Contents

Foreword

This collection of articles offers an outline of the ways that folklore exists in Lithuania today—how different facets of tradition have developed, have been transformed, and have adapted in a society increasingly dependent on technologies and media. At the same time, this publication reflects the determination of today's Lithuanian folklore studies to consider their subject's and their discipline's limits and goals within a world that, over several decades, has fundamentally changed. When Lithuania, together with the other Central European countries, emerged from behind the ripped open Iron Curtain three decades ago, the first wave of euphoria at having regained freedom was soon replaced by the realisation that the country now found itself in a completely new environment—one in which it would have to play by different, unfamiliar rules. This was also the case for post-Soviet academic communities, especially those related to the humanities. On the one hand, once they had shaken off the constraints of the Soviet era, researchers saw new horizons open up before them; on the other hand, a good deal of their earlier work began to seem irrelevant, dated, and not useful. But folklore studies in Lithuania, as in most of the European countries whose national ideologies were shaped in the late nineteenth century and under the sway of Romanticism, have deep and significant roots. The creators of the modern Lithuanian state—including the "nation's patriarch" Jonas Basanavičius—paid great attention to vernacular culture, national traditions, folklore, language, and so on, because they believed these things to be the very basis of the nation's identity and the key to its survival.[1] When history's spiral made one more turn with the Soviet

1 Regarding Jonas Basanavičius's folkloric activities, see, for example, Leonardas Sauka, *Lietuvių tautosakos mokslas XX amžiuje* (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2016), 11–46. For the *Jonas Basanavičius Folklore Library,* see www.knygadvaris.lt.

occupation, Lithuanian folklore and folklore studies continued to be important in a similar way: for many, the folkloric movement and attention to national folk traditions became a counterbalance to the ideologised Soviet culture imposed by the occupiers and the ideology of "friendship between nations," which thinly veiled an aggressive policy of national oppresion. During this period, the folkloric movement both directly and figuratively laid the foundation for the "singing revolutions" in Lithuania and the other Baltic countries and the subsequent restoration of their independence.[2] But because newly independent Lithuanian society and state faced different challenges—globalisation, building European identity, developing a free market, and so forth—folklore that had grown out of Lithuanian agrarian culture suddenly lost its former function of promoting national identity. Folklore researchers now felt that they had neither an appropriate, relevant subject nor the methodological tools for studying it.[3] There was also (and continues to be!) considerable pressure from society to stop "worshipping clogs and ploughs" and to begin speaking in modern language about relevant, contemporary matters. After 1990, all of this resulted in a deep and fundamental crisis in the discipline, one that lasted more than a decade. It took considerable intellectual effort and a turning toward the experiences of foreign colleagues to begin to dig ourselves out of the ditch, to gradually give up the Romantic view of folklore, to redefine folklore as an aspect of a universal, but continually shifting culture, and to grasp the importance of studying it and its place in the modern world.

One of the conceptual, basic steps in this process was a 2010–2012 project conducted by a group of about twenty Lithuanian scholars from different disciplines, "*Homo Narrans*: Studies of Folk Memory," the main product of which was a substantial collective monograph containing articles by seventeen authors.[4] Through lively discussions and brainstorming, the project's participants succeeded in establishing several key guidelines to enable the further development of Lithuanian folklore studies. The first step was to rethink the subject of folklore studies—equally from conceptual, methodological, and practical standpoints. If in the past we walked around

2 See, for example, Guntis Šmidchens, *The Power of Song: Nonviolent National Culture in the Baltic Singing Revolution* (Seattle, WA, and London: University of Washington Press, 2014).

3 For more of this see Lina Būgienė, "Objekto problema šiandienos tautosakos moksle ir naratyvų analizės perspektyvos," *Tautosakos darbai* 35 (2008): 38–51.

4 *Homo narrans: Folklorinė atmintis iš arti,* ed. Bronė Stundžienė (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2012).

villages looking for "good" folk singers or storytellers from whom we might record yet one version of a story, song, or riddle that was already in the archives, Lithuanian folklorists now began to focus their research on narrative itself. The narrative could be provided by any kind of person or shaped within a community from different individual narratives, memories, or their fragments. We concentrated on the ways that an individual's life story reflects their folkloric or cultural identity, and how society's or an individual's actions or views are influenced by cultural attitudes or stereotypes that are deeply rooted in the collective consciousness. In addition, folklore's survival and reach began to be understood as much wider and more varied—consisting not only of traditional things preserved by a community and passed on through direct interaction, but now also including the entire field of continuously reproduced and changing contemporary media, internet, and social media phenomena.

Obviously, it could be said that the Lithuanian folklore research, as Western humanities in general, experienced the so-called "narrative turn." Although narrating and narratives have always been at the heart of the study of folklore, "the folkloristic hierarchies of the past have been turned around, so that 'I'- and 'me'-centered narrating has become the norm or orthodoxy at least in the western world, both in everyday practices and in scholarly research."[5] In folklore studies, this development is of course related to performance analysis, the essential notions of which became familiar to the Lithuanian folklorists already some time ago,[6] but the shift also embraces increased proximity to the oral history research (*sakytinė istorija* in Lithuanian), particularly favored in Lithuania as the method for investigating the Soviet period,[7] and memory studies, which are especially relevant to folklore researchers. The Lithuanian folklorists participating in the above-mentioned *Homo narrans* project even made purposeful attempts at defining the concept of folkloric memory (*folklorinė atmintis* in Lithuanian). In foregrounding the contents of this concept, the notion of

5 Barbro Klein, "Introduction. Telling, Doing, Experiencing. Folkloristic Perspectives on Narrative Analysis," in *Narrating, Doing, Experiencing. Nordic Folkloristic Perspectives*, ed. Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj et al. (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2006), 7.

6 See Bronė Stundžienė, "Šiuolaikinė lietuvių folkloristika ir jos metodologiniai horizontai," in *Homo narrans: Folklorinė atmintis iš arti,* ed. Bronė Stundžienė (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2012), 18.

7 See a concise guide for both researchers and practicioners of this method, *Sakytinė istorija kaip sovietmečio tyrimo metodas*, ed. I. Vinogradnaitė et al. (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2018).

lieux de mémoire by the French historian Pierre Nora, works by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, particularly his monograph *On Collective Memory*, and theory of cultural and communicative memory developed by Jan Assmann were employed. Besides, according to the unquestioned knowledge maintained by the former strategies of traditional folklore studies, folklore is born and acts as memory of tradition.

> Therefore, if we agree that the communicative memory of a certain group of people addressed today still refers to some kind of folkloric manifestations, we have to acknowledge that these often reach to a much deeper kind of cultural memory, including reflections of folk culture, which justify current formation of a much needed tool for researching traditional culture—the concept of folkloric memory.[8]

This category is proposed not as some denomination of inactive memory bank; to the contrary, it manifests an actively working system and an intensely used arsenal, repeatedly intervening in the contemporary reality.[9] Such approach considerably broadens the general understanding of the subject of folklore studies, and allows viewing it as a diverse multilayered narrative encompassing not only the traditional verbal, oral forms, but also various visual, musical, written, and even material expressions of folk creativity. Folklore, therefore, is increasingly perceived and approached as a new cultural text.[10]

At the same time, folklore researchers stopped preserving their discipline's "purity": they found themselves integrated into a wide and diverse field of contemporary anthropological studies and began to actively look toward other branches of scholarship including history, literature, sociology, psychology, even medicine and law, and to draw on their experience while at the same time enriching them with their own new discoveries.[11] It should be noted that some of the insights folklorists have achieved approach the level of philosophical reflection and reveal cultural

8 Stundžienė, "Šiuolaikinė lietuvių folkloristika ir jos metodologiniai horizontai," 36.

9 Ibid.

10 This notion was introduced already in 2008, see Bronė Stundžienė, "Folkloras kaip naujas kultūrinis tekstas," *Tautosakos darbai* 35 (2008): 25–37.

11 Barbro Klein notes similar developments taking place in Nordic folklore research, and subsequently concludes: "The folkloristic expertise in studying oral narrating and oral narratives is a resource to the other human and social sciences—more than folklorists seem to realize." See her "Introduction," 22.

depths and influences that could be interesting in terms of efforts to grasp human communication and societal development in general.[12]

One example of such discoveries is Aelita Kensminienė's research, which is presented in the opening article of this collection. While the author is a researcher of riddles,[13] her attempt to determine the status of this especially archaic genre in our times led her both to disappointment and to much broader conclusions of a scope beyond questions limited to this genre. In 2011, while conducting very typical fieldwork and wandering through the areas surrounding the small Western Lithuanian town of Rietavas, Kensminienė was forced to note that riddles have basically disappeared from contemporary usage—the tradition of riddling has practically died out and it is only rarely that a very elderly person is able to remember one. It was one such individual, an old grey-haired woman who was the only person who could tell several riddles, that most interested the researcher. This inevitably begged the question: why this woman still remembered riddles and other pieces of traditional folklore when other individuals, even of the same generation or analogous experience, did not? What made this informant remarkable—what traits related to her understanding and communication determined such abilities? Comparing this woman with another distinct female informant from the same area, Kensminienė noticed that the two women not only had very different styles of narration, but also ways of understanding the world. The first informant appeared to be more the *homo audiens* type—she had a primarily auditory understanding of her environment (this was clearly evident from her speech, dominated by words that express sounds, talking, and so forth). She was also better at remembering and conveying texts belonging to oral folklore. On the other hand, in the case of *homo videns*, that is, someone who has a predominantly visual understanding, traditional oral folkloric genres emerge only as fragments and motifs, even when such an individual has the ability to use and incorporate them into new texts. It should be noted that the informant who could remember traditional texts and had a more auditory understanding of her environment was semi-literate, while the

12 For more on these processes see Lina Būgienė, "Lithuanian Folkloristics during the Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods: Changes and Challenges," in *Mapping the History of Folklore Studies: Centers, Borderlands and Shared Spaces*, ed. Dace Bula and Sandis Laime (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 29–42.

13 She recently published an extensive collection of Lithuanian riddles; see *Lietuvių mįslės. Rinktinė, ed.* Aelita Kensminienė (Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2018).

woman with a visual understanding of her environment, who had almost completely forgotten traditional texts, was literate. The author draws the conclusion that the proportion of people who have predominantly visual understanding is apparently increasing; perhaps this is why traditional folkloric texts, which are passed on orally, are less and less remembered, while new visual forms of folklore emerge. This situation is likely the result of the democratisation of writing and literacy, as well as emergence of cinema and television, and, more recently, the spread of modern media in which things are increasingly, and more effectively, communicated through images.

The influence of deep historical experience and traditional folk culture on the contemporary individual's understanding, attitudes, values, behaviour, and general stance is analysed in the three other articles that make up this collection's first chapter, titled "History and Tradition in a Changing World." These articles reflect upon the consequences of the multifaceted historical traumas that Lithuanian and other Central European societies experienced in the mid-twentieth century and then in the fifty years following the war, when they were forcibly erased from the political map and had to endure Soviet occupation, terror, deportations, national oppression, forced collectivization, industrialization, and land reclamation, and other social experiments that left deep scars as much on their landscapes as on their social organization and spiritual culture.

In her article, Radvilė Racėnaitė focuses on one aspect of this painful collective and individual experience—how transformations of the visible landscape fundamentally affected a people who were intimately connected to the land, and how these experiences are revealed in recollections. This author also bases her analysis on a comparison of memoir-like texts produced by two well-known folklore informants and by two highly educated literary figures. Examining these individuals' reflections upon nature's beauty, their intimacy with it, and its impact on their physical and spiritual lives, she notices that the transformation of the visible landscape into a mental one in memoir texts is related to the axiology of the environment. On the mental plane, this kind of evaluative attitude emerges from an aesthetic relationship of enjoyment and appreciation of the world one lives in. The axiology can be based on practical factors, as when that which is useful is seen as beautiful. This kind of perception of the visible world is naturally related to pragmatic rural attitudes. In other cases, assessment of the natural environment is related to idealization of the landscape. Such aesthetic perception may

simply be a given for a more sensitive, poetic person who already knows how to discern beauty. But for a deeper aesthetic relationship to the visible world to develop, some greater mental distance, in terms of both space and time, is necessary. In memoir texts, such distance is often related to situations of loss, when everyday routine is destroyed by historical breaking points or dramatic changes in an individual's personal life. Mental distance marked by this kind of existential loss can produce an aestheticization of landscape that is characterized by the highest level of poetry and the idealization of places known in the past. At the same time, it is this distance that has resulted in a shift from folklore as a collective creative practice to more individual egodocumentary forms (autobiographical narrative, life story, memoir) conveying personal experiences.

Recollections are also the focus of Daiva Vaitkevičienė's article—both memories of the violent repressions implemented by the Soviet regime in the mid-twentieth century (the 1941–1953 deportations took approximately 28,000 lives) and accounts of more recent efforts by relatives of deportees, who, from the late 1980s, took advantage of the political thaw to bring back their loved ones' remains from Siberia and the experiences related to that mass effort. This author offers a thorough presentation of the unique and extensive memoir-like material she has collected, which includes narratives, letters, photographs, newspaper articles, and literary reflections on these events. Demonstrating the mass nature of this dramatic "pilgrimage" process and the great challenges faced by those who travelled to recover and repatriate remains (deportee graves were scattered across a vast territory of the Soviet Union, from Komi to Tajikistan, from Yakutia to Irkutsk; the journey required intense physical and psychological efforts, as expedition members had to locate remains on their own and often dig them up with their own hands), this author tries to understand what motivated these people to travel to Siberia and what their accounts tell us about their relationships to the dead. The main goals of this research were to reveal how a burial site in a person's native land differs from a grave in Siberia, and to explore what kinds of burial rituals were conducted for the repatriated remains of deportees. The article stresses that although narratives about the repatriation of deportee remains from Siberia and their reburial in Lithuania recount fairly recent historical events, they also bear witness to an ancient tradition of burying the dead on their own land, in their birthplace, or at least somewhere in their homeland. For more than four decades, Soviet occupation and the restriction of deportee rights prevented

relatives of deportees from fulfilling that duty—a duty to the dead that was fulfilled as soon as political conditions made it possible. The narratives of individuals who performed these duties reveal that their determination and perseverance were inspired by clear and unquestionable motivations: the living must bury the dead in an appropriate place and following the necessary rituals, in this way returning them to the homeland and laying their path to the land of the dead. Thus, narratives about the repatriation and burial of remains also constitute a verbal form of ritual: they allow the narrators to make sense of the duties they have performed, and inform listeners (beginning with relations who participate in the funerals) that the burial ritual has been carried out. At the same time, this bears witness to the particularly deep and innate connection that exists in Lithuanian culture between the living and the dead, manifested as the unquestioned necessity of performing certain actions dictated by tradition, and the attitude that failing to do so is tantamount to disturbing the fundamental order of the world.

Dramatic historical experience—as revealed on the individual level, through life stories, recollections, and reflections upon historical events—is also the research subject explored in Lina Būgienė's article. In this case, the focus is on the situation that developed in a small borderland corner of southeastern Lithuania—the Valkininkai region—in the mid-twentieth century, during and after the Second World War. Tangled ethnic and linguistic relationships, four changes of government over two years (1939–1941), long-term constraints upon developing national identities, and the complex circumstances of the wartime and postwar years—these are but some of the themes that have painfully affected the lives and fates of this area's inhabitants. The article reveals how the region's history dramatically disrupts each individual's personal history, and how each individual has his or her own way of experiencing, surviving, reflecting upon, and relating that history. An absolute and inevitable component of such historical reflection—and perhaps its most fundamental characteristic—is subjectivity: through their narratives, the narrating individuals sometimes reveal themselves even more distinctly and more impressively than they do the events they are describing. Although employing the methods developed for the oral history research, the author adopts the folkloristic point of view rather than the historical one—she focuses completely on the subjective interpretation and meaning of the collected memoirs, entirely abandoning any attempts at their verification or quest for an "objective truth." It

is precisely those multifarious interpretations of the same conflictual situations—the focus on completely different moments and views, adopted by various narrators—that help the listener (and researcher) clearly grasp that historical experience is never uniform, just as there is not and can never be one truth. Nevertheless, and perhaps paradoxically, these individual subjective narratives to a considerable extent reveal the major issues that are relevant even to national and global discourse, thus allowing for better understanding of large-scale processes at the grassroots level. Moreover, Būgienė's research makes it clear that bitterness about and residue from past grievances and allegedly experienced injustices tend to shape people's current attitudes and cultural practices (for example, current attitudes toward the Lithuanian–Polish question), which, in turn, can impact future social and cultural development.

This book's second chapter, titled "Traditional Folklore and Modernity," comprises articles focusing on the development of traditional folklore, the transformations that its various genres have undergone, and the new folkloric forms or adaptations that are emerging in contemporary, modern society.

Folktale researcher Jūratė Šlekonytė's article considers how and to what degree the long development of the folktale—one of the most "classical" and familiar of the folkloric genres—is determined by the individual storyteller's personality, temperament, worldview, and creativity, and how all of this is reflected in their story's text. Offering examples of interesting individual folktale adaptations that have been recorded in the course of recent folkloric fieldwork research, the author strives to elucidate what kinds of meaning the folktale adopts against a modern background, in particular whenever the researcher is able to observe a situation and interpret it from a contemporary folkloristic perspective. Particular scrutiny is applied to cases in which personal and collective aspects of the narrative seem to merge, and the traditional tale incorporates lots of personal details and interpretations that as a rule are quite rare, presenting evidence of individual narrative creativity.

The next article is devoted to the archaic and very popular oral genre of the proverb. Paremiologist Dalia Zaikauskienė surveys both the tradition of the proverb and its contemporary usage. She notes that we can be sure that the proverb genre has survived the challenges of modern communication, has spread into new uncharacteristic spheres, is taking on new forms, and is continuously evolving. The goal of her article is to present contemporary

Lithuanian proverb usage within an international context to highlight both the cosmopolitan aspects and national singularities of that usage. In order to do this, Zaikauskienė reviews how contemporary Lithuanian proverbs are used and how they can be applied in the public sphere; she presents what kinds of proverbial expressions are used by the contemporary Lithuanian-speaking community and how they are modified to achieve linguistic and paralinguistic goals; finally, she attempts to draw conclusions about the intentions behind the use of proverbs in contemporary communication. The article offers extensive examples of modern proverb usage from the news media, the internet, social media, and so forth, as well as proverb translations, adaptations, reworkings, and modifications. According to the author, recent decades have seen a revival in proverb usage, more attention to proverbs, and even a trend in using and manipulating them. On the one hand, the existence, use, and application of proverbs in contemporary communication is clearly a continuation of an ancient oral tradition. It indicates the survival of a habitual model of conversation; the continued use of traditional proverbs; essentially unaltered usage intentions; the contemporary person's ability to use proverbs; and the deep proverbial principles to which new "non-folkloric" sayings must submit. On the other hand, we can see and recognize changes in terms of the proverb fund, expression, functions, and usage objectives, and how broadly, inventively, and creatively proverbs are applied for concrete pragmatic and artistic purposes in many areas in which they are not traditionally used. In contemporary Lithuanian proverb usage the relationship between tradition and modernity unfurls in complex and varied ways: traditionally used sayings help one to feel like a part of a certain community, while the breaking of tradition allows for the expression of individuality. Indeed, in modern communication contexts the use of something traditional can even be a sign of originality and individuality.

The author of the following article, Salomėja Bandoriūtė, concentrates on the traditional folk genre of the joke—its development and the distinct features of its contemporary manifestations. Examining archival examples of traditional jokes and anecdotes that have been recorded since the late nineteenth century, as well as examples of Soviet-era humor (both officially sanctioned by the state and directed against it), and, finally, contemporary jokes (which are published on a mass scale online), the author attempts to draw out the cultural characteristics of the joking Lithuanian across different historical periods. She notes that humor is the best example of the

social phenomenon of folklore: it adapts to everyday life, helps identify the stereotypes that dominate in a given society, and expresses opinions about different events and people. Humor is here and now, and it evolves along with its users—from oral transmission to internet joke sites, from radio programs to television, from leaflets handed out on the street to social networks on the Web. On the other hand, analysis of Lithuanian jokes dating from different periods reveals that there are three groups that are most popular as targets: women, foreigners, and people of higher social status. Concrete manifestations of these targets naturally shift across historical periods, depending upon specific political, social, or cultural situations; the persistence of certain themes over more than a century reveals a tendency to laugh at jokes that are based on stereotypical views about certain social groups. Targets of mockery help to generate a feeling of connection: jokes become a connecting thread between people who joke and laugh in the same way. It can also be argued that joking is a certain form of bullying that arises when people see things from the perspective of the *we—they* opposition.

The last article in this collection analyses an instance of folkloric culture that is especially modern, both in terms of its object, expression, and means of dissemination. The article's author, Povilas Krikščiūnas, draws our attention to the most popular sport in Lithuania, basketball, which is often referred to as "Lithuanians' second religion" in popular discourse. International and major national basketball events attract large crowds of fans to sports arenas and television sets; they express their passion and emotion not only during the matches, but also before and after them. The internet—where it is possible to combine textual, graphic, and video elements—is perfectly suited to this and has therefore enabled fans to develop new forms of expression and self-expression. The article examines folkloric (or closely associated) elements related to basketball and basketball fans from Lithuanian internet sources. Krikščiūnas seeks to determine what kinds of texts, images, or combinations thereof are most popular, and understand their sources and connections to real events and people. Presenting a large number of examples of fan culture, he demonstrates that they are marked by distinct folkloric traits: the use of certain plots and motifs, their development and variation, and so on. As in the earlier discussion of jokes, here we can clearly see stereotypes, the *we—they* opposition, as well as a certain sublimation of aggression. It is therefore safe to say that internet sports fan creations constitute a new

form of folkloric expression that bears witness to the vitality of folkloric traditions and their capacity for adjusting to new times and contexts.

Although this publication cannot, naturally, encompass all newly emerging folkloric forms and cultural manifestations in today's Lithuania, we hope that it will at least allow readers to form an impression about the development of contemporary Lithuanian folklore, as well as certain facets of culture and society in general. Separate articles offer possible answers to certain problematic questions related to today's world, such as: what are the causes behind the disappearance of traditional oral folkloric genres? Why do Lithuanians stereotypically see themselves as having an especially strong connection to their native land a unique relationship to nature? What innate cultural attitudes inspired the mass repatriation of deportee remains from Siberia, even when the obstacles and difficulties involved were almost insurmountable? What are the roots of some Lithuanians' prejudices against Poles, attitudes that can still be felt today? Finally, how and in what forms does folklore manifest and transform itself in Lithuania today? This book is also the first collective scholarly publication in English to present the state of academic folklore studies in post-Soviet Lithuania to an international readership.

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Part One

History and Tradition in a Changing World

Chapter 1

Predominant Modes of Perception and Folk Narrative

Aelita Kensminienė

Introduction

This article was inspired by fieldwork I conducted with a colleague several years ago—a 2011 expedition to the municipality of Rietavas, in the Žemaitija region of Lithuania. Because I am a researcher of riddles and know that it is quite difficult to document them (they often need to be dragged out of people), I began my research by investigating which riddles from this region had already been recorded. This region's riddles have been collected for a long time—more than 150 years. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the publisher of the first Lithuanian calendars, Laurynas Ivinskis, lived in Rietavas.[1] Ivinskis's calendars often contained a considerable amount of folklore, so I anticipated that his collections, which contain riddles, would likely include a good number of such texts recorded in Rietavas and the areas surrounding it.[2] As I perused the collections it became clear that the majority of the riddles he used came from printed sources, as he used a careful system of abbreviations in rewriting them. For example, in Ivinskis's largest collection of riddles, out of 340 riddles only 43 are transcribed without abbreviation, indicating that the majority were rewritten from other authors.[3] Some of these riddles, or variations on them, were recorded from sources in the Rietavas area in later years, so they were

1 Stasys Stropus, *Rietavo kraštas (1253–2003)* (Vilnius: Mokslo aidai, 2003), 99–105.
2 LMD I 227, LMD I 671, LMD I 710, LMD I 921.
3 LMD I 710.

likely collected by Ivinskis himself. In addition to these, another 150 or so riddles were recorded.

The material collected during the fieldwork trip led me in a completely different direction. It did not especially surprise me (I did not expect to record a great number of riddles), but it left me somewhat saddened: only one informant was able to remember a total of four riddles, while other interviewees could only say that, while they remembered knowing riddles and enjoying them in childhood, they simply could not remember any. The results of this trip once more confirmed what many folklorists have stated verbally and on paper about the almost complete extinction of old folklore forms and genres, and the need to begin looking at folklore itself in a new way:

> As we look, out of habit, at its (sometimes remarkably well-preserved) remnants, we repeatedly arrive at the same conclusion: our folklore is irreversibly dwindling and changing. Although the changes and modifications it is undergoing provide new opportunities for research, the new cultural situation we find ourselves in calls for more effective scholarly approaches.[4]

As the number of classic folkloristic texts written today dwindles, the previously existing context in turn becomes a new "text": folklore studies are increasingly turning their attention to informants and their narrations about themselves and their lives. Phenomena that we previously so easily ascribed to various narratives we now must try to identify more precisely: life stories,[5] personal experience narratives,[6] utterances,[7] and so on. Of course, this is not a recent phenomenon—according to Finnish folklorist Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj, as early as 1932 the Swedish researcher Carl Wilhelm von Sydow argued that it is difficult to grasp the nature of folklore, or its development and spread, without paying attention to the so-called folklore bearers; beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, folklore studies have increasingly turned their attention to the general performance situation,

4 Bronė Stundžienė, "Folkloras kaip naujas kultūrinis tekstas," *Tautosakos darbai* 35 (2008): 34.

5 Vilma Daugirdaitė, "Folklorinės patirties apraiškos gyvenimo pasakojimuose," *Tautosakos darbai* 32 (2006).

6 Lina Būgienė, "Objekto problema šiandienos tautosakos moksle ir naratyvų analizės perspektyvos," *Tautosakos darbai* 35 (2008).

7 Stundžienė, "Folkloras kaip naujas kultūrinis tekstas."