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Summary

This volume formally concludes a project that started in 2008 at Växjö University (since 2010 Linnaeus University) in the research environment Forum for Intermedial Studies.¹ The volume contains seven long essays presenting research and development pursued as part of the infrastructural project “Digitization and Net Publication of Medieval Ballads”, which ran from 2008 to 2010 with financial support from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. The texts have obvious points of contact with the research project “Intermediality and the Medieval Ballad”, which ran 2006–2010, and in a couple of cases there are direct links to the results presented by the latter project in 2008 in a collection of studies entitled *En värld för sig själv: Nya studier i medeltida ballader*, edited by Gunilla Byrman. There are also some links to texts in the volume *Intermediala perspektiv på medeltida ballader* (edited by Lars Elleström) published in 2011.

The starting point for the project “Intermediality and the Medieval Ballad” was the finding in 2005 of a number of boxes on a shelf in the basement of Växjö City Library. The boxes contained over a thousand hand-written notes including medieval ballads. It is probable that the collection was originally a donation in the form of “Hand-written records of a great many folksongs, folktales, and the like” presented by the antiquarian and philologist George Stephens to the Växjö Diocesan and High-School Library in 1893.² The rediscovery of the collection was the starting point for a multidisciplinary research project with close collaboration between the subjects of comparative literature, musicology, ethnology, and Swedish. The project concentrated on the roughly 350 medieval ballads recorded in the George Stephens Manuscript Collection (GSMC) and was initially geared to exploring these sources which had previously been unknown to ballad researchers. In the volume *En värld för sig själv* it was chiefly this first phase of the research project that was presented in texts about the collection, its contents, and its author, George Stephens. In the volume *Intermediala perspektiv på medeltida ballader* the focus is more on the classical field of study of medieval ballads, investigated with the aid of the intermedial theory developed by Lars Elleström. Here it is thus primarily the position of the medieval ballad as an art form crossing boundaries of genre and medium that is discussed in texts of a more general character, concerning the ballad genre itself, an early Danish ballad collection, and specific ballad variants.

1. This Summary is a translation by Alan Crozier of the “Inledning” (Introduction) in this anthology.

2. See also the article by Boel Lindberg and Eleonor Andersson, “Reviderad registrant över balladerna i George Stephens manuskriptsamling”, page sida 328 ???in this volume.

It should be mentioned in this connection that the project “Intermediality and the Medieval Ballad” has also given rise to two other major publications. In 2009 a collection of conference papers was published on the web, *I fråst och i källe: Texter från Nordiskt balladmöte, Växjö 2008*, edited by Karin Eriksson. A book about jocular ballads appeared in 2011, *Om kvinnligt och manligt och annat konstigt i medeltida skämtballader*, written by Gunilla Byrman and Tommy Olofsson.

As mentioned earlier, this volume contains texts presenting research and development in the infrastructural project “Digitization and Net Publication of Medieval Ballads” and scholarly offshoots of that project. In the opening text – “Från kämpavisa till ballad: En begreppshistorisk översikt” (From heroic song to ballad: A historic survey of terms) – Magnus Gustafsson examines what the term “medieval ballad” stands for and how different underlying ideologies and thought systems have governed the collection and publication of these works, which is in turn also reflected in the terms and concepts used. He describes how the term was introduced in Sweden from the 1880s, under the influence of scholars in Germany and Britain, and shows the role played by George Stephens in this process. In the manuscript collection in Växjö City Library there are several examples of the use of the term “ballad”, although at the time when the collection was formed (c. 1840–1860) it was never used by any other recorders or collectors active in Sweden. The article has a detailed presentation of the designations used in Sweden from the end of the sixteenth century onwards – “old songs”, “heroic songs”, “chivalrous songs”, “folk songs”, et cetera – for the epic ballads that are assembled today in the major national edition, *Sveriges medeltida ballader (SMB)*.³ Gustafsson also provides a generous survey of the projects to collect and publish epic ballads in other European countries, going on to link these to the launch of the term “ballad” in Sweden in the 1880s by scholars with good international connections. The real acceptance of the term ballad would not come, however, until the end of the 1940s. The Swedish poet and singer-songwriter Evert Taube was responsible for the breakthrough when, as editor in chief, he published the collection *Svenska ballader och visor – ett tvärsnitt av Svensk viskonst* (1948), a work that he himself regarded as “a monument to Swedish song”.

Boel Lindberg’s article “Patriarkatets höga visa – balladen om Tiggargubbens brud” (“The patriarchate’s Song of Songs: The Ballad of the Beggarman’s Bride) analyses all 52 known variants of a ballad – SMB 236 *Tiggargubbens brud*. All these variants are now digitally published at folkvisa.se, the website that is one result of the project “Digitization and Net Publication of Medieval Ballads”. One aim of the article is to elucidate the kinds of analyses that can be performed on ballad texts and their melodies when they become available in digital form. Lindberg shows that the ballad about how a beggarman se-

3. Jonsson, Bengt R. et al. (ed), Vol. 1–5, Stockholm: 1983–2001.

duces and humiliates a brazen woman has its roots in the medieval outlook on women. The strict form of the ballad, with fixed formulae as important building blocks to support the structure of the narrative, helped the tradition carriers to memorize the ballad through the ages. The melodies to which the ballad was sung likewise helped to keep the narrative alive in the oral tradition right into modern times. An analysis of the words and tunes separately and in combination corroborates the assumption about the medieval origin of the ballad. The analysis also makes it possible to distinguish the different roles played by men and women in passing on the ballad. In variants mainly transmitted by women, the ballad seeks to imprint morality in connection with women's choice of partner and warns them not to let themselves be dazzled by outer finery and boasting of wealth. In the male tradition the ballad instead conveys jocular advice about how a young man contemplating marriage puts insolent and proud women in their place. The two strategies have the same effect: to preserve the patriarchal order in which the men's right to choose a partner always comes first. The story in ballad form about the beggarman's bride was thus effective for a long time in maintaining an unequal gender-power order that was humiliating to women. As cultural heritage, the medieval ballads are perhaps not just the beautiful, pure treasures they were claimed to be, chiefly by those who discovered them during the romantic era.

Gunilla Byrman, in her text "Epik till musik – en jämförelse mellan rap och ballad" ("Epic to music: A comparison between rap and ballad") focuses on other properties in the genre of medieval ballads. She has discovered that ballads show several similarities to modern rap. Both are intermedial art forms where the performers have to be able to master words, language, music, and dance. She notes furthermore that both genres contain a large measure of intertextuality, with links to other texts, melodies, and situations. They also include a social dimension when people perform ballads or rap together by telling stories, making music, and moving rhythmically together. She briefly outlines the history of the genres, analysing and comparing their typical themes, forms, and function. She goes on to consider the dance and pictorial art associated with rap and ballad and discusses the role of the texts in a societal perspective. The analysis concentrates on two raps – *Ungdomligt oförstånd* by Nabila and *Trasiga skor* by Lilleman – which are both accessible as texts (web pages) and performances (YouTube) on the Internet. These are compared with two ballads – *Rosen Elin och Kong Ola* (a variant of SMB 92 *Rosilias sorg*) and *Det kom en rallare på vår gård* (a variant of SMB 243 *Bonden och hans hustru*). When Byrman wrote the text, the ballads were available in one case (SMB 92 Da) with words and tune in the collection *Sveriges medeltida ballader*, in the other case (SMB 243 FKc) in recorded form on a gramophone record. These two ballads have now also been made available on the website folkvisa.se. This is thus yet another example of the advantages

of digital publication. When reading Byrman's text it is now possible directly via the net to obtain a more detailed presentation (including tunes and commentary) of the examples she discusses. One conclusion that Byrman draws is that both genres are basically narrative in character and deal with similar existential themes of love, suffering, and human relations. The themes not infrequently expose a power perspective at the individual or societal level. Other features they have in common are the use of rhyme, assonance, alliteration, and refrains, and the rhythmic performance to music. Perhaps it is the oral immediacy of the genres that makes them so appealing to many people.

An important but unfortunately time-consuming task in the project "Digitization and Net Publication of Medieval Ballads" has been to clarify the source situation of the ballads that were to be published on the net. The original plan in the project was to publish the ballads in the George Stephens Manuscript Collection (GSMC) which were not previously known to researchers and therefore not included in *Sveriges medeltida ballader*. It was envisaged that these would be published in the form of a digital supplement to this book. For various reasons this plan was abandoned in favour of a more general solution which means that the ballads are now published in a ballad database accessible at the website folkvisa.se. This database contains songs in many different genres and enables, among other things, the net publication of songs from the George Stephens Manuscript Collection in other genres than ballads. The guiding star for all publication in this database, however, is the same set of principles as those applied in the publication of *Sveriges medeltida ballader*. Three texts in this volume reflect how we have tackled these questions of source criticism.

Karin Eriksson's text, "En samling i samlingen – presentation av den så kallade Västmanlandsamlingen i George Stephens manuskriptsamling" (A collection within the collection: A presentation of the so-called Västmanland Collection in the George Stephens Manuscript Collection), gives direct insight into how complicated this work of source criticism can be. In the preliminary analysis of the manuscripts in GSMC, which took place in 2006, it was noticed that several of the previously unknown ballad variants were stated as coming from "Västmanland" at the top right of the manuscript sheet. Both the texts and the melodies on these sheets were written by the same (unknown) hand. It gradually became clear that there were also manuscript sheets in the collection with fragments of song texts and melodies, written by the same hand but with no statement of provenance, sheets that often showed signs of having been cut up. The thirty or more sheets and fragments in question were scattered through the whole collection. Eriksson gives an account of the laborious task of putting all these manuscript sheets together – complete sheets and fragments – and reconstructing what the manuscripts once looked like

when they were collected in a bundle of seven sheets. These sheets contained a total of 18 songs, 11 of which are ballad variants, three quasi-medieval ballads and three jocular songs. There is also a song game. All the songs are now accessible at folkvisa.se. Despite great effort, Eriksson has not yet succeeded in discovering who noted down the songs. The analysis and reconstruction of this “collection within the collection” nevertheless gave a deeper understanding of how George Stephens worked as a collector and philologist.

In the article “Och liten Karin tjänte’– episka folkvisor i de tidigaste skolsångböckerna” (“And little Karin served’– epic folksongs in the earliest school songbooks”), Boel Lindberg surveys the ballads published in the songbooks used in the elementary school system up until 1920. The aim is to obtain a better foundation for understanding the importance the nineteenth-century written secondary tradition may have had for the oral transmission of medieval ballads documented in versions noted and recorded in the latter part of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. Quite a lot of work has been done in Swedish ballad research to elucidate the mass dissemination of ballads and other folksongs through broadsides.⁴ This has made it possible to provide *SMB* with detailed data about all known broadsides containing medieval ballads. Lindberg shows that as the elementary school system was expanded and consolidated, with more ordered teaching in singing as one result, the school songbooks became a mass medium that easily bears comparison with the broadsides. Unlike the latter, the school songbooks almost always contain both words and tunes, which must surely have affected the oral transmission more thoroughly than when only the words are available in print. Lindberg shows which ballads occur in a fairly representative selection of school songbooks published in the period 1842–1920. She also discusses the position occupied by the folksong genre, and especially the medieval ballads, in the repertoire of school songs during this period, observing that folksongs and patriotic songs were second only to hymns. One reason stated by publishers of school songbooks for including folksongs was to give back to the people the songs that had once been collectively created and kept alive by the common man. Other publishers imagined that old folksongs, that is, ballads, represented simplicity and unadulterated emotions, which made them a particularly suitable repertoire for pupils in elementary school. The article ends with a look at how the view of polyphonic and unison singing of folksongs changed during the period. Around 1900 the prevailing ideology was that folksongs worked best in unison form. The most dedicated singing teachers, however, were convinced that harmony singing was better for deve-

4. Cf., for instance, research by Bengt R. Jonsson presented in *Svensk balladtradition I. Balladkällor och balladtyper* (Stockholm, 1967) and by Margareta Jersild in *Skillingtryck: Studier i svensk folklig vissång före 1800* (Stockholm, 1975).

loping the children's aesthetic sensibilities, a view that was widespread in all school systems above the level of elementary school at this time. The article also considers the strong position of folksong at the folk high schools established from the end of the 1860s onwards. There unison singing of the songs was preferred.

The essay by Boel Lindberg and Eleonor Andersson, "Reviderad registrant över balladerna i George Stephens manuskriptsamling (GSMS)" (Revised index of the ballads in the George Stephens Manuscript Collection [GSMC]) describes the revision that has been undertaken of the preliminary index of the ballads in Stephens' collection at Växjö City Library that was published in 2008.⁵ The revision of the index is based on the detailed source-critical studies performed in the project "Digitization and Net Publication of Medieval Ballads" in preparation for publication in the folksong database at folkvisa.se. The studies were coordinated by Boel Lindberg and Eleonor Andersson but they also build on important work done by Karin Eriksson, researcher at Linnaeus University, and by the former employees of Svenskt visarkiv (the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research), Eva Danielson and Märta Ramsten. When the digitization project was started in 2008 it gradually became apparent that the preliminary index of the ballads that was already published was not reliable. It was noted, for example, that several songs had been wrongly classified and that others could not be classed as medieval ballads at all. There were so many errors that we decided to go through the whole of GSMC once more. With the assistance of Eva Danielson and Märta Ramsten, further manuscripts in the collection were found to contain records or transcripts of ballads. The results from this thorough revision – *Reviderad registrant över medeltida ballader i George Stephens manuskriptsamling på Växjö stadsbibliotek (GSMS)* (Revised index of the medieval ballads in the George Stephens Manuscript Collection at Växjö City Library [GSMC]) – will be published during 2013 by Linnaeus University Press. The revised index contains a total of 342 medieval ballads. 80 of those have by now been published on the website folkvisa.se. The other 262 variants are already available in the national edition, *Sveriges medeltida ballader (SMB)*, and the revised index tells where they can be found in that work.

Andersson and Lindberg explain in their article how the revision of the index has been done. It contains three lists that show the manuscripts in GSMC that now are published on the website folkvisa.se. List A (p. sida <?>) contains the manuscripts that wrongly were classified as medieval ballads in the preliminary index published in 2008. List B (p. ???) contains the 46 new ballad variants found in GSMC and not mentioned in *SMB* since the editors

5. Bäckvall, Louise & Kværndrup, Sigurd, Registrant över balladerna i GSMS. I Byrman, Gunilla (ed.) *En värld för sig själv. Nya studier i medeltida ballader* (Växjö: Växjö University Press, 2008), s. 421 ff.

of that work did not know that the collection existed. List C (p. sida <?>) comprises 34 ballad variants from GSMC that are transcripts of recorded ballads included in SMB under the heading “Not reproduced”. Besides these lists, the article gives background facts about GSMC. Key concepts such as ballad type, ballad family, and ballad variant are also explained in the article.

All that remains is to give a brief presentation of Lennart Carlsson’s text “Ballader på webben: Om projektet digitalisering och nätpublicering av medeltida ballader” (“Ballads on the web: On the project “Digitization and Net Publication of Medieval Ballads”). Here he gives a detailed description of the working process to digitize songs and ballads as this is now being done in the project in the form it has taken since 2011. He also outlines the search for technical solutions and suitable modes of publication that took place when the project was being built up in 2008–2010. Since there are not so many published accounts of similar experiences to refer to, Carlsson has chosen to put the description of the project into a broader context. The article therefore begins with an account of more general problems of digitization and digital net-based publication. In this part he describes the discussions currently in progress about the long-term storage and migration of digital information, a problem that our project has had to consider. He observes that several major digitization and publication projects are being planned by large public institutions such as the Swedish National Archives and the Royal Library but that these have not yet led to new standards for digitization and net publication. For a smaller project like ours it has therefore been most appropriate to search for a solution of our own which suits the material we are to digitize and publish. To ensure that readers will be able to understand how we arrived at this solution, Carlsson paints a detailed background about the technical development in digitization, electronic publication and web programming. These sections are full of technical computer language, but they shed light on the technologies and programming languages that are essential to know when systems have to be constructed for digital storage and publication. Carlsson’s aim is to share the knowledge of digitization and net publication that he has acquired in the course of the project. It is our hope that readers will find it worth the effort to penetrate the sometimes complex discussion of data technology. The reward comes in the form of an understanding of how our website folkvisa.se is built up and how it functions, and conveying knowledge that can be used to create websites to make similar material available.

Lund, May 2013

Boel Lindberg