

# FOLKLORE FORUM



A COMMUNICATION FOR STUDENTS OF FOLKLORE

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#### INTRODUCTION

Kaarle Krohn's Die Folkloristische Arbeitsmethode is indeed one of the cornerstones of twentieth century folklore scholarship, the cornerstone upon which is based the influential "Finnish" historic-geographic method. Although we have been advised that a manuscript English translation of Krohn's work has been in existence for some years, this translation has never been published; indeed, even its exact whereabouts remain unknown, at least to the FORUM editors and those persons to whom they have directed inquiries. It is to be hoped that Mr. Danielson's excellent abstract will serve merely as a stop-gap measure and that eventually a full translation will be made available. Until such a time, this detailed abstract will allow those students of folklore not conversant with German some insight into Krohn's important ideas.

Mr. Danielson's work is the first extended abstract to appear in the FOLKLORE FORUM Bibliographic and Special Series. We hope to publish others in the future and cordially invite any scholars who are interested in doing such extensive, critical abstracts of works not in English to contact us. Ideally we would hope to abstract works in less accessible languages. But we also feel that we must recognize the fact that, lament as we may, many American folklore students (and, indeed, accomplished scholars) do not know German. This is perhaps the inevitable result of an educational system which puts greater emphasis on French and Spanish, languages of relatively little utility in dealing with folklore scholarship. This trend shows little sign of reversing, and indeed folklore graduate students who take up language study in conjunction with their folklore studies are apt to devote their attentions to sometimes exotic languages which will be useful to them in their fieldwork or their "area studies" minor. Indeed, at the present time students at the Indiana Folklore Institute are studying such languages as Chinese, Danish, Quechua, Mende and Croatian. This perhaps bodes well for the future of international scholarly cooperation. In the meantime, maybe an intensified translation and abstracting program could give us access to classic works in German, which is, with English, one of the two major languages of folkloristics.

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Kaarle Krohn, Kalevala scholar, folklorist, and one of the chief architects of the historic-geographic method of folk literature study, was the third in line of a Finnish folklore scholarship dynasty. His father, Julius Krohn, was the first to use the historic-geographic method in his studies of Kalevala materials, and Julius Krohn's teacher, Elias Lönnrot, was the synthesizer and editor of the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala. To continue the chain of scholarship, Antti Aarne was one of Kaarle Krohn's ablest students. Together with the name of Aarne, that of Krohn is most closely associated with the historic-geographic or so-called "Finnish" school of folktale study. Krohn's important statement of its methodology, Die Folkloristische Arbeitsmethode,<sup>1</sup> is still an indispensable volume in a folklorist's library, both for its historical value and for its clear exposition of the historic-geographic method.

Kaarle Krohn was born in 1863 and was reared in an academic family whose members esteemed their homeland, its language, and culture. A student of Krohn has noted that the scholar was always very conscious of his family background and proud of the fact that his family was one of the first among Finnish intellectuals to use the Finnish language purposely in the home.<sup>2</sup> (Not until the nineteenth century was the Finnish culture appreciated by the Finnish intelligentsia as unique and national, and not until 1917 did Finland attain her independence from Russia.)

A student of Finnish folklore and literature all his life, Krohn began collecting traditional materials in the field while still a student. In several years he collected some eighteen thousand items, including eight thousand folktales.<sup>3</sup> His later scholarship, then, was not that of an armchair bibliophile. He had experienced direct contacts with living folk traditions and their milieu. He began his long series of scholarly publications with a folktale study, as well--his doctoral dissertation, Bär (Wolf) und Fuchs, eine nordische Tiermärchenkette. The same year in which he received his doctorate, 1888, he became the first representative of folklore scholarship at the University of Helsinki, when he was appointed docent of Finnish and comparative folklore.

The following year, at the death of his father, he committed himself to the completion of a number of projects left unfinished by Julius Krohn, works on Finnish pagan rites, Finnish folklore and literature, and Kalevala studies. Krohn's independent studies followed: investigations of Finnish incantations, their geographic and historic origins, the geographic diffusion and development of the Kalevala poems, and investigations of other traditional narratives. In 1908 the University of Helsinki established a permanent chair in Finnish and comparative folklore and Krohn was its first occupant.

Later folklore studies included research in folk beliefs and

incantations, legends, ancient Finnish poetry, and Scandinavian mythology, as well as work with riddles, placenames, and Finnish folk religion. Krohn continued his thorough analyses of Kalevala materials and these studies culminated in six volumes of Kalevalastudien, published in the 1920s in FF Communications. Even this international publication owed its creation to Krohn (and Axel Olrik). The two folklorists founded the Folklore Fellows in 1907, an organization consisting of members of folklore societies in different countries which made available to folklorists around the world materials otherwise impossible to obtain. The Folklore Fellows published the FF Communications and Krohn was its editor-in-chief until his death. He issued more than one hundred numbers of the series.

In 1926 the indefatigable scholar enlarged a series of lectures on the "Finnish" method, given in 1924 at the Norwegian Instituttet for sammenlignende Kulturforskning at Oslo, and published the work as Die Folkloristische Arbeitsmethode. Near the end of his life he reviewed and synthesized the most important results of international folktale investigations since the appearance of his own doctoral dissertation in Übersicht über einige Resultate der Märchenforschung.<sup>4</sup>

In the words of Stith Thompson, Krohn was an extraordinary "organizer and coordinator of the efforts of other scholars." Among the most prominent students in the historic-geographic tradition whom Krohn could count as pupils or colleagues are Archer Taylor, Reidar Th. Christiansen, Stith Thompson, and the late Antti Aarne and Walter Anderson. During a full generation of scholarship, he "conducted an extensive program of study of the folktale and related subjects in which he secured the collaboration of scholars in all parts of the world. Helsinki became the Mecca for young folklorists, who went there to profit by weeks or months of association and stimulus which came from his sympathetic and ever kindly encouragement."<sup>5</sup>

One of these disciples was a Hungarian student, Bertalan Korompay, who both studied and lived with Kaarle Krohn in Finland. In his almost idolizing reminiscence of the man, composed in part of entries from his "Finnish diary," Korompay notes Krohn's views of folklore scholarship in the 1930s:

Among the Germans, folklore is always connected to something else, for example to ethnography, musicology and lexicography. This science is only a game to the Britishers. There are serious researchers in the northern countries, Germany and America, but even the Americans do not make sacrifices for folklore. Kaarle Krohn had four collaborators among them. In America only the British folksongs are of broader interest. The French are interested only in their colonies. In France J. Bedier impeded collecting.<sup>6</sup>

The statement is a clear illustration of Krohn's wholehearted commitment to folklore scholarship and the cautious restriction of its materials to the study of only certain kinds of traditions.

Kaarle Krohn was an original scholar in the epic song and the folktale, one of the important forces in the historic-geographic school, and an influential teacher and international organizer. He tirelessly published study after study, reviews, and his own poetry. These publications, at his death in 1933, comprised over thirty pages in the Studia Fennica volume commemorating the man.<sup>7</sup>

Toward the end of Krohn's life, of course, his theories and methods were attacked, both abroad and in Finland. His theoretical and methodological contribution to folklore scholarship was the "product of a particular period and a particular mode of generally accepted trend of thought," and, as another Finn, Jouko Hautala, has written, his methodology is "already tottering." Hautala continues, however, "... none the less, without his achievements we should at very many points still be at the very beginning, whereas now we are in position to broaden and level out a trail already blazed for us."<sup>8</sup>

Die Folkloristische Arbeitsmethod, Begründet von Julius Krohn und Weitergeführt von Nordischen Forschern was written to explain Nordic folklore research during the half century previous to 1926 and its treatment of over one thousand folklore texts. The work focuses on the "folkloristic method," in Krohn's expression, its discoveries, contributions, and errors, and it attempts to point out the difficulties of certain problems yet to be worked out. The author emphasizes that the statement does not propose exhaustive answers to questions of folkloristic research, but intends to awaken interest in its problems. Krohn's introduction to the volume closes with a dedication of the work to the deceased Moltke Moe, Axel Olrik, and Antti Aarne, whose studies he often refers to for illustrative purposes, and his thanks to Walter Anderson, Knut Liestøl, Gustav Schmidt, and Archer Taylor, who examined the manuscript.

## CHAPTER 1) JULIUS KROHN

The first chapter of Die Folkloristische Arbeitsmethode concerns the founder of the historic-geographic method of folklore research in Finland, the author's father, Julius Krohn. The elder Krohn, docent in Finnish language and literature at the University of Helsinki in the 1880s, assembled an overview of the different Kalevala song styles in the Finnish and Estonian language areas, together with corresponding themes and motifs. He used these materials as the foundation of a genetic investigation of the Kalevala songs. Finding that variants of the same song were bound to one another geographically, he attempted to order the

different variants chronologically and topographically. Only in this manner could he separate the original components from those arising at a later date. Julius Krohn finished the genetic explanation of the Kalevala songs and published it in two volumes in 1884-1885.

## CHAPTER 2) ABGRENZUNG DES ARBEITSFELDES

After describing the first application of the method, Kaarle Krohn demarcates the area of the folklorist's subject matter. According to the author, no one has the mind and/or the talent to investigate all aspects of tradition, the literary, the visual, and the musical. He agrees with von Sydow that the folklorist is concerned with spiritual traditions and the ethnologist with material traditions. Folklore study, itself, is a separate academic discipline and demands its own skills and methods. The folklorist (he uses the word Folkloristen in the German) studies Volkpoesie, which must be understood in its widest sense, and includes all aspects of knowledge found among the common people that are traditional, reworked by the imagination, and genuinely popular. It is Krohn's opinion that the presence of a poetic element is a decisive factor in the choice of folk materials. In addition to the folktale, folk poetry, and folksong texts, folk belief may be included in the folklorist's subject matter if it is a part of Volkpoesie or has become crystalized, as in a proverb. Also admitted are proverbs, riddles, and narrations of common experiences re-created in the folk imagination. The essential psychological basis of folk belief or folk custom, however, is not a real concern of the folklorist.

## CHAPTER 3) WAHL UND BEGRENZUNG DER AUFGABE

Next Krohn considers the choice and limitations of the folklorist's research and investigation. Individual folk materials must be studied as homogeneous totalities in regard to their formation as well as their dissemination and as units. A particular folktale type or subtype, or a magic custom, then, is an appropriate problem and one that can be exactly and specifically defined.

In his discussion of the selection and limitation of a problem in folktale research, Krohn describes the components of a folk narrative, which are referred to throughout the rest of the work:

The Gebild (pattern or structure) of a folk narrative is made up of chief elements, Episoden. The Episode is a composite unit of action, which can also exist independently as an individual type. Each Episode consists of smaller components, Momente, and these Momente can be broken down into motifs--Hauptzüge and Nebenzüge--which are characterized by different details or traits and which may be

characteristics and attributes of characters as well as their various actions. A Hauptzug, then, denotes the components into which a Moment, a part of the Episode, can be split up, and a Nebenzug, or subordinate motif, is a characterizing part of a Hauptzug.<sup>9</sup>

In order to illustrate his use of these expressions, Krohn cites an Episode in the Marchen "The Rich Man and His Son-in-law," the failure of the treacherous letter-sender. The Episode breaks down into two smaller components, Momente: 1) the sending of the letter with its enclosed murder command, and 2) the substitution of the murder command with a marriage command. The Hauptzüge of the first Moment are the sender of the letter, its bearer, the contents of the letter, and its address. Those of the second are the sleep of the letter-bearer, the substitution of another letter for the original one, the contents of the new one, and the receiving of this letter. Among the Nebenzüge (subordinate motifs) of these Momente are the rank of the letter-sender and the substitutor, the kind of death commanded, and the kind of substitution involved.

According to Krohn, the study of these variant components of the narrative--the Episoden, Momente, Hauptzüge, and Nebenzüge---reveals the genetic relationships between narratives, just as a similar study of incantation variants leads the folklorist to an understanding of their relationships with one another. Whatever the genre studied, however, the subject must be carefully defined and may be limited geographically or ethnographically.

#### CHAPTER 4) BESCHAFFUNG DES MATERIALS

The next step to be taken is the collection of as many variants of the item from as extensive an area as possible. At the least, an excellent collection in the area under consideration is requisite to the research and the results of intensive collecting work must be accessible. Few practical aids, e.g., national catalogues and indexes, are yet available [the situation has improved since 1926], so the international cooperation of folklorists is a necessity. In addition, many more materials must be collected, especially in non-European cultures. Krohn concludes that the real problem of the folklorist is usually not the amassing of these materials, but the study of such huge quantities of them.

#### CHAPTER 5) SICHTUNG DES MATERIALS

After all the variants of the item have been assembled, they must be carefully and astutely examined. Actual oral traditions must be separated from those which have been literarily adapted. Also important in this phase of the research is the folklorist's awareness that literary materials may

have entered oral tradition either secondarily or primarily. Most important, all the genuinely oral variations of the item must be assembled in a separate category. The literary, the less trustworthy, and the variations only concurrent must be studied as well, but separately.

## CHAPTER 6) ORDNERN DES MATERIALS

The materials must then be classified and the variants labelled, broken down into Züge, and examined. Literary documents are classified chronologically and traditional items usually ordered according to language areas and sub-regions of particular language areas. Each variant, literary and oral, is labelled with an abbreviation so that its specific linguistic and geographic area and/or age is readily apparent to the researcher. The more variants there are from distinct regions, the more elaborate the system of classification must be.

## CHAPTER 7) BEGRÜNDUNG DER GEOGRAPHISCHEN EINTEILUNG

At this point, Krohn discusses a basic premise of the historic-geographic method in order that the next step in the investigation may be properly understood. This basic premise is that traditions are carried through time from one generation to another, and through space, from one region to another, crossing cultural and language boundaries. The question of isolated similarities between variants of peoples far removed from one another geographically, supposedly never in contact, is therefore an important one. In such instances, if the acceptance of a long-lost prototype is not in question, the possibility of the independent creation of a narrative in different places does exist, and is explainable by the efficacy of the human imagination. On the other hand, dissimilar variants of one and the same Märchen can be found among groups of the same people in a circumscribed area. These variations are the results of weak recollections, active imaginations, and, above all, different fusions with other Märchen materials.

To evaluate the similarities and dissimilarities in the handling of a traditional theme in several geographic areas, the Normalformen of the individual variants in the areas must be determined. From these Normalformen, the folklorist must work back to the Grundform of all the variants of the tradition. After the establishment of the Grundform, he can determine the time and place of origin of the narrative, its diffusion routes, and its historical development.

Krohn's definitions of the terms Grundform and Normalform are important. The Grundform, according to Krohn, is synonymous with archetype: a reconstructed form of a ballad or tale from which the origin, paths of dissemination,



versions, and other forms of individual, regional, and stylistic alterations of the type can be determined. The Normalform is a younger, secondary Grundform<sup>10</sup> or archetype, a particular regional redaction of the tale.

The folklorist, once he has carefully evaluated and arranged all of the variants of the tradition, therefore sets out to determine the regional Normalformen of a tradition and its Grundform. An analytical investigation of the variants Zug by Zug in geographic order is the core of the historic-geographic methodology. The texts of the Zug variations are simplified or even abstracted, possibly abbreviated into letter-numeral formulae. Each Zug is noted on separate cards in this manner, together with the symbol of the variant in which it appears. In the analysis and comparison of these individual Züge and the indexing of the variants in each Zug list in the same order and on the basis of a constant sequence of variants, the original form of each Zug belonging to the tradition can be determined. Jouko Hautala's description of the method perhaps expresses it more clearly:

The analysis and comparison are carried out by means of a catalogue of features or, in the case of poems and songs, a catalogue of lines. Thereby, the distribution, prevalence or rarity, modification, etc., of each individual feature of the item of folklore can be demonstrated, employing a manner of presentation reduced to key words and references to the previously drawn up register of variants and thus produce in one sweep an illustrative general survey of the diversity of variants.<sup>11</sup>

The original combination and order of the original Züge can be established in this manner, and, thereby, the Normalformen of the areas in question and the Grundform of all the variants of the tradition. After the relations between the Normalformen and Grundform have been studied, the diffusion and development of the tradition can be disclosed.

However, Krohn emphasizes, to reach correct conclusions in the analysis of the tradition, its variants, Normalformen, and Grundform, the folklorist must be aware of certain laws and principals at work in the origin of folk traditions, their dissemination through time and space, and their kaleidescopic variations. These laws and principles--the influence of forgetting, expansion, and variation, the law of self-correction, and Orlrick's epic laws, for example--Krohn explicates and illustrates in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 9) EINFLUSS DER VERGESSLICHKEIT

The forgetting of certain Züge may be momentary or it may

influence the transmission of the tradition to a much greater degree than the occasional misplacement or dropping of a motif. The components that may be dispensed with most easily are usually forgotten first. The introduction and conclusion of the narrative are especially prone to this danger. Even an essential Zug may be omitted if the action can proceed without it.

The forgetfulness of the narrator has other effects as well. For example, partial forgetting brings about the generalization of a Zug or its simplification. Too, the deletion of an essential Zug may weaken the logical cohesion of the narrative and the plot-thread may break completely. In such instances the origin of the so-called fragment is to be found.

If there is no clue to a tradition in a certain area, it may have existed there earlier and have been later forgotten. However, the later a tradition has existed in a lively and viable manner and the more complete its collection is, the less one has to be concerned about the possible earlier existence of a form which was later forgotten.

#### CHAPTER 10) LUST ZU ERWEITERN

The inclination to amplify the narrative either may be a spontaneous impulse or may be brought about by the forgetting of certain elements. These amplifications and additions may be newly created at the time or borrowed from another context. They may also express themselves in the mere duplication or multiplication of Züge already in the narrative. Krohn notes that these amplifications, because of their elaborations and influence on the rest of the tale, can break the logic of the narrative just as can the forgetting of an essential element.

#### CHAPTER 11) GESETZE DER UMGESTALTUNG

The forgetting of a Zug or the addition of a new element produces a variation of the narrative. If the two impulses are at work in the same tale, the transformation becomes more apparent. Krohn describes additional circumstances in which variants are formed, e.g., when certain words are heard incorrectly or are misunderstood, when particular local conditions are introduced, or when the modernization or antiquation of Züge take place. The influence of another part of the same tradition or of another tradition somehow connected with the one under examination also may bring about frequent and important variations in the components of a narrative. Usually, of course, several causes have effected the alteration. Furthermore, adds Krohn, the spontaneous efficacy of the fantasy in the variation must be considered.

Although it has commonly been accepted that alterations occur little by little, Krohn admits that one of his most basic errors in folklore research was to give altogether too much credibility to the preservation of a folk tradition. A truly creative variation occurs not in stages, but with an impact once and for all. Then it easily slips into the tracks of the more mechanical, less important changes. A coherent chain of fundamental adaptations in Volksdichtung, however, is an impossibility.

## CHAPTER 12) KRITERIEN

It is not enough, writes Krohn, to understand the laws of variation in oral tradition. The folklorist must also differentiate between older and younger variants in terms of individual Züge. Certain criteria which aid him in the differentiation exist, but they are quite relative:

- a) The form occurring the most frequently will more often be original than the form occurring only seldom.
- b) The form occurring in an area of greater circumference is usually more original than the one occurring in a smaller area.
- c) A single variant in its original habitat can be of more decisive importance than all other variants and may contain a number of original Züge.
- d) Sometimes more original Züge can appear in a variant far removed from its area of origin, especially if the direction of the diffusion of the narrative is unclear.
- e) Sometimes the Züge of the Urform can be determined only through a literary document.
- f) At other times, the original Züge have been retained in oral tradition, just as in an early literary version of the type.
- g) There is no proof that the earlier documentation is in all respects the closest to the original, for the number of variants collected at a later date and their geographic proximity to the supposed area of origin may outweigh the importance of the earlier variant.
- h) A variant whose Züge are well preserved in general usually deserves greater attention than one in a corrupted form.
- i) In the choice between different forms of the same Zug, preference should be given to that one which can be posited as an original form out of which other forms can have developed directly or indirectly. For example, in the Asian version of "The Animals on a Journey" it is necessary to choose between a scorpion, crab, and centipede as the original Zug form. Aarne, in his study of the tale, chose the scorpion as the original because it possessed both the outer characteristics of the crab and the sting of the centipede.

- j) The natural is to be considered more original than the unnatural. Unnatural elements may be shaped through misunderstandings or contamination. If individual versions of

the narrative differ at a particular point, one must establish which of the forms follow the plot most naturally and in the least forced manner.

Krohn concludes that in applying these criteria in the evaluation of variants, the folklorist must not be led astray by his own subjectivity, as easy as that may be. It must also be remembered that these criteria remain quite relative. Therefore many independent criteria must be used in the evaluation of the Züge and the likelihood of their original position in a Normalform or Grundform.

#### CHAPTER 13) EPISCHE GESETZE

Additional criteria are to be found in the epic laws of Volksdichtung, investigated by Axel Olrik. Partially these epic laws are general principles which apply to all poetic creation, e.g., unity, concentration, and logic of action, and in other respects they are specifically characteristic of Volksdichtung, for example, schematization, repetition, and "single-strandedness." Among those deserving special attention in folk narrative study are:

a) The law of Achtergewicht, or aftweight, in which that character possessing certain qualities in the greatest or least quantity becomes the most important character in a series. For example, in the trio of helpers and opponents of the hero, the youngest, smallest, and/or weakest of the helpers and the oldest, largest, and/or strongest of the opponents are brought to the fore.

b) The preference for threesomes, which can be pursued in some cases to the Grundform itself, although the preference has also influenced forms originally not possessing series of three.

c) The law of two-to-a-scene, the importance of which can be easily overestimated.

d) The law of repose at the beginning and ending of the narrative. This law is not to be found in all kinds of folk traditions, e.g., it is not at work in the ballad.

In using these epic laws as criteria in variant evaluation, the folklorist must again insist that as many independent criteria as possible be applied in the assessment of the originality of the Zug. Too, it is often necessary to return to the entire variant to examine the Züge in their narrative context in order to determine which supposition is the most legitimate.

#### CHAPTER 14) GRUNDFORM

In his description of the Grundform, the focus of the historic-geographic study, Krohn stresses the fact that it is not an abstract, schematic formula, but a finished picture which bears up under the scrutiny of its every detail. He also emphasizes the "splendid Arkitektonik" of this Grundform,

which, in spite of dissimilar individual variants, structures them all. Deviations and distortions of certain variants, Krohn continues, did not originate in the creation of the narrative, but appeared later because of factors which brought about gaps and deformities as the form was disseminated. The Arkitektonik of the form remains, however, and may be perceived in the countless variants of the Grundform which have developed at different places in different times.

Thus, in addition to the assumption of an organic homogeneous Grundform, from which the different variants of an international folk tradition have proceeded, Krohn requires another: that of the continued existence of the original form in spite of all temporal and geographic variations. Neither the strength and the clarity of the illiterate tale-teller's recollection nor the strong organicism of the Marchen can satisfactorily explain this remarkable stability of the Grundform. Das Gesetz der Selbstberichtigung, as explained by Walter Anderson, plays a considerable role in the maintenance of this stability. According to the law, each narrator hears a certain tale several times from several narrators. Since he hears the narrative more than once, errors and gaps in the tale are eliminated, as are certain divergencies appearing on occasion only. Because he hears it from several individuals, mistakes and alterations characteristic of one or another of his sources are rectified. It can also happen that if a narrator tells a popular story several times dissimilarly, his audience will recall it as he or other raconteurs had narrated it "correctly" in previous tale-telling sessions. Thus divergencies in the form of the narrative are constantly corrected by the narrator and his audience.

This law of self-correction does not work effectively in all instances, however. If the variations in the tale are pleasing to the narrator and audience, they may be accepted by them and may spread over an entire area with the aid of variant fusion. In such case, a special local or regional redaction develops, a Normalform. Occasionally this form diffuses further and further and finally submerges the diffusion area of the tradition in question. After such an upheaval, the Normalform of the narrative will no longer correspond with its Urform (Grundform).

Krohn ends his discussion of the Grundform by noting that the folklorist often must be satisfied with the construction of a relative Grundform, both spatially and temporally. Since so much non-European tradition material, especially in Persia and India, is either uncollected or unavailable, the Grundformen and Urformen of many truly international narratives are still to be constructed. In the meantime, though, the folklorist can concentrate on temporally and spatially limited Normalformen and his resultant studies will become sound foundations for the continued examination of the traditions under investigation.

## CHAPTER 15) IDENTITÄT

In the reconstruction of a Grundform, Krohn continues, not all variants examined may derive from the same original form. The identification of isolated Züge, Zug complexes, Momente, combinations of Episoden, and the relation of these to the entire narrative and its variants is very important. Again, certain criteria exist which aid the folklorist in this sometimes difficult identification:

a) Nebenzüge must be regarded with great reservation. The correlating Züge should, above all, be Hauptzüge.

b) In order to establish a genetic connection between variants at least two corresponding structural Züge are required.

c) The more closely the structural Züge correspond, the more certain is the possibility that the two items are variants of one and the same tradition.

d) The order of the corresponding Züge, Momente, and Episoden in the different items must also be considered.

e) If only a few Züge make up the items under investigation, even their complete correspondence with one another does not guarantee a genetic connection. In such a case the possibility of similar independent creations remains.

f) The folklorist must also remember to examine the geographic distance between the items which are thought to be related to one another. As the distance between the items increases, the probability of a genetic relationship is proportionately weakened, except, of course, in the case of traditional materials collected among colonists.

Krohn concludes that if a great mass of variants described in detail offer a satisfactory number of Züge correspondent in a satisfactory degree, they very likely share their origin in a common Grundform.

## CHAPTER 16) HEIMAT UND WANDERUNG

After the Grundform has been established, its origin can be investigated. Krohn denies the theory of polygenetic origins as unthinkable, especially in the sense that each variant is independently created in countless locations. He accepts, however, the possibility of the individual origins of the traditions of one people or in a particular language group, and denies them only when international connections between the traditions are a possibility.

Krohn also admits that the results of the folklorist's research in origins of particular Grundformen are always relative and that they can be traced only as far as his materials bring him. Nevertheless, he has always come closer to the point of origin when he has established a point where a tradition could not have arisen.

The diffusion of a tradition also may be established after the Grundform has been reconstructed. In some cases, two

streams moving contrary to one another are possible, especially in transit countries, and then both directions must be considered. In other instances, the stream of Marchen has flowed only in one direction and certain areas have been inundated by the stream. Usually folk traditions diffuse along the usual paths of cultural interchange, and, on the whole, from a more advanced culture to one less advanced. In Europe, however, the latter factor is not very important, since the cultural levels of different European regions have been similar for many centuries.

#### CHAPTER 17) RICHTUNG DER VERBREITUNG

In order to establish the direction of a diffusion, Krohn suggests certain exterior criteria:

- a) Non-indigenous linguistic elements which point to the previous existence of the narrative in another language or dialect area.
- b) Non-indigenous place-names and personal names.
- c) Elements relating to the natural history of another region, e.g., references to ice in a tale collected in a south European area.

Of greater importance is the analytical investigation of the varying Züge in geographic order in the determination of migration routes. If the folklorist has before him the Normalformen of the different countries together with the individual variants, the direction of the diffusion appears almost spontaneously.

#### CHAPTER 18) ART DER VERBREITUNG

The folklorist, while he investigates the direction of the diffusion, must be aware of the different kinds of diffusion possible. For example, traditions diffuse through time and space, temporally from generation to generation and geographically from place to place. It is often true that the geographical diffusion of a tradition intrudes more disturbingly on its temporal diffusion, rather than vice versa. Also, the narrative is transmitted in variant form and each specific variant lives only as long as its teller. It travels only as far as its teller and the relative influence of the specific variant per se is brief and narrow. The Urform of these variants does not itself diffuse, but only its descendents--its variants--wander from country to country and from generation to generation. Because the law of self-correction removes the largest part of the new variations, the Urform remains recognizable in its descendents. In this manner, the possible number of variations of the Urform are reduced. Otherwise in their diffusion they would develop into more and more variants in a multiplying geometrical progression.

In this chapter Krohn refers to the theory that Episoden

float about independently, now attaching themselves to form one tale, now clustering with others in a different combination to form another. In other words, they seem to lead individual lives of their own and produce kaleidoscopic patterns quite arbitrarily. In Krohn's opinion, such an independence of Episoden is merely apparent. The only component that can be diffused independently is that one which can be expressed as a whole, by itself. In the degeneration of Volksdichtung one does find these separate fragments, but in such instances they cannot wander further.

## CHAPTER 19) ENTSTEHUNGSZEIT

The folklorist, having established the Normalformen and Grundform, and from these, having traced the place of origin and the paths of diffusion, can also determine the time of origin of the tradition, although only relatively. Since folk traditions are products of culture, their time of origin can be determined.

In dating the origin of a tradition one begins with the oldest document and cautiously proceeds backward. Certain reference points will provide the researcher clues to the comparative age of the form. For example, foreign words and concepts which were not known before a certain time are useful indications of age, if the researcher is sure they were not added at a later date. One must not be misled by references to historical events, either, for these events may be older than their original description. Literary adaptations of traditions can also aid the folklorist in establishing the known existence of a tradition at a certain time.

Even in the Grundform of the narrative the terminus a quo of a tradition may be found. For example, "The Rich Man and His Son-in-law" contains a feature essential to its structure, a letter, so the narrative must have arisen in a literate culture.

## CHAPTER 20) GRUND UND BODEN

According to Krohn, the last task of the folklorist is an investigation of the background and motivation from which the tradition developed, and this subject, he admits, is a more interesting one than the temporal and geographical origins of a tradition. Such an investigation of the formation of a tradition, its original individual components, and their origin, can take place only after the Grundform has been reconstructed. Sufficient groundwork in the establishment of certain Normalformen and Grundformen has been carried out, however, that Krohn discusses and criticizes several theories concerning the backgrounds and bases of certain traditions. For example:

a) Entirely new creations may be the result of extensive



adaptations of other materials, creative imitations, or fusions of different traditions.

b) Even different genres may be genetically related, e.g., the riddle and the proverb, folk belief and the proverb, the folksong and the Märchen.

c) Märchen have been created out of superstitions. In such creations the superstitious content of an indigenous Grundform must be carefully distinguished from later additions of superstitious conceptions and customs. These differences are particularly important in the use of Märchen as an aid in mythological and sociological research.

d) Attempts to derive Märchen from a complex of superstitious customs and to interpret them as commentaries on primitive rituals, as suggested by Saintyves, have been unsuccessful, because of the researchers' very limited choice of variants and the chance correspondence of their features.

e) The same criticism may be applied to the theorists who attempt to derive Märchen from nature myths.

f) Each nation has stamped international traditional materials with its own impress of character and culture, and these dissimilarities and their origins need to be investigated. Such re-creations of the narrative and their development and variation cannot be understood until the Normalform of the area has been established and its Urform reconstructed as accurately as possible.

## CHAPTER 21) SCHLUSSWORT

Krohn concludes his statement of the methods and purposes of the historic-geographic school with a cautionary word to those students who trust completely the infallibility of their own methods and theories and the reliability of their often scanty materials. He writes that "we must stop philosophizing and mythologizing, and work with real conceptions and microscopic investigations in order to derive appropriate, tenable, and general conclusions from particular, factual results."

Finally Krohn justifies the work of the folklorist and his "scientific" labors with the microscopic elements of a folk tradition. The folklorist's investigations are of great importance to world literature, and even his methods of analyzing comparatively simple traditions will be of much advantage as a preparatory school for the complicated investigations of comparative literary history.

Above all, he writes, the folklorist's pursuits "have brought the scholarly collector and researcher closer to the folk and have taught him to understand and to love not only his own nation, but humanity in general, on its deepest levels and in its most distant past."

The goals of the folklorist and the methods for reaching

them as outlined by Kaarle Krohn have not escaped the criticism of other folklorists and certain historic-geographic theories and methods have been modified by Krohn's students. Criticism has ranged from the harsh and vindictive attacks of those unconditionally opposed to the "Finnish" school to the mild questions raised by historic-geographic scholars who forthrightly respect the scholarly contributions of Krohn.

To the latter belong the comments of Stith Thompson, who feels that the general validity of the method cannot be doubted, that its methodology has continually been improved over the years, and that the careful analysis on which it is based is a foundation to which all folklore studies must be grounded. Nevertheless, Thompson questions the assumption of the school that a motif cannot be investigated in a manner similar to the analysis of a type, because, it is argued, originally every motif was a component of a particular tale. The American scholar points out that many narrative motifs exist as independent narratives. In fact, more than half of the tale types in Aarne's Type Index are nothing more than independent motifs. Moreover, many motifs are the result of the incorporation into the narratives of certain beliefs and customs of a people among whom the tale developed. Certainly motifs related to the common life and thought of primitive peoples were likely to have arisen independently in many places. He concludes that if the motif is rather complex, e.g., that of the Obstacle Flight, it can be investigated by historic-geographic analysis.<sup>12</sup>

A strident voice critical of the school was raised by Albert Wesselski. His objections to its methodology were rooted in his distrust of oral tradition. He argued that written tales and published versions of oral tales have carried stories to those from whom they have been collected. In his opinion, the only method of folktale study was the comparison of these written documents, for oral tradition only effected the disintegration of a narrative.<sup>13</sup>

It is clear that many historic-geographic folklorists have acknowledged the importance of written documents in their studies. Their retort, of course, is that Wesselski had no real knowledge or understanding of oral tradition, and certainly no experiences in the field.

Carl W. von Sydow also criticized the historic-geographic method of folk narrative study, but his position was not the radical one championed by Wesselski. Von Sydow charged that Krohn lacked insight into the laws which govern traditional materials, even though Krohn's student, Antti Aarne, used the method admirably in a series of "profound and thorough" folktale monographs. The Swedish scholar criticized several assumptions made by Krohn, due to the Finn's misunderstanding of the life and laws of a folktale.

Von Sydow held that the automigration of a tale is an

impossibility. It does not diffuse like a stream of water or like ever widening rings on a smooth surface of water, two favorite figures of speech used by Krohn. Instead, the dissemination of a tale is desultory, irregular, and subject to no rule, for tales are diffused by a very small number of active tradition bearers. The "Finnish" school's supposition that if a tradition is found in two different areas, it must also exist or have existed in between these areas, is also erroneous, according to von Sydow. The active tradition bearer will seldom narrate his materials in a transit region whose culture and language are different from his own.<sup>14</sup>

Other historic-geographic hypotheses, that the original form of a tale should be the most complete, natural, and logical, and that where the most original form of the tale is found, there the original home of the narrative may be located, were also dismissed by von Sydow. He found these to be assumptions based on mere guesswork and hardly founded on actual experience in a traditional milieu.<sup>15</sup>

Von Sydow believed that changes brought about by different kinds of significant mutations and oikotypifications (a process related to the creation of a regional Normalform) had also been slighted by the historic-geographic investigator, as had questions concerning the tradition bearer and the actual transmission of tradition:

To folk-tale research questions regarding the bearers of tradition and occasions to narrate must be problems of first rate importance, and if they are ignored, and scholars build instead on uncertain working hypotheses, the results must be false, more or less. Again, it is of vital importance to strike a right balance between the points of view of inheritance and dissemination, between the conservatism of tradition and its new formations.<sup>16</sup>

Von Sydow has also pointed out that one of the most serious deficiencies of the historic-geographic school is its contentment with extracts. Its proponents seldom view the material as part of "a natural, living whole." The folklorist must study not only folktales as tales, but also the use of folktales, their life in tradition, their transmission and diffusion, and the important differences between kinds of folktales. The life of the tradition has escaped the attention of the folktale scholars like Krohn and, as a result, they have constructed a number of postulates having no connection with reality.<sup>17</sup>

Holger Olof Nygard, in a monographic study of the ballad, "Heer Halewijn," offers perhaps the most recent criticism of the Finnish method. (It is interesting that the monograph itself is a kind of historic and geographic study, but not a traditional historic-geographic analysis in the manner of Krohn.) Nygard finds that one of the most

disquieting characteristics of the school has been the trust it places in numbers and percentages. The effective interpretation of this quantitative data is, in the end, dependent on the individual researcher. But, he writes,

. . . it is precisely in such matters of judgement that the "science" breaks down and the percentages lose their pretended sanctity. The panoply of percentages in tables does not inspire trust unless the variant material conforms to an ideal. Since a body of texts can never be expected to represent an even distribution through both time and space of an entire tradition, with nicely graduated changes inherent in its characteristics, the numerical data must be compensated by the judgement of the researcher, but compensated according to the degree of deviation of his material from the ideal. This ideal he does not know,<sup>18</sup> of course, and is in fact attempting to discover.

In addition, Nygard emphasizes that although the student is careful, he cannot help but neglect evaluative considerations in an analysis in which all items are relegated to numerals, abstractions, and statistics. ". . . The formal characteristics of these studies discourage evaluative remarks, for such considerations are not amenable to 'scientific' treatment."<sup>19</sup>

Historic-geographic studies have been called "scientific," he continues in the same vein, but in the strict sense of the term they are not, for they are "not based on theories that allow of experimental verification." Unfortunately many of the school's scholarly contributions are characterized by the trappings of pseudo-science described by R.B. McKerrow in Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare:

. . . the parade of the machinery of demonstration when such machinery is inappropriate, the amassing of statistics in cases where the phenomena are too diverse in character to be properly treated as units in an enumeration, the pretense that by bringing together arguments which individually are invalid one can arrive at proof.<sup>20</sup>

Nygard concludes his critique more positively, however. He calls attention to the period in which the school originated--an era of Finnish nationalism and "scientific" interest in historical philology--and he recognizes the fact that the most reputable practitioners of the historic-geographic method assert that their findings are merely conjectural. These scholars usually include among their "nonscientific" talents both an ability to make intelligent evaluations and common sense.

I find that these criticisms of the Finnish school of folk-tale study are generally sound and intelligent, with the

exception of those raised by Albert Wesselski, whose radical interpretation of oral tradition is difficult to accept. A few other questions relative to the historic-geographic method and, more specifically, to Krohn's statement of its goals and methods in Die Folkloristische Arbeitsmethode have also come to mind in the course of researching this review.

First, it seems that the methodology of the school is founded on an implicit trust in abstracted materials. Not only are the texts abstracted, for practical purposes, of course, but these abstractions are used to re-establish an abstraction of the Normalformen, and, in turn, the abstractions of the Normalformen are analyzed to reconstruct an abstraction of the Grundform. Can this superorganic series of abstractions give the folklorist much reliable and useful information about the actual life of the tradition in its temporal and geographic development? How meaningful is the Grundform to the folklorist working with specific and real variants, other than its use in pointing out whether or not an informant's tradition varies from its conjectured archetype? These variations and dissimilarities are certainly important to the folklorist, but does their comprehension require the massive, time consuming labors of complete Normalform and Grundform reconstructions?

Too, it appears that the so-called laws and criteria at work in oral tradition can be effectively used to prove almost anything, since they contradict one another at various points. One of the criteria used in the determination of an archetype reads that "the form that has the greatest frequency of occurrence will more often be the original than the form that occurs more rarely;" another, that "the Zug that is found in one folktale only, will more probably be more original than a Zug which is found also in others."<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the difficulty involved here is the school's preference for the terms "laws" and "criteria." These contrary characteristics of oral tradition probably could be described more aptly as "tendencies."

Another difficulty which arises in an examination of the historic-geographic method is its circular logic, already implied by Nygard. If the folklorist is attempting to reconstruct an archetype by the examination and analysis of each individual feature, he must have some idea in mind concerning the probable diffusion and development of the tradition. Yet, according to Krohn and his colleagues, this diffusion and development of the tradition can not be revealed or understood until the archetype is reconstructed. Unless I have misunderstood the basic method of the Finnish school and its interpretation, this circularity is intrinsic to its methodology.

At any rate, the historic-geographic method supposedly exemplified the objective and the scientific in folklore scholarship. Therefore its practitioners should have realized how significantly the researcher's preconceptions

and suppositions about the diffusion and development of the archetype affected the "objective and scientific" reconstruction of that very archetype. This subjectivity becomes even more apparent when one recalls Krohn's repeated comments about the difficult decisions the folklorist must make in deciding whether one form is more original than another. As stated above, the confused and contradictory laws, principles, and criteria set forth to aid the researcher in these decisions could be used to establish exactly what he wished them to establish.

The basal superorganicism of the concepts integral to the goals and methods of the historic-geographic scholar is also troublesome. Alan Dundes has noted that this superorganicism is the focus of the entire methodology: the archetype is superorganic, as are Olrik's epic laws, Anderson's law of self-correction, and the concept of automigration. If these phenomena cannot be explained in human terms--and Krohn, Aarne, and others often neglected to do so--then, as Dundes says, the "folk" is taken out of "folklore." In such an approach, "it becomes almost irrelevant that folklore is communicated by human individuals to other human individuals."<sup>22</sup>

My most basic criticism of the historic-geographic school is closely related to Dundes' questioning of its reliance on superorganic constructs. Because its researchers were so exclusively interested in varieties of the archetype, they usually neglected the specific tale in its actual context. The role of imagination in the tale-telling situation, the social milieu of the tale-teller and his audience, particular modes of tale-telling and transmission, the use and function of the tale in the society in which it is told, and the meaning of the tale to those telling it and listening to it--all of these subjects have been largely ignored by historic-geographic students. In order to understand the actual life of a tale, ostensibly the most important goal of the Finnish method, these cultural phenomena must be investigated. They must be described as they exist in a specific situation and interpreted in relation to similar phenomena present in other specific tale-telling situations. If these related subjects are ignored, it cannot be said that the life history of a tale is fully or satisfactorily understood.

Because the historic-geographic method of folk narrative study is easy to criticize from our present vantage point in folklore scholarship, it is perhaps easy to forget its important contributions. The school introduced a careful and rigorous method for the study of folk traditions. It demonstrated that the study of a tradition must be cautious and as exhaustive as possible before any generalizations about its origin, development, and diffusion can be made. It pointed out that what was true of one tale was not necessarily true of another.<sup>23</sup> The historic-geographic scholar has used oral materials wherever possible, stressed

their importance, demanded that the genuinely traditional be separated from the adapted and the literary, and emphasized the importance of collecting activities in the field. And, in an impressive series of scholarly monographs, he and his colleagues have established the international distribution of many narrative types and thereby have disproven certain monistic interpretations of tales and myths.

These contributions are most significant. Historic-geographic studies are a necessary part of the whole of folklore research, but they by no means constitute its entirety.

## NOTES

1 Kaarle Krohn, Die Folkloristische Arbeitsmethode (Oslo: H. Aschehoug and Co., 1926).

2 Bertalan Korompay, "Impressions Gained as a Pupil of Kaarle Krohn," Studia Fennica, XI<sub>5</sub> (1963).

3 Jouko Hautala, "Kaarle Krohn as a Folklorist," Studia Fennica, XI<sub>3</sub> (1963). The following biographical data is based largely on Hautala's article, Irja-Leena Evijärvi's article, "Das Leben Kaarle Krohns," in the same Studia Fennica volume, and Stith Thompson's brief biography of Krohn in the Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, ed. Maria Leach (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1949-1950), I (1949), 382-383.

4 FF Communications 93 (1931).

5 Stith Thompson, in Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, I, 383.

6 Korompay, pp 9-10.

7 Rauni Puranen, "Kaarle Krohn Bibliography," Studia Fennica, XI<sub>6</sub> (1963).

8 Hautala, p. 72.

9 Laurits Bødker, Folk Literature (Germanic), International Dictionary of Regional European Ethnology and Folklore, Vol. II (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1965).

10 Ibid.

11 Hautala, p. 60.

12 Stith Thompson, The Folktale (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 439.

13 Ibid., p. 441.

14 Carl W. von Sydow, "Folk-tale Studies and Philology," Selected Papers on Folklore (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1948), pp. 203-204.

15 Ibid., p. 207.

16 Ibid., p. 205.

17 Carl W. von Sydow, "Geography and Folk-tale Oicotypes," Selected Papers on Folklore, pp. 44-45.



18 Holger Olof Nygard, The Ballad of Heer Halewijn. Its Forms and Variations in Western Europe. A Study of the History and Nature of a Ballad Tradition, FF Communications 169 (1958), p. 9.

19 Ibid., pp. 9-10.

20 Ibid., p. 10.

21 Laurits Bødker, p. 35.

22 Alan Dundes, The Study of Folklore (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 130.

23 Carl W. von Sydow, "Folk-tale Studies and Philology. Some Points of View," p. 201.

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