore was old, too. Then they started collecting old stories, old songs, etc., especially those about fairies, ghosts, witches, and other things most people didn't believe in anymore. Collecting was a Good Thing, because Folklorists are still doing it today. However, the Antiquities sometimes changed the texts, because tape-recorders hadn't been invented yet; this was a Bad Thing. The way the Antiquities collected songs and stories was by going into fields and talking to the pheasants; thus they are known as the First Fieldworkers.

The most famous of the Antiquities was William Thoms Thumbs, also known as Ambrose Merton, who invented Folklore in 1846. For this reason he is regarded as a very memorable person and the Father and Chief Cause of Folklore.

This is the only date in this paper.

II. Romantic Nationalism: A Good Reason for Folklore

The main reasons for Romantic Nationalism were two big philosophers, Vico and Herder. Herder was very big; Vico started out being not-so-big, but got much bigger after he died. Vico was Italian, and thus very romantic. He invented the Mythopoetic Age. He called it the Divan Stage, but later decided to change its name to something more romantic. He thought primitive man was not smart enough to talk the way we do (abstractly), so he expressed himself in metaphors. Later the metaphors died, so modern speech contains dead metaphors. An example of this is when primitive man got mad, he didn't realize he was mad, but said instead, "My blood is boiling." Everybody knows primitive man was mad a lot of the time, because he was a Savage and had Rites and Rituals such as headhunting, etc. Anyway, this was the origin of language, poetry, myth, and many other Good Things.

The other big philosopher was Herder. Herder lived in Germany, but Germany didn't exist back then. The cause of this was the Thirty Years War, but that is outside the topic of this paper. Anyway, everybody in Germany was speaking French, and Herder thought this was a Weird Thing, which it was. He thought it would be better if everybody spoke German and did German things, like have Oktoberfests, go to bierhauses, tell marchen, and wear funny shorts made of leather with fat suspenders. This was called Nationalism.

Herder is also known as the Father of Philology, which is the study of language. He studied language so he could convince the Germans that it was better to speak German than French, and that German Folklore was better than whatever the French did, which was not Folklore.

The Germans believed him and decided that since they could speak German and had all this German Folklore, they ought to forget about the French and create a German state, which they did. This was the first time anybody had thought of a good reason for Folklore.

When other countries realized there was such a good reason for Folklore, they became very excited and wanted to do it, too. One of these countries was Finland. Finland had been occupied for a long time by the Swedes, who were bad and would not let the Finns speak Finnish or have Kalevalas. This changed when Elias Lönnrot had a big Kalevala and invited all the Folklorists to it. But Julius Krohn crashed the party and made everybody mad by saying that Kalevalas were not Finnish, after all, but had been made in Taiwan. Later his son, Kaarle Krohn, apologized for his father and said it wasn't true, after all. This was the cause of the Finish Method.

Ireland also had Romantic Nationalism, but they had it much later, since at this time all the people in Ireland were pheasants, and were much too busy doing Folklore to study it.

III. In Search of the Land of Ur

One of the things Herder had discovered while he was studying languages was that everybody had originally come from a place called Ur. Ur was a magical land in which everyone was happy because everyone was a Folk. This was called *volksiele*. The Ur-Folk sat around all the time and had Ur-forms, which were wonderful things and a lot of fun. The result of this was that the Folk became a Good Thing and Herder became the Father of Folklore.

At this time there lived in Germany (which now existed) The Two Brothers, who were very grim. They were known as the Grimm Brothers because they collected *marchen* with very grim endings, in which people were punished by having

their feet, ears, etc. cut off. Some of these tales were so grim that one of the brothers, Wilhelm, decided to change them; he put on happy endings and always made it the stepmother who beat up on the innocent hero instead of the real mother. We now know that he was doing a Bad Thing; but he did not know this at the time, so he is still a Good Person.

While Wilhelm was busy putting happy endings on marchen, his brother Jacob was worrying about why the tales they had collected were so grim. He decided they were Folk versions of Teutonic myths, which were not so grim because they came from the Land of Ur, the magical kingdom where everyone is happy. Jacob decided to travel to the Land of Ur so he could get Ur-forms and live happily ever after.

On his way to the Land of Ur, Jacob met his friend Max Müller and persuaded him that it would be fun to come along for the ride. Max Müller is memorable for having invented Solar Mythology, which says that all myths are really about the sun, moon, stars, etc. and not about what they say they are about. This was on account of the Disease of Language, which was later cured by Tylor, the Doctor of Survivals. At the time, Müller thought that Ur-forms might be the cure, but he was later proved wrong by Andrew Lang. At any rate, he was glad to join Jacob in the search for the Land of Ur, which he thought must be somewhere in India.

Another party in search of the Land of Ur was the Finnish party (this was after they left the Kalevala). This was mostly Kaarle Krohn and his father Julius; their Auntie Aarne; and a dead man with a lisp named Stiff Thompson (Thth Thompson). All these people thought that tales spread through ripples in ponds. They collected tons and tons of folktales and arranged them on a map in circles. This was known as the Finish Method, because it went around in circles and would never be finished. The Finish Method went

on for a long time and is still not finished yet.

The Finnish party was looking for Ur-forms, too, only they called them archetypes. There were other types, too, such as oikotypes, subtypes, picatypes, and elitetypes--in fact, there got to be so many types that Auntie Aarne put them all in a book called *The Types of the Folk Tail* so people could find out what type of tail they had.

When they had travelled for a long time, they finally reached the pink brick road which led to the city of Ur, the magical kindom where everyone is happy. They followed the road into the city, which was very beautiful and perfectly arranged in concentric circles around a marvelous castle.

"But where are the Ur-forms?" Jacob Grimm asked one of the pheasants.

"I don't know; I'm just a Folk," said the Pheasant. "You'll have to ask the Wizard of Ur, who lives in the castle."

The Wizard of Ur received the visitors graciously in the castle. "What can I do for you?" he asked them.

"We are looking for the Ur-forms," said Max Müller.

"But haven't you heard?" cried the Wizard. "Nobody does Ur-forms anymore! The new paradigm is *Survivals!*"

IV. Tylor, the Doctor of Survivals

Tylor was the first folklorist to have a real university degree; therefore he was known as the Doctor of Survivals. He is famous chiefly for curing the Disease of Language, and the way he did it was this.

Tylor started out studying fossils of dinosaurs, dinosaur eggs, dinosaur dung, etc. This was known as the Origin of the Feces. He decided that the Folk were descended from

dinosaurs--or at least from opossums--and were getting smarter every day, until one day they would be as smart as he was. They would then become Civilized and take over the world. This was called Cultural Revolution, and was to be avoided at all costs. To avoid this, Tylor divided everybody up into Civilized, Barbarian and Savage. Here are some examples of the different categories:

- CIVILIZED** me, you (probably), Tylor, our friends, Tylor's friends, Queen Victoria, Queen Victoria's friends;
- BARBARIAN** the neighbors, foreigners, pheasants, the Folk;
- SAVAGE** dark-skinned natives who worship Animism and don't wear clothes, people we don't like, other people's children.

To make sure that Civilized people stayed Civilized, they had to be certain they didn't do anything that Savages also did. This included things like Rites and Rituals, having beliefs, worshipping anything except the Church of England, and playing children's games. These things were known as Survivals, and they were Bad Things. Tylor got a whole bunch of other anthropologists and folklorists to go around collecting all the Survivals and put them into books so people would know they were Survivals and stop doing them. The best book of Survivals is **The Golden Rule**, by J. G. Frazier, which has a lot of good ideas for parties.

Tylor influenced many important people. For this reason he is known as the Father of Anthropology and the Godfather of Folklore. One of the people he influenced was Andrew Lang, a very cute Scot who looked like Henry Glassie. He

hated Max Müller and used to fight with him all the time, especially on television. This was known as the Müller-Lang debates and was a very popular TV show in Victorian England. Of course, Lang always won because he was cute and had more television charisma. Some of the topics they debated were:

1. Are savages smart enough to make their own myths, or do they just use broken-down ones?
2. Which is better, a Folk or a Savage? Compare and contrast.
3. Is the Disease of Language organic or psychosomatic in nature? Can you catch it?
4. Are Ur-forms a possible cure for the Disease of Language? Discuss at length.
5. Who originated the first myth? Where did he live? Was he Civilized? Does anybody care?

V. The Singing, Dancing Throng

The Singing, Dancing Throng was a group of folklorists who studied ballads. Ballads were a special kind of song you can make with formulas, such as Enfamil, Esbilac, Similac, etc. This is known as Oral Formulac.

There were two main theories about who could make ballads. The first one was thought up by Percy Bishop Shelley in his book, *Relics of Ancient English Poetry*. This theory was about how Great Bards had once lain in the halls of kings and made up long, romantic poems about what it was like. These poems were called "lays." They were Great Poetry, and therefore a Good Thing. But sometime during the literary debris of the Middle Ages, these songs had undergone a mongrel debasement and become the

property of the strolling minstrel and tavern bard, who were just Folk. The minstrels had sung these lays to the pheasants, who, being pheasants, got them all wrong and turned them into ballads. Thus ballads were a Bad Thing, or at least a Degenerate Thing.

The other theory about ballads was that whole tribes of Savages had communally composed them during wild orgies in the dawn of primordial time. The main exponent of this idea was Gummery, or Gummer, or Gummerie, or Gummrie (also spelled Gummere), who is chiefly memorable for not knowing how to pronounce his name.

The two theories got together and had a war; this was known as the Ballad War. Neither side won, because Cecil Sharp, also known as C#, came along and ended it. Sharp, who was definitely not dull, knew that pheasants are smarter than you think. He also knew it was very hard for people to compose a ballad while they were having an orgy, especially if they were Savages. He came up with the Theory of Oral Transgression, which says that ballads are transmitted orally and not through doorknobs and toilet seats as was previously thought. This is a True Fact, as it is still believed today.

The most memorable collector of ballads was Child Ether (also spelled "Chil Ether," also known as Young Bekie, Child Waters, Lord Randall, etc.), who collected the Child Ballads. Most of these ballads were about children getting hanged, poisoned, killed, burned, murdered, etc. But at least they were real ballads. Ballads caught on so much that some people started making imitation ballads using artificial additives and ingredients. Obviously, this was a Bad Thing.

VI. The End of History

The main cause of the beginning of the End of History was Frank Boas, the Famous Anthropol-

gist, who was thus named because of his many snakes. Boas realized at once that the Folk were not at all descended from dinosaurs or any other kind of reptile; in fact, they were people, and therefore just like us. Boas is the originator of the famous phrase, "We have met the Folk, and they are us!" He was very angry that Tylor had made up the whole Cultural Revolution to keep them out of high society, and he declared that from now on all Folk, Savages, pheasants, etc. were allowed to be Civilized and Good Things. Also, he made a rule that nobody's culture could be better than anybody else's. We now know these to be True Facts.

Under Boas, folklorists and anthropologists stopped trying to prove that we were Top Culture. They decided that culture was relative (Theory of Relativity) and had to be understood in context. This meant that it didn't matter anymore if you were a pheasant; you could still be equal.

This marks the end of the screwy theories about Folklore and the beginning of ones that we still debate today; therefore it is the End of History and the beginning of Nowadays.

THE END

ERRATA CORRIGE

For "pheasants," read "peasants" throughout.