FOAFTALE NEWS

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ISCLR mourns the passing of friends and legend scholars, Karen Baldwin and George Mifsud-Chircop

IN THIS ISSUE

ISCLR Conference
Dublin July 2008

PROGRAMME
And
ABSTRACTS

PROGRAMME

MONDAY (7th JULY)

(9.00-9.30am): Registration/ Welcome:

(9.30-10.30am): Session 1

Paper 1: David Main: *Classifying Contemporary Legends by Their Psychological Functions: A New Look*.

Paper 2: Stephanie Singleton: *According to Rumor, It's a Conspiracy: Conspiracy Theory as Paradigmatic Construction*.

Break (10.30-11.00am):

(11.00-12.00am): Session 2:

Paper 3: Mark Glazer: *Contemporary Legend and Cultural Proscriptions*.

Paper 4: Bill Ellis: *Contemporary Legend: "A Fundamentally Political Act*."

Lunch (12.00-1.30pm):

(1.30-2.30pm): Session 3:

Paper 5: David Clarke: *Unmasking Spring-Heeled Jack: A Case Study of a 19th Century Ghost Panic.*

Paper 6: Petr Janecek: *Urban Maniac or Resistance Fighter? Rumours and Legends about Spring Man of Prague*.

Break (2.30-3.00pm):

(3.00-4.00pm): Session 4:

Paper 7: Michael J. Preston: *Contemporary Legends are Ephemeral: What Was Really Told about the Hatchet Lady at Red Rocks, Colorado, a Case Study.*

Paper 8: Theo Meder: *The Search for Winnie the Puma: Wild Animals in a Civilized Environment.*

(4.00-4.45pm):

Film Presentation: *Return to Glennascaul: A Story That is told in Ireland* (1951). Introduced by Sandy Hobbs and Paul Smith.

TUESDAY (8th JULY)

(9.30-10.30am): Session 1:

Paper 1: Eda Kalmre: *The Legend of Sausage Factory: Post-War Images of Violence and Evil*.

Paper 2: Sandy Hobbs and Seonaid Anderson: *Gassed and Robbed.*

Break (10.30-11.00am):

(11.00-12.00am): Session 2:

Paper 3: Christine Shojaei Kawan: *Collecting Student Lore in Göttingen*.

Paper 4: Gunnella Thorgeirsdottir: *Japanese Ghost Lore*.

Lunch (12.00-1.30pm):

(1.30-2.30pm): Session 3:

Paper 5: Peter Burger: *Crime Legends in Different Media*.

Paper 6: Russell Frank: *What Else Is Black, White and Read All over?: Legends that Sound like News.*

Break (2.30-3.00pm):

(3.00-4.00pm): Session 4:

Paper 7: Mare Kalda: *Treasure Hunting in Contemporary Journalistic Discourse in Estonia.*

Paper 8: Paul Smith: *The Cookie Monster: Cashing in on a Contemporary Legend.*

(8.00 pm.):

Film Presentation: *Shutter* (2004) introduced by Mikel Koven

WEDNESDAY (9th JULY)

(9.30-10.30am): Session 1:

Paper 1: Cathy Lynn Preston: *Legend, Gender, and Contemporary Popular Literature, a Case Study: Carol Goodman's the Lake of Dead Languages.*

Paper 2: Elissa R. Henken: *The Proverb Legend: A "New" Genre in Medieval Literature*.

Break (10.30-11.00am):

(11.00-12.00am): Session 2:

Paper 3: Lisa Machin: *From the "Girl next Door" to Celebrity Socialite: The Homemade Sex Video in Rumour and Contemporary Legend*.

Paper 4: Mikel J. Koven: *Karma's a Bitch!: Traditions of Belief and the Cinematic Ghost Story.*

Lunch (12.00-1.30pm):

(1.30-2.30pm): Session 3:

Paper 5: Joel Conn: *A Pocahontas by any Other Name.*

Paper 6: Joy Fraser: "*What Time Is the Three O'Clock Tour?": Tour Guides' Stories about Tourists' "Stupid Questions."*

Break (2.30-3.00pm):

(3.00-4.00pm): Session 4:

Paper 7: Carl Lindahl: *Man Disposes, God Discloses: Legends of the Levees.*

Paper 8: Diane Goldstein: *"Looter Man", "Green Helmet Guy', and 'Flat Fatima': Fauxtography as Anti-legend and Cultural Critique.*

(4.00pm. onwards):

Annual General Meeting and Closing Discussion

ABSTRACTS

CRIME LEGENDS IN DIFFERENT MEDIA

Peter Burger, Leiden University, The Netherlands

Contemporary legend studies has always been a broad church and is in the process of becoming still broader. The present research project seeks to integrate criminology, journalism studies and legend studies. Using Pamela Donovan's work on online crime legends (2004, 2007) as a springboard, we analyze the rhetoric of crime legend debates in different media.

Focusing on crime legends in internet newsgroup settings, Donovan distinguishes various styles of belief and disbelief, supported by different rhetorical practices. In her sample, fervent believers turned out to be rare. Fervent disbelievers were quite common, but most numerous were those who professed a conditional or instrumental belief in the truth of crime legends: for this type of believer, the stories are useful, regardless of their truth status.

How do journalists negotiate the truth status of crime legends? In what way do their rhetorical practices differ from those used in online discussions? Applying content analysis to news items and web-based discussion fora, we'll look into stories concerning drink spiking, snuff movies, organ theft, and the Smiley Gang.

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UNMASKING SPRING-HEELED JACK: A CASE STUDY OF A 19TH CENTURY GHOST PANIC

David Clarke, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, England

Spring-heeled Jack is a name "given to a person who from his great activity in running or jumping, esp. in order to rob or frighten people, was supposed to have springs in the heels of his boots" (OED). It was first used in print by the London *Times* 22 February 1838 to describe a shadowy figure responsible for a series of serious assaults in the Barnes Common area of London. The rumours emerged from pre-existing folklore concerning 'a ghost, bear or devil' who had brought terror to parts of northwest London months and, in some cases, years earlier. Later in the 19th century, similar ghost-scares, attributed to the activities of an assortment of ghosts, demons and human pranksters, spread across England and Scotland, including to my home city of Sheffield, Yorkshire. During this period a fictional "Spring-heeled Jack" became a prominent character, alongside Sweeney Todd and Dick Turpin, in the popular late Victorian literature of the "Penny Bloods".

A similar character was portrayed in theatre and, early in the 20th century, in film initially as a vengeful aristocrat deprived of his inheritance and, later, as a superhero, a prototype Batman or Robin Hood. Jacqueline Simpson's Research Note on Spring-heeled Jack (*Foaftale News* 48) summarised some of the 19th and early 20th century lore. April 2008 will see the publication of an edited collection of essays on this subject by a group of international scholars, led by Dr Mike Dash, author of the definitive study of Spring-heeled Jack (*Fortean Studies* vol 3, 1996). The monograph is the culmination of a research project utilising the resources provided by The British Library/Gale's 19th century newspaper digitisation project, launched in October 2007. My paper will focus upon my own contribution to this project: a case study of Spring-heeled Jack's visit to Sheffield between Easter and Whitsuntide, 1873.

A POCAHONTAS BY ANY OTHER NAME

Joel Conn, Glasgow, Scotland

This paper will examine the legend of Pocahontas McGinty, a schoolgirl in Glasgow; or perhaps she is Pocahontas McGinchey living in a town nearby, or perhaps in Edinburgh with yet another surname.

The tale of a young Scottish girl—always implied to be Caucasian and from a lower socioeconomic background—whose parents were inspired to give her the name after seeing the 1995 Disney film, is well known in the west of Scotland and has found its home on websites on children's names.

This paper examines sources and variations of the tale (in particular those told by journalists among themselves). It further considers the social structure in which the tale is told and understood. This is specifically considered in the light of the increasing trend for "newly coined names".

Comparison is made with similar "name myths" such as those narrated in *Freakonomics* (Levitt and Dubner 2005), in particular the American children who are said to go by the names of LemonJello, OrangeJello and Shithead (pronounced "shuh-teed").

The paper briefly reviews the use of the United Kingdom's Freedom of Information legislation as it was used to investigate the legend.

"LOOTER MAN", "GREEN HELMET GUY", AND "FLAT FATIMA": FAUXTOGRAPHY AS ANTI-LEGEND AND CULTURAL CRITIQUE

Diane E. Goldstein, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John's, Newfoundland

In a 2003 article in *Contemporary Legend*, folklorist and journalist Russell Frank discussed digitally altered photographs as visual legends. Frank's article referred to the periodic discovery of digitally altered, composite and recycled photos used in the news media, or "hoax photos", as he called them, as visual images which "reinforce widespread suspicions that the news media are not independent sources of accurate information, but organs of government propaganda" (137). Frank's discussion of hoax photos referred in part to two photos which circulated heavily and were used in the media after 9/11, one of Palestinians celebrating after news of the attacks on the World Trade Center, and another of a tourist standing on the observation deck of the World Trade Center posing for a picture as the first of the hijacked airplanes approached the building. Frank traced the uses of the photographs, the debates about their plausibility, and efforts to debunk their validity, and briefly mentioned the creation of anti-legends (Limón 1983, Ellis 1994) or parodies as vernacular comment on their dubious provenance. Frank's article unknowingly anticipated what was to become an explosive issue in both the news media and the blogosphere, escalating with each disaster following 9/11 but focusing particularly on the media handling of hurricane Katrina and the 2006 hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel. Dubbed fauxtography by concerned bloggers, each disaster prompted a new set of rumors about the photoshopping of images in the news media. As Stephen Cooper notes, "Fauxtography refers to visual images, especially news photographs which convey a questionable (or outright false) sense of the events they seem to depict . . . it is shorthand for a serious criticism of photojournalism products, both the images and the associated text" (2007:1).

This paper will extend Frank's discussion of news media hoax photography or faux-tography by exploring the vernacular creation on the Internet of three folk heroes or anti-heroes – "Looter man", "Green helmet guy" and "Flat Fatima". While each of these characters began initially as the subject of debates about the authenticity of specific news photographs, they ultimately became powerful anti-legends, critiquing the legendary characteristics of their initial subject through parody. These characters were depicted in news photography, subsequently became the subject of parody by repeated photo-shopping into popular culture contexts such as films and magazine covers, and ultimately were superimposed throughout the Internet onto contemporary news stories as commentary on media coverage or governmental handling of new disasters and political events. The three folk heroes, and others modeled after them, represent the vernacular appropriation of unethical methods of news manipulation for subsequent use as cultural critiques of the treatment of new and emergent news stories and, as such, they provide interesting perspectives on debates about the ability of legends and anti-legends to co-exist.

CONTEMPORARY LEGEND: "A FUNDAMENTALLY POLITICAL ACT."

Bill Ellis, Pennsylvania State University, Hazleton PA, USA

In 1989, for an AFS panel on "Contemporary Legends in Emergence," I proposed that "Those who tell a legend have a goal in doing so; likewise, audiences have implicit expectations they want fulfilled. Legend telling thus embodies a complex social event, in which the performer .

. . also gains (or fails to gain) social control over an ambiguous situation. The . . . most popular legends have the potential to transform social structures for better or worse. Hence legend telling is often a fundamentally political act." (1990:2). Much later, in April 2003, I participated in a Rockefeller Foundation conference on the "Social impact of Rumor and Legend," in the seemingly peaceful setting of Lake Como, while the papers were full of the news of the United States' invasion of Iraq. A politically wise observer sat in on one of the sessions, then rose at the end to comment, "I see now . . . the 'weapons of mass destruction' was the urban legend." Perhaps this remark was naive or superficial, but on the other hand perhaps it is we who have limited our perspectives to the parts of social interaction that are the easiest to dismiss as peripheral.

This paper will build on my analysis of the most recent political phenomenon in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, an area that I described in 1989 as plagued by persistent rumors that Evil Others (Satanists, in this case) were about to overthrow the status quo. Now, nearly two decades later, the rumors have shifted their focus, and, while remaining in essence the same, now target the mysterious presence of "Illegal Immigrants." This crusade, which has become one of the dominant themes in the 2008 political campaigns, draws much of its momentum from legends and legend types documental both in previous times and also in other cultures where immigration has become a volatile political issue.

But this paper will suggest, as with rumor panics, that collective political action such as we see in such crusades is itself a form of legend telling, and not just a "popular delusion" sparked or driven by legends. If our focus is not a product (legends) but a process (legendry), as I suggested in my 2007 ISCLR paper, then we should not be shy to apply our concepts and perspectives to movements that are not just widespread, but at the moment central to political decisions in the West. We have since then valued the political significance of legends; now perhaps it's time to look closely at the legendary significance of politics.

WHAT ELSE IS BLACK, WHITE AND READ ALL OVER?: LEGENDS THAT SOUND LIKE NEWS

Russell Frank, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA

One of the distinguishing features of contemporary legends is what Steven Colbert might call their "truthiness": by setting the tales in specific locations, attributing them to a reliable source and attesting to their veracity, narrators attempt to persuade their audiences and possibly themselves that these improbable events really happened, or could have happened. The photocopier, the fax machine and now the personal computer have offered new ways to create at least the appearance of verisimilitude: the legend in the form of the press release, the inter-office memo, the news story and the news photograph.

In this presentation I will examine examples of all four legend sub-genres and show how the immediately recognizable and easily imitated elements of each genre of "official" or mass communication function rhetorically to confer authority. As a folklorist who is also a journalism scholar, I will pay particular attention to the appropriation of such news story signifiers as the headline, the dateline, the inverted pyramid lead and the attributed quote, and to the use of captions and photo credits to lend verisimilitude to digitally altered photographs. Like contemporary legends, such photos visually "tell" a story— John Kerry consorted with the likes of "Hanoi" Jane Fonda when he returned from Vietnam—and use the elements of journalism to buttress their believability. In the age of "photoshops," apparently, it is no longer enough to produce a realistic-looking image by electronically combining photographs. Add a caption that says, say, "Actress and Anti- War Activist Jane Fonda Speaks to a crowd of Vietnam Veterans as Activist and Former Vietnam Vet John Kerry (LEFT) listens and prepares to speak next concerning the war in Vietnam," followed by "(AP Photo)," and it looks for all the world to be a photo as it was supposedly published in a newspaper at the time. The paradoxical aspect of all this is that journalistic style lends authority to legends even as the authority of journalism itself erodes. Indeed, an argument can be made that legends and parodies are themselves helping to undermine the authority of journalism: when a photo or story we thought was factual turns out to be fiction, we begin to doubt the factuality of other news photos and stories.

"WHAT TIME IS THE THREE O' CLOCK TOUR?": TOUR GUIDES' STORIES ABOUT TOURISTS' "STUPID QUESTIONS"

Joy Fraser, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John's, Newfoundland

I was recently told the "true story" of an employee at Chateau Lake Louise in Alberta, Canada, a hotel situated on the shore of a lake renowned for its brilliant blue colour. On being asked by a pair of German visitors "how they get the lake so blue," the employee replied, deadpan, that the water was drained each winter and the lakebed repainted. His misdemeanour was discovered when the couple returned the following winter especially to witness this spectacle, and as a result he was fired from his position at the hotel.

This narrative brought to mind many similar stories and anecdotes about tourists' odd or amusing questions and observations which circulate among guides at the various tourism sites in Edinburgh, Scotland, at which I have worked in recent years. In contrast to the tour guides' narratives analysed by Schmidt, Hammond, Hobbs and Cornwell, and others, which form part of the "frontstage" discourse that guides present to their tourist audiences, these stories are primarily exchanged "backstage" among guides themselves. Although they are by no means told exclusively by those employed in the tourism industry, such stories can thus be interpreted as a significant element in the occupational folklore of tourism workers (cf. Gmelch).

Working from an initial corpus of narratives collected from employees at several visitor attractions and tour operators in Edinburgh and in St. John's, Newfoundland, I

approach tour guides' stories about tourists' "stupid questions" as a complex of contemporary legends, jokes, anecdotes and personal experience narratives. I investigate their functions and meanings for those who tell them, building on Evans-Pritchard's suggestion that such stories function as a means of "deal[ing] with the problems of face-to-face interaction with tourists" (89). Examining the characteristics, attitudes and behaviours of both the tourists and the guides featured in the narratives, I explore how they comment on the nature and dynamics of such touristic encounters, while also enabling their tellers to rework these dynamics by playfully violating the tour guide's golden rule of presenting "just the facts" (Handler and Gable 78-101).

Like those analysed by Evans-Pritchard, the stories are often "situationally specific," but also draw on and contribute to "a pool of common images . . . depict[ing] predictable tourist behavior," as well as encoding their tellers' ideas about tourists' "conventional preconceptions" about the host destination and its culture (95). I consider how they thereby both reflect and help to shape wider ethnic stereotypes such as that of the "stupid American" abroad.

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CONTEMPORARY LEGEND AND CULTURAL PROSCRIPTIONS

Mark Glazer, University of Texas—Pan American, Edinburg, TX, USA

Tales of miniature horror, contemporary legends, have preoccupied our imagination as the folktale of our times. The horrors, which often dominate these tales, draw our attention because any one of us can fall prey to the situations portrayed in them. Modern science and technology with all their marvels and wonders have not made human life safer or, in a sense, better. However, modern life and technology have created their own set of problems and anxieties. The contemporary legend, the genre par excellence of quotidian malaise and anxiety, is replete with the cultural prescriptions and proscriptions of living in today's world.

The contemporary legend is a narrative genre which has a very large number of narratives depicting both physical and/or psychological violence. The basis for this violence is the anxiety created by the prescriptions and proscriptions of modern life and culture which are reflected in these stories. The range of violent acts in the contemporary legend extends from boyfriends hanging from trees to scenes of disgust at eating chicken fried rats. All of these events stem from the characters in the tales breaking a cultural proscription. Although these situations in the contemporary legend appear to be more pedestrian than most described in more traditional legends, myths or fairy tales, it is these acts of violence that make the contemporary legend dynamic and convincing. It is also these characteristics which make contemporary legends miniature tales of horror which remind us that modern life has its own proscriptions and prescriptions.

These proscriptions and prescriptions have a major common dominator which affects the content of the tales as well as our reactions to them. Namely they are concerned with the breaking of the minor proscriptions or taboos of daily life. These broken norms lend an element of danger and violence to the contemporary legend. Examples of these broken norms include: rats as food or as pets, dog meat as food, giving dangerous hitchhikers a ride in one's car, taking off one's clothes in the dark, and many others. Recently, with the advent of legends involving gang initiations and devil worship, the elements of the proscribed in these legends have become even more significant.

The paper will review the manner in which prescriptions and proscriptions are a part of contemporary legends, as well as the effects these miniature horror stories have on our perception of taboos and proper cultural behavior in modern culture.

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THE PROVERB LEGEND: A "NEW" GENRE IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

Elissa R. Henken, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA

Medieval Welsh and Irish texts are full of onomastic legends, providing explanation for both place names and personal names—a feature long recognized as playing a

strong role in early Celtic literature. Previously un-noted, however, is a genre of legends which provide explanation (or at least an origin) for proverbs. It is not that people have not been well aware of the legends or of the proverbs, but rather that no note has been taken that the two pair in a narrative unit. Indeed, the legends have sometimes been published in excerpted form lacking their concluding proverb.

Now that I have "discovered" this genre of proverb legend (*chwedl dihareb*), I am searching for as many examples as possible and attempting to determine significant points for comparison. So far I have located these proverb legends embedded in historical annals, prose tales, poetry manuscripts, and saints' Lives. In each case, whether in Welsh or in Irish, the narrative ends with some form of "then was spoken the proverb…." Some of the proverbs are known and used independently; some have no other recorded instance and are unfamiliar to current ears. One natural question is whether the proverb existed before the story which was then made to go with the proverb or whether the proverb just rounded out an already extant story. So far, my research indicates that the combination has resulted from both processes. It is harder to determine whether the proverb and legend ever truly arose together. In this paper, I shall report my findings, laying out the examples I have located, what else is known of either the story or the proverb in the appropriate literature, and any significant characteristics held in common in the proverb legends.

GASSED AND ROBBED

Sandy Hobbs and Seonaid Anderson, University of the West of Scotland, Paisley, Scotland

A number of accounts have appeared in recent years of people being gassed and robbed on trains, as well as in caravans, trucks, villas and hotels. The reports suggest that some kind of gas has been pumped into the sleeping area, disabling the occupants.

One major source of information is the advice given on caravanning websites. That thieves render their victims unconscious using gas is endorsed in travel advice issued by the British Foreign Office. Companies dealing in alarms sell products which claim to protect from such "gas attacks".

Does a gas exist which can render the victims unconscious in the way the stories suggest? We have not identified one. Anaesthetists suggest that pumping ether, for example, into a sleeping area would be difficult. Other agents mentioned include "chloroform", "nitrous oxide gas", "sleeping gas" and "carbon monoxide" but firm evidence of their use is lacking. There is seldom any reference to tests being made to identify the gas. There is also a lack of medical evidence, with no one dying or even becoming so ill that hospital treatment is required.

How did the victims know they had been gassed? Symptoms reported have included: "groggy", "dry throat", "blinding headache". Symptoms of this sort often occur in cases of mass psychogenic illness. The possibility of a similar causation needs to be examined. From a psychological view it is easy to see why such a story may be perpetuated. Like other serious crimes, a burglary can produce feelings of self-blame. When the possibility of having been gassed comes up, it allows the feelings of guilt to be assuaged somewhat. Another possible psychological influence could be the power of suggestion. The idea of gassing appears in some cases to originate from the police. However, in some cases there may also be a simpler reason for not being woken by the robbers. Driving long distances could leave caravanners so tired that they are not woken when a robbery is in progress.

It has been suggested that these stories should be regarded as urban legends. They have certainly survived and grown in a way analogous to urban legends, although being gassed and robbed appears to occur more in first person narratives than in third person ones.

URBAN MANIAC OR RESISTANCE FIGHTER? RUMOURS AND LEGENDS ABOUT SPRING MAN OF PRAGUE

Petr Janecek, National Museum. Prague, Czech Republic

During the last months of the Second World War, strange rumours about a mysterious phantom overwhelmed Czechoslovakia, occupied by Nazi forces. Usually called *Perak* (*Springer*) or *Perovy muz* (*Spring Man*), this urban apparition was said to be able to jump to extraordinary heights because of his spring-heeled boots. Rumours started in the capital of Prague, overwhelmed by curfew and the brutal daily regime conducted by Nazi police and SS forces, and soon spread to other big cities, then to the whole country. *Spring Man* was sighted almost everywhere—on rooftops of high buildings, jumping across the trains or buses or skipping over huge chasms and river valleys. Some claimed that *Spring Man* was secretly fighting the Nazis; he apparently stole their equipment, damaged their weapons, sabotaged work in factories. Instead of being scared, people started to venerate *Spring Man* as some kind of superhero, mythical figure helping Czech resistance fighters.

The presented article analyzes *Spring Man* rumours and contemporary legends of the Second World War on the territory of the Czech lands. The article describes main characteristics, distribution and variation of *Spring Man* rumours and legends, and compares this tradition with other Czech wartime urban phantoms like *Ziletkar* (*Razor Blade Man*) and *Fosforak* (*Phosphoric Man*), as well as other WWII phantom scares like *Mad Gasser of Mattoon* from the U.S. or *Pippo* from Italy. Finally, three main hypotheses of the possible origin of the Perak rumours are presented: inspiration by British urban phantom *Spring-heeled Jack* from the 19th century via Czech popular press or British anti-Nazi propaganda, independent inspiration by local eastern Bohemian demonic being, or influence of older anti-Catholic legends from the end of the 19th century.

Spring Man rumours and legends have been closely connected to the unique political and social situation of the Czech lands during the Second World War and vanished immediately after the end of the conflict. Nevertheless, the character of *Spring Man* has captured the imagination of many artists, including movie directors, cartoonists and science fiction and comics writers. After his demise in oral tradition, the character of *Spring Man* became deeply rooted in Czech popular culture and has been used as a satirical tool to symbolical criticism of

various political regimes, including Communist critique of bourgeoisie and the U.S. in the 1940s, Czech national critique of intervention of armies of the Warsaw Pact to Czechoslovakia in 1968, dissident critique of Communism regime in the 1980s and contemporary antiglobalization activities in the 2000s.

TREASURE HUNTING IN CONTEMPORARY JOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE IN ESTONIA

Mare Kalda, Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia

During 2000-2007, several articles discussing incidents of searching for hidden treasures were published in the Estonian written press. Employing the interest of the general public as potential newspaper buyers towards hidden treasures and treasure hunters, the media focused on the activity and views of different interest groups—archaeologists, the National Heritage Board and hobby hunters. As Estonian newspapers are also available online and allow readers to comment on the articles, common people were able to share their views on the topic.

The situation seems to indicate that there is a joint discussion about hidden treasures going on in the community by the mediation of public texts. A folklorist is interested in the degree to which traditional folktales and knowledge about hidden treasures are actualised in this discourse and to which degree it involves popular practices based on the traditional knowledge.

In my paper I will attempt to describe the narrative context of media messages in more detail. The observations are based on the interpretation of published newspaper articles and media channels on the same topic in a way that the texts as part of the continuous discourse merge into a conceptual metanarrative.

The media presents the topic of hidden treasures as a field of conflicting interests. The manner in which it is done is quite different from folk tradition. The media makes the discussions of the events public and markedly reveals the intention of the concerned parties. Contemporary media no longer mediates mythological treasure tales but publishes articles, for example, about discoveries of coins.

From a folkloristic viewpoint, it is possible to discern in the newspaper articles certain motifs which have been topical in the narrative lore for a longer period of time. Both traditional legend tellers and journalists have discussed and continue to discuss the origin of the information. Treasure hunting is still carried out in places associated with oral narrative history, but it is no longer done according to the conditions set by folk tradition.

THE LEGEND OF SAUSAGE FACTORY. POST-WAR IMAGES OF VIOLENCE AND EVIL

Eda Kalmre, Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia

The paper centers on a rumour that was popular in Tartu, a town in South East Estonia, and its vicinity after World War II. According to the rumour, there used to be a mechanized human sausage mill, *vorstivabrik* in Estonian, in the ruins near the Tartu market, and people were being lured there from the street and from the marketplace. The rumours that spread in these days claimed that the crimes had become public after the escape of a dairy woman who had been lured into the ruins. Russians, Jews, Estonian expatriates in Russia, and Soviet authorities were the "offenders" most commonly associated with this monstrous business. This rumour arose as a collective fancy and spread quickly in the atmosphere of terror under the totalitarian system. Hundreds of people visited the site of the alleged sausage mill in the ruins near the Tartu market, and recollections of the event and of the post-war period in Tartu still linger in the memories of the older generation.

The paper focuses on the imaginations of violence and evil that this folkloristic tradition has put forth and on the boundaries between experiencing and mediating violence in the stories. The post-war images of violence textualised in these stories are largely stereotypical, relating to similar traditions in earlier and later folklore and literature, with real circumstances set in actual surroundings playing an important part in their creation and development processes. From the fears and anxieties of the community and the lack of information after World War II, there sprang a myriad of traditional and symbolic themes of direct attacks against the human body. There were secret rooms and chambers that concealed violent acts against the community, conspiracy theories and secret pacts, images of a mythological enemy, robberies, killing, bloodletting, and sausage boiling. The imaginary world that spread in the tales of post-war Tartu secretly brought forth such private and social taboos as violence against women and children during and after the war, their generally difficult, unprivileged situation, the violent actions of the authorities, and also the real-life acts of cannibalism that had occurred in Leningrad under siege.

COLLECTING STUDENT LORE IN GÖTTINGEN: EXPECTATIONS AND RESULTS

Christine Shojaie-Kawan, Enzyklopädie des Märchens, Göttingen, Germany

In this paper I will discuss the legends three students collected in 2006 in the context of a seminar on contemporary legends. I had given them the following list of themes which I supposed to be possible subjects of legends, stories or anecdotes told among students:

- examinations
- suicides and crimes of violence
- university buildings

– personalities (professors, students), especially eccentric ones
– the 1960s and their aftermath
– student fraternities
– stories from the faculty of medicine
– stories from the faculty of law.

It turned out that subjects which could be called historical, even those connected to a relatively recent past, were almost absent. Instead, interest focused on 1) buildings on the new campus, 2) representatives of the medical profession and, students of medicine, and 3) conspicuous dropouts, especially a woman variously called Pit, Janice or James whose fate was to take a tragic turn in 2007 and has given rise to vernacular practices of commemoration.

This small collection, as well as stories which were told spontaneously during classes by the whole group of seminar participants, will be considered in connection with the problem of genre. This is by no means only of formal interest, as genres are connected to meaning. At first, most of the students in the seminar did not know what "contemporary legends", "modern legends" or "urban legends" were. Even later on, they still tended to use the journalistic terms "urbane Mythen" (urban myths) and "urbane Legenden" (which is not the same thing as "urban legends" but more or less corresponds to "urban myths") that are apparently the current popular terms for the phenomenon in Germany. Most of the students in the larger seminar group also thought they did not know any contemporary legends centered in Göttingen because many of the stories, particularly those about university buildings and dropouts, are believed as true. At the same time, during classes they enjoyed telling modern joke-lore (partly from the Internet), which is also well-represented in the collection of the three students – i.e., tales that are generally included among "contemporary legends" or at least are not strictly separated from them. Although jokes and other humorous stories have also other functions, it would appear to me that they were very much told for entertainment. Most of the other stories that were collected are typical local legends, even including traditional ones. While these stories are certainly contemporary, we have to ask if it makes sense to separate them from "traditional" legends, a question which is of specific interest in the context of renewed attempts at legend classification.

KARMA'S A BITCH!: TRADITIONS OF BELIEF AND THE CINEMATIC GHOST STORY

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Shutter (2004, Bangjong Pisanthanakun & Parkpoom Wongpoom) is not a film particularly well known in the West, although this is due to change with the Spring 2008 release of an American remake. This recent horror film however explores contemporary ghostlore within a modern Thai context touching upon topics such as spirit photography, Thai Buddhist vernacular ghost beliefs and the afterlife, as well as the international impact of the recent traditions within Japanese horror films (like *The Ring* and *The Grudge*) in what Zhang Juwen calls "filmic folklore"—that "modern" folklore which exists primarily on the cinema screen rather than in oral tradition and to some extent, acts as a more appropriate descriptor than dismissing such phenomenon as "fakelore" (Zhang 2005). This paper explores the visual representation of these legend topics—spirit photography, Thai vernacular belief traditions and filmic folklore—through this film, a film which, unintentionally, is a graphic repository of these debates.

But beyond merely "spotting" an awareness of folklore themes and debates (see Koven 2008), of identifying a particular Asian ghost motif or folkloristic belief debate, the overall aesthetic impact of a film like *Shutter* is more than the sum of its folkloristic parts. Identifying the folklore(istics) within the film seems overly reductive, particularly in comparison with other, similar films. This paper seeks to go one step further and, recognising that *Shutter* is, firstly, a "good" ghost story, attempts to use the film as a model for cinematic storytelling. How do films (in general) tell, or rather *perform* their ghost narratives? Are these "performances" situated within specific traditions of belief or disbelief (i.e. can a film be said to hold such a position)?

Ideally, I would like to organise a screening of *Shutter* before my presentation at the conference, i.e. as an evening event.

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MAN DISPOSES, GOD DISCLOSES: LEGENDS OF THE LEVEES

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More than any other Hurricane Katrina legend complex, the constellation of "Intentionally Blown Levee" tales serves as a cultural boundary marker. For African American and Creole insiders, the levee stories possess a compelling plausibility. Among the more than thirty levee legends recorded by the Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project, none of the African American narrators express incredulity about the proposition that government forces—local, state, or, most often, federal—intentionally dynamited the levees in the hopes of saving the white population at the expense of the blacks. In contrast, the great majority of white outsiders have judged the levee legends extreme and delusional.

Ironically, the African American legends are the more rationally constructed and painstakingly argued; the white

rebuttals tend to be impulsive and nonrational. The discursive gulf between these two legend styles follows the same fault line as the gulf between African American and European American responses to the legendary discourse of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, whose anti-government rhetoric has threatened the presidential candidacy of his most famous parishioner, Barack Obama.

FROM THE "GIRL NEXT DOOR" TO CELEBRITY SOCIALITE: THE HOMEMADE SEX VIDEO IN RUMOUR AND CONTEMPORARY LEGEND

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The current media is rife with rumours and contemporary legends about sexual behaviour —one of the issues that receives the most press being sex scandals, the breaking of society's rules for appropriate behaviour, involving prominent people, or in some cases quite ordinary people whose inappropriate behaviour is highlighted by the media. As with other contemporary legend themes, sex scandal or taboo narratives have been in oral circulation long before the development of the technology used to produce our news-papers, radio, television, video and Internet. The rumours and contemporary legends that centre on scandals involving "homemade sex videos" are a more recent subject and are the focus of this paper. The author explores the impact of modern imaging and audio recording technology, such as video cameras, recorders and players (VCR's), as well as digital cameras, on both the transmission and subject of rumours and contemporary legends involving sex scandals, circulated orally or through modern media such as print, television, and the Internet with the aim of identifying the similarities and differences between the "homemade sex video" narratives and other versions of sexual narratives that pre-date the VCR.

This study is based on versions of "homemade sex video" rumours and contemporary legends collected from personal tape-recorded interviews with informants regarding a local sex video scandal, as well as examples that have circulated in the media about well-known celebrities or prominent people. Following Gillian's Bennett's application of William Labov and Joshua Waletsky's paradigm for personal experience narratives in her article "The Phantom Hitchhiker: Neither Modern, Urban Nor Legend?" (*Perspectives in Contemporary Legend* I, 1984, 45-63) the author examines the key narrative elements in the versions of the "homemade sex video" narratives. The sexual taboos found in the homemade sex video narratives are similar to those found in sexual narratives that pre-date the VCR. However, it is the added element of the "homemade video" that characterizes these narratives as different from other sexual taboo narratives in subject, and potentially of meaning. The author aims to show that though the "homemade sex video" narratives may perpetuate society's taboos about sexual behaviours, understanding the key element of the "video tape" and other imaging technology central to the narrative will illustrate the importance of technology on both the narratives and the people who tell them.

CLASSIFYING CONTEMPORARY LEGENDS BY THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS: A NEW LOOK

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Academic consideration of Contemporary Legends (CLs) has always fostered a multi-disciplinary approach. However, with some notable exceptions, it is only relatively recently that psychologists have taken an interest in this field. Di Fonzo & Bordia (2007) examined the relationship between Urban Legends, Gossip and Rumours, while Guerin & Miyazaki (2006) explored the social psychology underlying the telling of and listening to Urban Legends. A more cognitive psychological approach was employed by Heath Bell & Sternberg (2001), who experimented on the level of emotions expressed within Urban legends. This was further explored by Main (2007) who experimentally assessed whether higher levels of disgust within CLs produced improved recall of the stories.

Perhaps one of the major problems in CL research is the lack of a systematic and coherent classification system for CLs. Brunvand (2005) has admitted that there is no classification system of CLs that is universally accepted. However, over twenty years ago, Hobbs (1987) proposed a potentially very useful way of classifying CLs. Hobbs idea was to approach the problem from a psychological perspective, which involved considering CLs in terms of the "psychological functions" these stories had for the listener/teller. For instance, some CL's are, at heart, tales of "poetic justice" and some individuals will be attracted to telling or remembering such tales as it serves to reinforce their personal beliefs or world view, or act as a potential comforter given their own personal background or history. Assigning appropriate psychological functions to stories considered as "urban legends" allows for a radically different way to classify and subsequently examine CLs. Unfortunately Hobbs did not pursue this research; therefore the present study was devised to examine and update Hobbs's ideas on CL classification using a larger sample of CLs. This research draws on the previous work on CL classification by researchers such as Brunvand and expands upon the concepts and categories Hobbs originally proposed for his psychological functions. The present paper suggests some potential areas for further research, and raises issues and ideas that should encourage discussion and debate within the CL community on both the classification system itself and the usefulness of incorporating psychological approaches to the study of CLs.

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THE SEARCH FOR WINNIE THE PUMA: WILD ANIMALS IN A CIVILIZED ENVIRONMENT

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In the summer of 2005, a wild animal was spotted on the Veluwe, a tourist moorland and forest area in the east of the Netherlands. In the national media, the animal was soon presented as being a puma—a species not indigenous to Europe. With landrovers and even a helicopter, the police tried to hunt down the predator, determined to shoot and kill. Amongst others, left wing politicians and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals protested: the animal should be caught, not killed. Mr. Arno van der Valk from the Panthera Foundation claimed to be able to stun and catch the puma alive, and the authorities agreed to leave the job to him. Meanwhile, so-called puma tourism came into being, and Winnie the Puma was spotted by people all over the Veluwe, sometimes on several places at the same time. The puma became such a hype in the media that the stories started to create a reality of its own. At first, no one bothered to listen to the few experts (biologists and folklorists) who suspected the whole story was a contemporary legend. After a while, when Van der Valk proved to be able to shoot photos and video footage of a supposed puma, but failed to stun the wild animal itself, more and more people turned sceptical. Many jokes commenting on the hoax started circulating.

It all turned out to be a case of WYBIWYS (What You Believe Is What You See) and *quasi-ostension* (a misinterpretation of facts in reality, based on existing narrative scenarios). Folklorists recognize the international contemporary legend called *Big Cats (Panthers etc.) Running Wild.* It is just another version of the tale of the dangerous and uncontrollable monster walking through our civilized and peaceful backyard. How often do these tales emerge, and how modern are they, as far as the Netherlands are concerned? What parties are involved these days? And why do people keep falling for the tales time and again?

The story of Winnie the Puma ended with photos of a large tabby cat (2005) and got canonized by a chapter in Peter Burger's new collection of contemporary legends (2006) and a huge steel piece of art on the Veluwe by Maarten de Reus, called *Cage-With-No-Puma-In-It* (2007).

LEGEND, GENDER, AND CONTEMPORARY POPULAR LITERATURE, A CASE STUDY: CAROL GOODMAN'S *THE LAKE OF DEAD LANGUAGES*

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Carol Goodman's *The Lake of Dead Languages* (2002) is a mystery/thriller novel focused on a series of suicides/murders that occur at a fictional, private girls' school (Heart Lake) in the Adirondacks. At the center of the novel, of the girls' culture at the school, and of a series of deaths at the school is a suicide legend:

> Like many girls' schools, Heart Lake has its own suicide legend. When I was here the story would be told, usually around the Halloween bonfire at the swimming beach, that the Crevecoeur family lost all three of their daughters in the flu epidemic of 1918. It was said that one night the three girls, all delirious with fever, went down to the lake to quench their fever and drowned there. At this point in the story, someone would point to the three rocks that rose out of the water off the swimming beach and intone solemnly, "Their bodies were never found, but on the next morning three rocks appeared mysteriously in the lake and those rocks have from that day been known as the three sisters."
> One of the seniors would fill in the rest of the details as we younger girls nervously toasted our marshmallows over the bonfire. India Crevecoeur, the girl's mother was so heartbroken she could no longer live at Heart Lake, so she turned her home into a girls' school. From the school's first year, however, there have been mysterious suicides at Heart Lake. They say that the sound of the lake lapping against the three rocks . . . beckons girls to take their lives by throwing themselves into the lake. They say that when the lake freezes over the faces of the girls can be seen peering out from beneath the ice. The ice makes a noise like moaning, and that sound, like the lapping of the water, draws girls out onto the lake's frozen surface, where the sisters wait to drag the unsuspecting skater through the cracks in the ice. And they say that whenever one girl drowns in the lake, two more inevitably follow (pp. 16-17).

The legend is told and referred to at various points in the novel, reenacted by the characters, and used as a mechanism by one character to cover up murder (see Linda Dégh on legend and ostension in *Legend and Belief*, 2001).

Legend scholars have actively documented literary and popular culture texts (movies, advertisements, TV shows, etc.) that incorporate in one way or another extant folk legends (see, Daniel Barnes and Paul Smith's work in *Contemporary Legend* 1991, 1992, 1993; Jan Brunvand's *Encyclopedia of Urban Legends*, 2001). More broadly, folklore scholars have addressed various folkloric forms in relation to their fictional literary inscriptions (see Frank de Caro and Rosan Augusta Jordan's *Re-Situating Folklore*, 2004). My essay draws on such earlier work in order to

address, in this case, not a folk legend, but rather a literary legend based on folk motifs, the ways in which legend in combination with other folk forms is used mimetically to construct "fictional life-world[s]" in literary texts (Bruce Rosenberg, *Folklore and Literature: Rival Siblings*, 1991), and, in an admittedly circular turn, what those fictional lifeworlds might tell us about legend.

CONTEMPORARY LEGENDS ARE EPHEMERAL: WHAT WAS REALLY TOLD ABOUT THE HATCHET-LADY AT RED ROCKS, COLORADO, A CASE STUDY

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Between about 1975 and 1985, almost all teenagers in the Denver Metropolitan Area knew about the Hatchet-Lady at Red Rocks. One boy reported that, "if one sits on the thirteenth seat, thirteenth row on a full moon, one will be chopped up and dismembered by the hatchet lady." A girl reported that "there was a lady who had a daughter, and some boys raped her and killed her so hatchet lady comes to red rocks and whoever the male is that's sitting in the thirteenth row thirteenth seat on Friday the thirteenth she kills them for revenge and then yells out "Cry, baby, cry!" Another girl reported that the hatchet lady lives up in red rocks and you go up these thirteen steps and yell 'cry baby cry' and she chops off your head." Another boy reported that "I have heard of her and quite often, but I cannot remember how the story goes. All I can remember is that she hangs around Red Rocks at night and hacks up anyone that goes there alone."

A later printed account of the hatchet-lady, as well as a recent televised re-telling, are both longer and considerably distanced from what teenagers reported at the time.

This paper is based on what might best be described as "casually collected" accounts, more than one thousand of them. Is such data to be discarded, or does the volume of redundant collecting become a kind of verification when the various accounts are compared?

ACCORDING TO RUMOR, IT'S A CONSPIRACY: CONSPIRACY THEORY AS PARADIGMATIC CONSTRUCTION

Stephanie Singleton, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA

There are few Americans who would deny the popularity of conspiracy theories in this country. It seems as though theories are resurrected and constructed daily: the Illuminati; the Order of Zion, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Princess Diana; 9-11; AIDS; Halliburton and the war for oil; the moon walk – the list continually grows. Some of these "conspiracies" are new and some have been around for centuries. Oftentimes conspiracy theories are entertaining narratives illustrating fantastic plots of Byzantine-like intricacy.

Currently, conspiracy theories have been treated by folklorists under the genre of rumor or legend. The terms *conspiracy rumor* and *conspiracy legend* have been used in studies. The adjectival use of *conspiracy* indicates that the term *rumor* may not be fully adequate or accurate to describe a particular type of lore: hence, the qualifier, conspiracy.

There are definitely rumors of conspiracy and conspiracy rumors—meaning a rumor of or about conspiracy, which is a different entity from a fully fledged conspiracy theory. My argument is that the elements and characteristics of conspiracy theories are distinct enough to remove these constructions from the realm of rumor into a separate genre.

Most conspiracy theories probably originate as rumors but for several reasons begin to mutate into an entity that simultaneously resembles but differs from its parent. Conspiracy theories are similar to rumors and urban legends in that they are narratives that: may or may not be true, may contain truths that have been distorted in some fashion, contain "unsubstantiated information," are believed by many to be true but may not be considered true by the transmitter, and they multiply and produce numerous variants.

Conspiracy theories are dissimilar to rumors in that conspiracy theory constructs:

- Speak to good vs. evil/ us against them/ powerful against the powerless, and a sense of persecution on the part of the victims or targets of the conspiracy
- Are always sociopolitical in nature
- Speak to whom and what is truly "American"
- Inherently contain elements of suspicion, fear, and anxiety
- Build on themselves through events that serve as *proof feeders*

This paper illustrates similarities and differences between rumor and conspiracy theory in addition to identifying the causal elements and conditions resulting in the mutation of a rumor into a conspiracy theory and outlining its distinguishing characteristics.

THE COOKIE MONSTER: CASHING IN ON A CONTEMPORARY LEGEND

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In 1949 Marihelen McDuff compiled a collection of recipes for Neiman-Marcus that went on sale as *A Taste of Texas*.... edited by Jane Trahey. Included in the volume was the following "story" and accompanying recipe for a "$100.00 Chocolate Cake" which was attributed to Mrs. A. R. McElreath of Fort Worth, Texas.

> A Kansas City schoolteacher visiting in New York dined at a chichi hotel and for dessert had a piece of delicious chocolate cake. After going

home, she wrote the chef asking for the recipe and adding that she would pay anything for it. The chef sent the recipe and a bill for $100.00 The school marm promptly lost her appetite and consulted an attorney who advised her she had made a legal contract. When she sent the chef her check, she added bitterly that she was going to scatter the recipe to the four corners of the earth. Mrs. McElreath and this cook book are just helping to scatter it (Trahey:236-37).

Now recognized as a contemporary legend, in one form or another since 1949, versions of this tale have surfaced periodically, being told about a variety of businesses in the USA—including the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York, Mrs. Field's Cookie Company and, ironically, the Neiman-Marcus Company.

This paper will look at the history of this contemporary legend and the ways in which it has been communicated both as a narrative *per se* and through ostension, for the narrative calls for action by suggesting the recipient circulate the recipe while at the same time providing them with the opportunity to make the cake or cookies. In addition, the presentation will explore the dissemination of the narrative and recipe in a variety of non-oral forms, the role played by the media in its dissemination and the recent trend to commodify the narrative and the recipe, the ultimate being the marketing of *Neiman Marcus Chocolate Chip Cookie Mix* by the Neiman Marcus Company.

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JAPANESE GHOST LORE

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Japanese culture has had a rich and varied history of lore and legends, very few of which have unfortunately been translated into other languages. However some of these have wound themselves into western culture of late through the recent influx and popularity of Japanese horror movies, often referred to as J-horror.

These movies bring to light the multilayered and coexistent belief system that exemplifies Japanese culture encompassing Shinto, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and in later years Christianity. Shinto, in particular, with its emphasis on the impurity of death as well as the power of the spirits, makes for very fertile ground for the stories of vengeful spirits roaming the earth unfulfilled.

In my paper I intend to explore some of the contemporary legends that still abound in modern day Japan and look at their historical background as well as how they have been appropriated in modern day media such as movies, comics and cartoons.

FOAFtale News (**FTN**) is the newsletter of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. We study "modern" and "urban" legends, and also any legend circulating actively. To join, send a cheque made out to "ISCLR" for US$40.00 or UK£20 to Mikel J. Koven, AHSS, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ, UK. Institutional rates available upon request. Members also receive **Contemporary Legend**, a refereed academic journal. Some back issues of **FTN** are available on-line at http://www.folklore.ee/FOAFtale.

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This newsletter is called **FOAFtale News** for the jocular term current among legend scholars for over twenty years. The term "foaf" was introduced by Rodney Dale (in his 1978 book, *The Tumour in the Whale*) for an oft-attributed but anonymous source of contemporary legends: a "friend of a friend." Dale pointed out that contemporary legends always seemed to be about someone just two or three steps from the teller — a boyfriend's cousin, a co-worker's aunt, or a neighbor of the teller's mechanic. "Foaf" became a popular term at the Sheffield legend conferences in the 1980s. It was only a short step to the pun "foaftale," a step taken by a yet-anonymous wag.

The opinions expressed in **FOAFtale News** are those of the authors and do not in any necessary way represent those of the editor, the contributors, the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, its Council, or its members.

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