

ARV

Nordic Yearbook of Folklore

Vol. 78 – 2022



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Vol. 78

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Published by

THE ROYAL GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS ACADEMY
UPPSALA, SWEDEN

Distributed by

eddy.se ab
VISBY, SWEDEN

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ISSN 0066-8176

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Articles appearing in this yearbook are abstracted and indexed in
European Reference Index
for the Humanities and Social Sciences ERIH PLUS 2011–

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<http://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/forskning/publikasjoner/tidsskrifter/arv/index.html>

Cover: Kirsten Berrum

For earlier volumes, see

<http://kgaa.bookorder.se/SV-SE/serie/140/arv>

Distributor

eddy.se ab

e-mail: order@bokorder.se

Box 1310, S-621 24 Visby

Telefon +46(0)498 25 39 00

Printed in Sweden

Exakta Print, Malmö 2022

“The Money Chest Lay by His Head”

The Narration of a Ghost Story from Troms

Randi Hege Skjelmo & Liv Helene Willumsen

Abstract

This article deals with two versions of a ghost story from Skittenelv in Troms, written down around 1700. Located at the farm of the magistrate Søren Bogø, a ghost apparently was heard disturbing the people at the farm. The earlier version of the story is down-written in 1695 by the magistrate Søren Bogø and was published in transcribed form by Håvard Dahl Bratrein in 2016. The later version is down-written in 1716 by Isaac Olsen and is part of his copybook, which is preserved in the original form. By using narratology as a methodological approach, the article offers an interpretation of the ghost story with emphasis of the function of the narrator. Also, attention is paid to changes in the story's content occurring during a time span of 20 years. Contextualization of the ghost story is paid attention to.

Keywords: Ghost story, 18th century, Northern Norway, Isaac Olsen, Scribe Søren Bogø, Bailiff Henrik Riber

Introduction

This article is about a ghost story from around 1700, which exists in two original versions. The earlier version was put down in writing by Søren Pedersen Bogø, a magistrate, in 1695, and published by Håvard Dahl Bratrein in 2016 (Bratrein 2016, 426–434).¹ The more recent of the two versions was recorded in Isaac Olsen's copybook in 1716,² and has never been published. The existence of two different written versions is a unique coincidence since this relates to the early days of written records in Norway. Having two original sources means we can compare two documents from around 1700. This in turn enables an analysis using a narratological approach based on close reading of the two versions, an interpretation of people's conceptualizations of supernatural phenomena in Troms (a former Norwegian county), and a reflection on further contextualization. The article's textual analysis is broadened to include local factual history as well as the wider historical perspectives on mentalities.



Figure 1. Map of Troms and Finnmark with Tromsø, Skitteneelv and Karlsøy marked. Made by Johannes and Tomas Willumsen Vassdal.

A ghost story is an oral or written text about a ghost. The conceptualization of “the haunted” is linked to the ghost, and the supernatural elements relate to places, objects or individuals, as in legends (Schweitzer 2005:338–340).³ Legends can be categorized as historical legends, origin legends, supranormal or mythical legends; the latter referring to “gnome-type creatures that live underground (*underjordiske*), the water spirit (*nøkken*), the revenants of the sea (*draugen*), gnomes (*nisser*) and all the other creatures who invisibly surround humans, but who only make themselves known in special situations” (Hauan & Skjelbred 1995:11).⁴ Revenge is a clear motive in these stories. The protagonists are given the opportunity to express themselves through dialogue, and the context is recognisable. The content is characterized by mysterious, spooky events.

Both versions of the story have narrative structures, which enables an analysis of how the story is told and a discussion of elements of the content. Changes in the narrator’s position from the earlier version to the later version throw up interesting perspectives in terms of interpretation. Contextualization through factual historical information is essential given that the texts are sourced from historical documents.

About the Two Versions

Søren Pedersen Bogø was a magistrate from 1690 to 1707. He lived in the rural Norwegian village of Skitteneelv, north of Tromsøya, an island in the municipality of Tromsø. The earlier version of the ghost story was authenticated by the magistrate’s son, Antoni Willhelm, whereupon it was sent to the Bishop of Nidaros, Peder Krog. This source is one of the ecclesiastical history documents that were collected by Johan Ernst Gunnerus.⁵ Antoni took over the farm from his father in 1707, but was never a magistrate (Hasselberg & Dahl 1999:53–54). Why this document has ended up in a church archive as opposed to a secular one – like that of the magistrate or

the bailiff – is an interesting question. Krog was bishop from 1689 to 1731. He made a number of official visits to the north of the country during which he may have met the magistrate who then recounted the ghost story to him. Storytelling was a common form of entertainment at the farms of high-ranking officials. It is also possible that Bogø met the bishop in Trondheim. Krog may have heard about the ghost story and wanted to obtain a written copy.

The later version of the ghost story is written in ink by Isaac Olsen in his copybook. Olsen was probably from Trøndelag, born around 1680. After dropping out of the cathedral school in Trondheim, he worked as a teacher and catechist in Finnmark from just after 1700 until 1716. Olsen got to know the Sámi population and learned to speak the Sámi language shortly after his arrival in Finnmark. He met the missionary Thomas von Westen during the latter’s first missionary journey north, and accompanied him back to Trondheim, where he became a teacher and translator at von Westen’s mission seminars. The ghost story from Skittenelv is dated “*Thromsen ind Augusto 1716*”.

Isaac Olsen’s copybook is a compilation of different types of texts from the period 1703–1717, all of which are linked to the originator of the book. The term “copybook” is most commonly used in archival contexts to refer

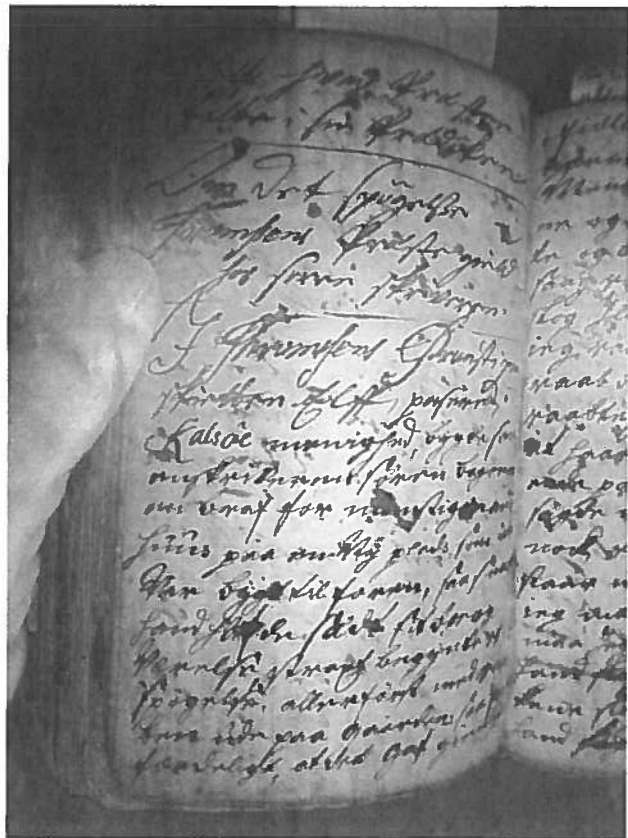


Figure 2. The beginning of the ghost story written by Isaac Olsen in his copy-book. Photo Liv Helene Willumsen.

to a collection of copies of outgoing correspondence. Copybooks as a genre were intended to document public office activities; they became part of society's archival memory and were a key element in the desire to form a well-documented bureaucracy in the eighteenth century. However, Isaac Olsen's copybook is something different. First, he himself has selected the texts for inclusion. Secondly, Olsen's copybook includes a wide range of genres, not just letters. Thirdly, the texts all have a personal connection to Olsen.

The content of the copybook is varied, and includes texts used in teaching – Olsen was an itinerant teacher and catechist. In addition, Isaac Olsen is the first person in history to record Sámi place names connected to ethnic religious practices, such as Sámi sacrificial sites and sacred places. These records form the basis for all subsequent research related to the Sámi ethnic religion in northern Norway. The copybook also consists of official documents related to Olsen's work, including a letter of appointment from Bishop Krog in 1708. The very first translation of a Danish hymn into Sámi is also included, as well as documents relating to popular culture; "letters from heaven", moral tales, riddles, calendars and recipes for natural stimulants. The ghost story is also included here.



Figure 3. The end of the ghost story written by Isaac Olsen in his copybook. Photo Liv Helene Willumsen.

The Earlier Version

The earlier version of the ghost story is a detailed account of events that took place in October and November 1695 at the magistrate's farm in Skittenelv. The plot revolves around the activities of a ghost over a number of days. The ice has destroyed a dam and the farmhands are dispatched to repair it. Two days later, in the evening, they hear noises coming from outside. It starts on 18 October with a tapping sound and escalates to banging on the wall in the farmhands' living quarters. One of the farmhands, Rasmus Jonssen, goes to fetch the magistrate, who had retired for the evening. The magistrate goes with Rasmus to the farmhands' quarters, where he tries in vain to engage the ghost in conversation. In the hope of making the ghost stop banging on the wall, they sing the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God". They go outside to look for the ghost, but don't find anything. The magistrate goes back inside, invokes God and urges the farmhands not to be afraid, as the ghost does not have the power to harm them. The next day, 19 October, the banging is so loud that it drowns out the voices of 11 worshippers singing their praises to God. So the magistrate takes his rifle, loads it with bullets and pellets before handing it to Rasmus. The farmhand fires a hole in the wall, exactly where the banging emanated from. When they hear further banging below the bullet hole, he fires into it in the hope of scaring off or hitting the ghost. A loud boom is heard from outside the wall, like a galloping horse setting off with its legs attached to two or three timbers. The ghost is only heard a few more times that evening before going on his way. The next evening, 20 October, banging and scratching can be heard on the wall of the farmhands' quarters at 9 o'clock. Noises are heard almost daily, always at the same time – 9 o'clock. This continues until 2 November. Then follow two days of silence, but on 5 November at the usual time, banging, whinnying and bellowing can be heard. The farmhands are terrified and go down to the kitchen. All this takes place while magistrate Bogø is on the island of Karlsøy to register the estate of the deceased bailiff, Henrik Riber. Before he left, Bogø had asked his wife if the farmhands could sleep in the loft room by the parlour. This was agreed, but the ghost immediately started banging on the wall there too. The next day, the farmhands were asked to move back to their own quarters. The ghost then stops its banging in the parlour, but continues where the farmhands are, every night until 10 November. On the last night, the ghost continues right through until the morning. In the hope of making the ghost disappear, a farmhand named Peder sings the Danish hymn "*Den signede dag som vi nu ser*", which makes mention of the Holy Cross. The ghost then screams three times before disappearing.

On 11 November, the magistrate returns from Karlsøy. That same night, the ghostly banging and voices start up again. Just after midnight, the ghost lets out five terrifying screams, and is not heard again that night. The

next day, the farmhand Søren says that the ghost will not be back until 13 November. He knows this because the ghost told him so in a dream. It also told him that they have “hacked one of his animals to death” (Bratrein 2016:430). This apparently took place when they were up by the dam digging the ground. They had also ripped the entire roof off his house. He therefore sent his farmhand to make a racket as revenge for the damage they had caused. His own farmhand was apparently shot at from the farmhands’ quarters, something the ghost had a hard time believing. He therefore wanted to investigate for himself. The ghost is then asked if his farmhand was afraid when the shot was fired, which he answers in the affirmative. Then the ghost is asked if he is now afraid of gunshots. The answer is no, he would know how to take the right precautions. The farmhands ask the ghost how often he plans to return. He says he will come back once more and then cause no more trouble. Søren thinks that the ghost looks like a middle-aged man dressed in a black linen kirtle,⁶ black linen trousers and a black hat. After this apparition and conversation, the ghost disappears.

On 15 November, following holy worship in the farmhands’ quarters, Christen Jørgensen, the magistrate’s deputy, remains there. He wants to “sense” whether the ghost plans to return as indicated by Søren. Jørgensen is knowledgeable and speaks several languages. He sits smoking a tobacco pipe, while the farmhands lie on the bed smoking. They have extinguished the light, because they know that the ghost will not appear if it continues to burn. A faint tapping noise is then heard, and it sounds like the ghost is also smoking tobacco. When the farmhands spit, the ghost does likewise. At the same moment, it starts howling and making animal sounds. The dogs start barking and try to locate the ghost. Just as the dogs seem to have worked themselves into a frenzy, the ghost stops. When Christen Jørgensen then hears that the ghost is talking, he asks it what is wrong, if there is something that it regrets or if someone has gotten too close. The ghost repeats Christen’s words. In the hope of making it disappear, Christen tells the ghost that God has banished it to hell and that it has no business interfering with God’s children. “You’re wrong, you’re wrong” is the response. Christen then starts reading the Lord’s Prayer in Danish, Latin and German, which the ghost repeats word for word. When he is finished, Christen scolds the ghost, only to be subjected to the same reprimand in return. Christen continues to question the ghost about various things, including Christen’s family. It stops mimicking him and answers all his questions, indicating that it knows Christen is married, that his wife is in Copenhagen and that he has four children.

Christen Jørgensen introduces a new topic; the bailiff Henrik Riber, who drowned in a shipwreck during an official trip off the coast of Karlsøy. When asked if the bailiff had drifted ashore, the ghost answers that he lies in the fjord. It does not mention either God or the Devil, but when the subject

of the bailiff comes up, it raises the ghost's hackles. Christen then asks if any of Riber's possessions have been found. The ghost informs him that the boat has been found across the fjord. When asked if the boat is intact, the ghost responds, "No, it came asunder." (Bratrein 2016:432) Christen enquires as to whether they have found anything else, and is told that three bottles of spirits, half a barrel of malt and two bottles of beer⁷ have been found, but that "the butter still drifts on the sea". (Bratrein 2016:432)

The farmhands take over the questioning. They ask if the ghost gets angry when they are praying for God's mercy. The answer is no, they are free to worship and get along with one another, whatever their status, and they should never lie, never steal, and never feed their cattle too late at night. Then the farmhands ask if any of the ghost's people have been out fishing on this day. The ghost answers in the affirmative, whereupon he is asked if they have caught any fish. They have. The farmhands say they did not catch anything, and the ghost laughs. The farmhands prompt the ghost to tell them where there are good fishing spots. The ghost tells them that they row to the same place as his people. "Do you have many farmhands rowing?" Eight, and two boats, comes the response. The farmhands then ask if the ghost lives there. The ghost says he does, and that his father had also lived there. The next questions relate to whose boat the ghost uses to send his fish to market, to which he responds "I had two men aboard Hans Morttens's boat the last time he set out, who lay starboard." When asked how many children he has, he says four. The ghost is then asked if he is responsible for the noises at the boathouse. "Yes, what of it?", comes the response.⁸ The farmhands then ask if he wants them to organize a boat for him, if he wants to ship fish to Bergen the next time they head south and if he plans to sail with Hans Mortensen. The ghost responds in the affirmative to all of these questions. The farmhands become interested in finding out which of them would be sailing to Bergen. It was great to have the opportunity to take part in the trip to Bergen, and not only that – they got the chance to sail with a learned skipper who had studied in Copenhagen (Bratrein 1989:536). Several of the farmhands' names are mentioned, and the ghost answers their questions, but they eventually grow bored of the conversation with the ghost. Jørgensen heads towards the door as he wants to leave the farmhands' quarters and go to bed. The ghost says: "I have to scream before I leave, but I'll be back." Christen asks when the ghost will return. He says he doesn't want to disclose that yet, but will now let out three screams, each louder than the other. They then hear that the ghost is departing.

A few days later, on 20 November, Elias Kjedelflicker [Elias the pot tinkerer] is at the magistrate's farm, tinkering with some pots before evening worship. He hears a tapping sound on the wall of the farmhands' quarters, where the farmhand Jan Hollender [Jan the Dutchman] is mending a pair of shoes. "Who's knocking?" asks Jan. The ghost then asks him what he is

doing. Jan replies that he is stitching shoes, to which the ghost responds: "Aye, pray be told, pray be told, and stitch shoes, stitch shoes." It then asks Jan to tell whoever is tinkering with the pots that he must not make so much noise at this time of night. Jan makes his way to the brewhouse where Elias is. He passes on the message and Elias stops his banging noises. That same night, the ghost knocks on the outside wall where Elias is sleeping, and gives the occasional cough, just as Elias is doing on the inside of the building. On 29 November, the farmhand Peder is grinding malt in the mill in the farmhands' quarters following his evening meal. He hears scratching on the wall outside where he is standing, and instantly stops grinding. That is the last time they hear from the ghost.

The Later Version

The later version must have been written shortly after Olsen heard the ghost story, which means there is a twenty-year gap between this and the earlier version. This newer version is more mysterious, and starts with Bogø the magistrate building a new house on an undeveloped piece of land. As soon as he moves in, the ghostly events begin, first with shouting – so loud that it reverberates throughout the mountains. The ghost sounds like a human being when it talks, its shadows are visible, but it remains unseen. It smokes tobacco in the farmhands' quarters, and they see the smoke and the flame as he lights his pipe.

After a while, the ghost asks if it is okay to shout. The farm people's response is "shout till you embarrass yourself." It then shouts so loudly that everyone's hair stands on end. Someone comments that the ghost does not shout enough, that it must shout more, and it answers: "The big man forbids me from shouting louder, I must bang on the wall." To which they respond: "Bang away, till you embarrass yourself." The ghost bangs so hard that the moss flies off the walls. They ask the ghost to bang more and it responds: "No, the big man does not want me to do any more banging." They ask it to "Put your lips there and there." It answers: "Put your own lips there." They enquire further as to whether anyone has been out fishing on this day, to which the ghost answers in the affirmative. He itemizes the boats and fishermen that were out, and how much fish they caught. "If you find it hard to believe, he said, then go over and see for yourself." The ghost answers all their questions, but when they enquire about the bailiff, he responds that he "didn't dare because the big man wouldn't want him to".

The ghost then announces that "the bailiff had remained, and he lays [in] the water with the money chest by his head." The farmhands ask the ghost why he is so ugly, to which he replies that when the brother lying in the boathouse rises, he is much uglier, bigger and stronger. They then ask the ghost why he comes here. He tells them that they are building too close to

him and spoiling his sleep; the river ran red for two or three days, which the ghost claims was the blood of his sheep.

The magistrate starts to avoid all worship and public gatherings. He wants to fear God alone and once said that "he had heard something from the spirit that he would not reveal or say to any man other than a man of the highest standing, but he never found that man and never talked to him before death came." In conclusion, it is said that twelve years have passed since these events, and that there are still people alive today who saw and heard the ghost. The story is about a god-fearing and sensible man who changes in the latter years of his life.

Methodology

A narratological approach has been used to analyse the text, especially the following works by Gérard Genette: *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method* (1983) and *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1990). Genette defines narratology as the study of narrative structures, an exploration of the narrator's function (Genette 1990:101). By the term modern narratology, Rolf Gaasland understands the relationship between "*historie og fortelling*" as well as the act of narration (Gaasland 1995:49). The focus of a narratological analysis is on narrative technique and composition (Kittang 2001:77–78), and the aim is to investigate both *what* a text means and *how* it means (Fludernik 1993:13). In this article, both structure and content will be analysed (Willumsen 2006:40). The narrative technique will highlight the content.

Narratology encompasses a number of categories,⁹ and the main one used in this article is *voice*. It is possible to listen to the *voice* in written historical sources of a narrative nature (Simonsen 2017:17). The category of *voice* consists of the narrator's voice and the character voice. It is always the former that has the most authority in the textual universe. Character voice is heard when one of the characters in the story acts as narrator (Willumsen 2006:43). Various examples of how voice is delegated from the narrator to character are given in the analyses below. These character voices have their own nuance in embedded narratives. Narratology can be used in the analysis of all historical sources structured as narratives (Genette 1993:55–56). Genette emphasizes that it is important to incorporate the context into the analysis of historical sources (Genette 1993:57).

The Narrator of the Earlier Version

In the earlier version, we have first-person narration from the magistrate, who writes about his personal experiences. It is clear from his writing style that he is a professional writer who is used to expressing himself in a sober fashion.

His writing follows a timeline, almost like a diary. When you consider that the magistrate's job entails taking minutes from court meetings and writing other documents in accordance with a formal standard, penning a ghost story must be far removed from the parameters of his professional role. The clear linear characteristics found in his narration – exact dates, times, time of day, before and after activities such as evening worship, supper and specific chores – add a robustness to the storyline and strengthen its substance and reliability. The timeline applies both in the narrator's voice and the character voice. We can follow the development of the ghost's antics from day to day. Before each departure there is a powerful marking, "I have to scream before I leave."

The narrator delegates voice to several characters: the farmhands Søren, Rasmus, Peder, Jan Hollender and Lille-Jan [Little Jan], as well as Elias the pot tinkerer and the magistrate's deputy, Christen Jørgensen. The narrator makes a clear distinction in the rendering of his own experiences versus those of others by naming the people who speak. During conversations with the ghost, the questions as well as the answers are conveyed. The narrator also describes the days he is not present at the farm, when he is reliant on the others' explanations of what has taken place.

Another feature of the narrative structure is the use of repetition. This sometimes take the form of words linked by a conjunction and, for example, "firmer and firmer", or certain expressions such as "piercing"; the first time "piercing and terrifying", the next time "piercing and terrible" about the way the ghost screams. Other repetitions are found in the variation of how many times the ghost screams; "screams for the 3rd time", "screamed 5 times". The range of words used to describe the ghost's antics also varies; banging, scratching, tapping, bellowing and whinnying. Images are carefully painted in words in a way that enhances and clarifies the text, and the magistrate constantly uses the introductory term "like": "like a smithing hammer", "like with claws", "like a horse". This parallel qualifier improves the visual and audible qualities of the story.

The narrator implicitly makes use of elements that are typical of legends and fairy tales. From legends, we recognize the practice of dating events by specifying the year and day, the naming of individuals and the linking of the narrative to specific historic events. Examples of the latter include the drowning of the bailiff. Fairy tale elements include short, succinct phrases, like "Who's knocking, said Jaen?" Orality elements are also prominent, for example "Aye, pray be told, pray be told and stitching shoes, stitching shoes, said the ghost." Orality elements are largely reserved for character voices, like the farmhands' or the ghost's. Rhythm and rhyme emphasize the oral character, and in the above example, repetition is used to reinforce the rhythm and sound of the statement. The narrator's voice rarely uses elements of orality, but when it does, this highlights the narrator's own behaviour and decisiveness: "I then arose immediately."

The narrator vouches for the tale and appears to believe in various individuals, even what the farmhand, Søren, saw and heard in his dream. The narrator's attitude towards the told is an accepting one. However, he knows his authority as a scribe; he is the one in charge of the narrative. We see this for example when he claims a mandate to restrict the scope of the story: "to avoid being longwinded it cannot all be included". By doing so the narrator shows that he is in control of the story. Another example is the narrator's comment about the farmhands' questioning of the ghost. This starts reflectively: "We can thus sense" [*Heraf kand fornæmmes*].

The Narrator of the Later Version

The later version of the ghost story is a third-person narrative. The narrator writes down a story he has heard, as opposed to the earlier version where the narrator writes about a personal experience. In the later version, the narrator is not identified. The different narrative styles are also clearly seen at the end of the story. In the later version, the magistrate is involved as a third person, i.e. a character or participant. In other words, the first-person narrator of the earlier version has now become "him", "the man", and "the magistrate".

We do not know who recounted the story to Isaac Olsen. However, because Olsen writes it down, he can influence the text. The narrator establishes a clear timeline in that the story starts when the magistrate builds his farm and ends when the magistrate dies. The timespan is linked to a specific part of the magistrate's life through words and phrases such as "immediately", "at the very beginning", "for two or three days" and "twelve years have now past since these events took place".

The narrator of the later version delegates voice to the farmhands and to the ghost, but none of the farmhands are mentioned by name, nor is the bailiff. The personification of the earlier version has disappeared. The bailiff has been anonymized, and the farmhands are referred to as "some" and "they". Delegation of character voice is achieved through direct speech and by referring to indirect speech statements made by the farmhands. Voice has thus not only been delegated to the ghost, but to the farmhands. In the later version, the conversation between the farmhands and the ghost accounts for almost half the story. The narrative category of frequency is reflected in repetitions, which is used by the narrator to add potency to the account; the ghost's shouting "grew louder and louder"; the ghost asked "may I bang the wall", "they said to bang it harder". The description of the magistrate as a "sensible man" is also repeated.

The oral nature of the account is also seen in imagery and exaggerations. The ghost shouted so loudly that the sound "reverberated throughout the mountains", "he banged so hard that the moss flew off the walls" and he shouted so loudly "that their hair stood on end".

Voice is clearly delegated to several characters. The ghost's answers are sometimes marked *Res.*, [responded] and this is italicized in the source because the word is of Latin origin. Examples of orality in the character voice delegated to the residents on the farm include "shout till you embarrass yourself", "just put your lips there and there, and he said to put your own lips there". The ghost's voice is also heard: "If you find it hard to believe, he said, then go over and see for yourself." In this version, the character voice encourages the ghost to be more active, like shouting louder and banging harder. The activity is described as an increase in volume, the sound is getting near and nearer. They can see his shadow, but not him.

The narrator's voice brings in the magistrate at the start of the story and right at the very end. The narrator describes the magistrate's last years as being mysterious. Towards the end of the narrative, unanswered questions about the magistrate are pointed out in a style typical of the legend genre: "there are still people alive today who witnessed it". Echoes of fairy tales are heard in expressions like "why he was so ugly". The ghost replies that the brother who is lying in the boatshed, is "far uglier, bigger and stronger".

In terms of the way that the two versions are narrated, the later version uses much stronger words, greater drama, more severe threats, and has a stronger element of orality. We have attributed this to Isaac Olsen, whose written style tends to feature larger gestures and ornate descriptions. He was a lively narrator, very different to the level-headed magistrate of the earlier version.

Similarities of Content

The two versions are set in the same location.¹⁰ In both instances, the ghost is a poltergeist (Espeland 2002:57). Another similarity of content is the damage caused to the ghost's home by those currently living on the magistrate's farm, and the killing of one of the ghost's animals. In both versions, the ghost is questioned about taking the boat out to go fishing, how many boats and fishermen were on the water and how much fish they caught. The plot is driven by dialogue for the purpose of learning more about the ghost, but also to elicit answers about matters that the questioners believe the ghost is knowledgeable about and they are not. They hope the conversation will reveal to them what will happen in the future. The description of the ghost is not unequivocally negative and frightening. On the one hand, the ghost comes across as a scary creature in both versions. On the other hand, the people on the farm consider it to be some kind of an oracle.

Both versions have a core element whose textual scope is limited, but which in terms of content is highly significant. This is connected to the drowning of the bailiff. The similarity is that in both versions the ghost responds that the bailiff is in the sea. Both versions use the expression "big man".¹¹ In the earlier version, the ghost says: "The fjord became his final

path; he earned himself the big man's wrath." The rhythm and rhyme make this a strong sentence, but it also carries a powerful message that lends itself to being passed on through oral storytelling. While the later version explains where in the sea the bailiff is located in a more succinct way, this nevertheless suggests that this particular element has been passed on by word of mouth in popular tradition and has even been elaborated on with the introduction of the money chest. What emerges is that the people on the farm are keen to learn more about the bailiff, but also that this is information the ghost is reluctant to part with. The emphasis on this in both versions reflects the serious nature of the event. The accident must have caused alarm in the community and given rise to questions and speculations.

Differences of Content

There are several differences between the two versions. In the later version, the geographic location is described in terms of diocese, parish and congregation. This suggests an ecclesiastical framing, while the magistrate of the earlier version accentuates the judicial district, which seems reasonable considering his profession.

Another difference is the reason why the ghost appears on the magistrate's farm. In the earlier version, the explanation is that they have ripped the roof off the ghost's house and killed one of his animals. In the later version, it is because the farm was built on a site too close to the ghost, and that it is therefore "disturbing his sleep".

A further difference is the way the ghost materializes. In the later version, its first manifestation is in the form of loud shouting that reverberates throughout the mountains. The shouting increases in volume and gradually comes closer. The ghost talks like a human being but only its shadow can be seen. It smokes tobacco in the farmhands' quarters, and they can see the smoke and the lighting of his pipe. This manifestation is unlike that described in the earlier version, where the ghost's farmhand announces his arrival by tapping and knocking on the wall. Later on, the ghost goes to the farmhands' quarters in person, in order to contact the people there. Here we are also given a description of what the ghost looks like, as he appeared to Søren, the farmhand, in a dream; like a farmer fisherman.

The earlier version includes clear dates and times, and it is longer and richer in detail than the later version. Consequently, it also contains more information. However, the later version is the most dramatic in that it features the narrator's accentuation of spooky and mysterious elements. Differences of content are also found in respect of what objects are salvaged from the bailiff's shipwreck. The earlier version talks about finding the boat, clothing and bottles, while the later version introduces the bailiff's money chest and its location in the water, next to his head.

In both versions the ghost is asked if he took the boat out to go fishing. In the later version, the ghost's answer is affirmative and includes an account of the number of boats, how many fishermen were there and how much fish they caught. In the earlier version, the ghost has also been fishing. Unlike the residents on the farm, who only caught three small fish, the ghost caught quite a few. When asked where the good fishing ground is, the ghost laughingly replies: same place where the farmhands go fishing.

Only the earlier version makes it clear that the magistrate's farmhands are trying to find out from the ghost who will be joining the magistrate on the next boat trip to Bergen. The farmhands get their answers.

The change from the earlier version's personification of the farmhands and the bailiff to the later version's anonymization introduces a distance. The sense of being close to the characters is diminished. "The bailiff" is now more of a concept than a person, and "some farmhands" is a characterization of a group. The weaker link to specific individuals after two decades of passing on the story by word of mouth, suggests that people now only refer to Riber by his professional title and to the farmhands without any individual characteristics. This is reflected in the narrator's voice, which fails to mention any names, and in the character voice, where all turns of phrase associated with specific individuals have disappeared.

The later version introduces a new element concerning the magistrate's final years. Through oral recounting over time, the ghost story has acquired an epilogue. In the most recent version, the once strong first-person narrator has the same standing in the story as the other third-person characters: he no longer carries authority and has no narrative decision-making capacity. This is a better fit for the description of the magistrate in the last years of his life, when he had undergone a change of character and was living in isolation. The wording here suggests that he was carrying a dark secret that he may have wanted to confess to a specific person – someone he could trust and who may have been in a position to help him. He never got the chance to do so.

Shifts of Content

The two versions were written more than 20 years apart. This gives us an insight into the way that elements of content can shift in oral tradition. The earlier version was written more or less at the time the ghost appeared, which enabled a very detailed description of the events. Such richness can only be found in documents where the sequence of events is concurrent with the time of writing. The writer has first-hand knowledge of the names of the characters, life on the farm, the buildings there and the general surroundings. The writer is close to the alleged events, and the characters have access to the person writing up the story. Because the writer is recording

his own experiences, he is unable to maintain a distance to the time and space of the narrative. His horizon of understanding lacks the illuminating potential of distance, but it does guarantee immediacy in what is recorded. The later version was recounted to Isaac Olsen by one person. It is this one person who tells the entire story. The writer is reliant on what he is told.

In the earlier version, telling a captivating story was not the magistrate's main objective. The reason why he recorded the events was probably that he found them mystifying. Nevertheless, he believed they had happened.

Olsen's version is a shining example of his storyteller talent. After hearing the story, he writes down an inspired version of it, in which the dramatic content is supported by a combination of verbal exchanges, dialectal words and repetitions. The narrative is characterized by abrupt linguistic constellations, ambiguous phrases and a clear textual rhythm. It highlights a genre that is well suited for entertainment because the story is considered spooky and scary.

There are a number of shifts of content, both in respect of the information about why the ghost appears and the way that this happens. We can also see a shift in the ghost's behaviour. In the time lapse between the earlier and the later version, various elements of content have been shaved off the story. Nevertheless, it is the later version that gives the more dramatic and intense account. Mention of the bailiff's money chest is also entirely new. This can be seen as a shift of content in the sense that just after the boat perished, people were keen to establish what cargo might still be salvaged, particularly any valuable items. After a period of 20 years, the bailiff's body had still not been found. As the years have passed, the interest has shifted to whether the bailiff may have been carrying money aboard the boat. He was a tax collector, so this was a reasonable idea, as was the possibility of finding the money chest.

The introduction of the money chest suggests another possible interpretation of the ghost. Bratrein unequivocally interprets the ghost as an underground gnome-type creature who lived below the farm. In folklore, this creature's world was structured in a way similar to the human world. Subterranean gnomes of this type would rarely allow themselves to be seen by people. However, a ghost can also be interpreted as a restless soul who has failed to find peace in the afterlife. This type of ghost struggles with its conscience. In the earlier version, the ghost is described by Søren, based on his dream, as a middle-aged man dressed in black. This may be a representation of a person who has not found peace because he has committed a crime. It is also possible that the ghost is the bailiff himself, and that he holds a dark secret that makes him haunt the place. If so, his secret is at the heart of this ghost story and may explain why the sentence about the bailiff is included in both versions, while the money chest is only included in the later one.

Factual Local History

Ghost stories fascinate thanks to their mixture of fantasy and realism. They are categorized as “true stories” (Aukrust 2013:258). In both versions of the ghost story, the historical facts are clear. Both also have unmistakable characteristics of the legend genre, where place and time are invariably specified. Both are associated with Skittenelv. The earlier version was written up in the autumn of 1695 and was authenticated a few years later. The later version can be dated to Olsen’s recording of it in August 1716. Although the narratives were written down at different times, the events have been set in the same timeframe.

Søren Pedersen Bogø took up office in 1689 and settled at Skittenelv in 1692. He was married with four children, and his two oldest sons were educated at Bergen Cathedral School. Søren Bogø remained in office until his death in 1707. He was the last magistrate in Helgøy judicial district (Bratrein 1989:436).¹² At the time, even high-ranking officials had to arrange for their own leaseholds and build their own properties. The office of magistrate was introduced in 1591 (Næss 1991). The intention was to provide assistance for the bailiffs. Magistrates came from a variety of different educational backgrounds and we have no information about Bogø’s. At the time, a magistrate’s status was more modest than that of a bailiff’s, both financially and socially (Bratrein 1989:434). Although he was a sensible man, the magistrate took the account of the ghost very seriously. He listened to what the farmhands told him and wanted to investigate the matter for himself. He must have considered the ghost’s conduct to be credible. Besides, he sent his deputy along to try to speak to the ghost, a man who probably had more authority than the farmhands.

In the later version, the story has gained an epilogue where Bogø, the magistrate, appears as a changed man who withdrew from public life in the years before he died in 1707. The epilogue raises questions relating to this change in Bogø’s behaviour. Timewise, this coincides with the year that he registered the estate of the deceased bailiff, Riber. The changes that are introduced between the earlier and the later versions give rise to several potential interpretations. For instance, the magistrate may have uncovered something illegal when he registered Riber’s estate which he ought to have reported. The estate was registered with Søren Mortensen Hegelund, who was the sheriff of Helgøy judicial district from 1694 to 1698. He was a skipper and resided at Nord-Grunnfjord (Bratrein 1989:517). Hegelund had been the bailiff’s assistant, and in 1694 had received remuneration for journeys undertaken to collect taxes on the bailiff’s behalf (Bratrein 1989:436).

Riber was in considerable debt. He was also known for his shoddy account-keeping and is likely to have been suspended from office for a while (Bratrein 1989:433). Riber’s accounts disappeared when he drowned. At the

time, there was little cash in circulation, and if any monies existed it was considered easy enough to keep this concealed during probate settlements. Our suggestion of possible illegalities in Riber's financial affairs is based on the introduction of the money chest. When the box makes an appearance in the ghost story after 20 years, this indicates that Riber's death is linked to money in oral accounts. Finding the money chest may have been an incentive.

Other possible explanations could be that Bogø had uncovered a serious crime, and that Riber's drowning accident was a covert murder. If so, there must have been one or more culprits. Failing to report a murder would have been a sin of omission. This interpretation is based on the magistrate's behaviour change once probate had been granted. According to the later version, the secret became an increasingly onerous burden for the magistrate as the years went by.

One of the people the magistrate may have confessed to was the curate at Karlsøy, Michael Jensen Hegelund (1694–1729). He had married into money when he tied the knot with Rebekka Elisabeth Myhlenport of Kristiansund in 1696.¹³ In 1703, he was suspended from office, and in 1704 he lost his job following a court decision. We do not know whether a replacement curate was found during Hegelund's suspension. In 1706–07, he was reinstated after winning his appeal. Tradition has it that it was his wife who travelled to Copenhagen and sorted things out with the help of rich relatives at the royal court (Erlandsen 1857:173). Curate Hegelund is said to have constantly been at odds with the bailiff because he refused to pay taxes on Vannstua farm.¹⁴

The second person it would have been natural for the magistrate to confess to was Ole Audunsen, the vicar and dean of Tromsø. He took office in 1697 after having served as curate to his predecessor Nils Bredal for 25 years. Audunsen was also a skipper. He had a new church erected in Tromsø in the period 1708–10, which was subsequently consecrated by Bishop Krog in 1711 (Ytreberg 1946:145). Bogø and Audunsen knew one another as they both signed the census of 1702 (Ytreberg 1946:64–68ff). Audunsen must have been a very busy man when Bogø was nearing the end of his life, and Bogø may therefore have been reluctant to inconvenience him.

The third person who may have been a likely confessor was Bishop Krog. It was he who took receipt of the earlier manuscript from Bogø's son. Krog visited the north on several occasions while the magistrate was in office, in 1696, 1699 and 1705 (Skjelmo & Willumsen 2017:132). Bogø may have considered the matter to be so serious that he wanted to confess to the highest-ranking clergy in the diocese. We believe that Bogø would have been seeking peace of mind and therefore may have wanted to confess to a gentleman of the cloth, rather than to a public official. An additional concern would have been the new magistrate or bailiff getting wind of his neglect of duty.

Henrik Riber is another central character. He held the office of bailiff from 1689 to 1695, and was married to Anna, the sister of Rebekka, the curate's wife. Riber lived with his family on the island of Karlsøy. The probate shows that there were 15 buildings on his well-equipped farm, plus fixtures and fittings, clothing and jewellery. There was also a good deal of merchandize (Bratrein 1989:521, 540, 543, 545f). The farm inventory listed 66 barrels of rye meal, 115 lbs of tobacco, 7 barrels of malt, 200 ft of wadmal, canvas cloth and other fabrics. A further 430 lbs of fish, fleeces and wool were stored for export. The bailiff also owned a boat, but this had been damaged on a journey north from Bergen in 1695, before he himself was shipwrecked. It was the bailiff who was responsible for ensuring that correct accounting records were kept and submitted to the authorities. When Riber drowned, he was travelling with his wife and his accounts in the boat [*speilbåt*] that came with his office. His wife also died in the accident, but there is no information about the fate of the crew.

Both versions of the story retain the mystery surrounding the shipwreck. In the earlier version, the rhyme and rhythm of the sentence about the bailiff add a linguistic vigour that has made it easy to pass on of this detail. While this suggests that the shipwreck is considered important, it can also be a hint that the man described as a ghost is in fact the bailiff. There are unanswered questions in connection with the shipwreck, which keeps the notion alive that something is being concealed and that the circumstances are mysterious.

Further Contextualization

This ghost story can shed light on the wider historical context of mentalities around the year 1700. It gives an insight into people's perspectives at a time of great change, when higher powers played an influential role in people's lives. Stories about supernatural phenomena helped people understand their surroundings and the forces they experienced. This also included how encounters with "the world beyond", the world we do not see, manifested themselves. In both versions of the ghost story, the ideas that are expressed by the narrator are linked to traditional material passed down through the generations. This constituted knowledge was known to the common man and passed on by word of mouth – associated with fear, anxiety, the whims of nature, human evil and desire, a punishing destiny; the sombre palette of a human life. These were all incomprehensible matters for which explanations were nevertheless sought through storytelling. This is a general phenomenon that covers people's perception of mysterious matters and the need for explanations around the year 1700 and later.

However, both versions demonstrate acceptance of a world of ideas where invisible forces held a key position (Alver 2014:15, 38f, 58–62).

Thus, we see how a specific story sheds light on a more general pattern in that the explanatory potential of legends appears in the considerably more comprehensive context that is the history of mentalities.

Conclusion

The two versions of the story that have been analysed here demonstrate how a detailed narrative becomes more generalized over time. The original personified features of the magistrate's accurate writing style in the earlier version have been converted by Isaac Olsen to a legend-type story; the narrative extent has been compressed while the main content is retained. The language used by the narrator of the later version eliminates the close association with the characters. Stylistically, the recorder's pen can be seen in both versions; the magistrate's somewhat muted, detailed account in contrast to Isaac Olsen's penchant for a lively narrative with linguistic embellishments.

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