

FOAFTale News

Newsletter of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research

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PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND 2014:

A WELCOME FROM THE ORGANIZER

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the local Organizing Committee of the Perspectives on Contemporary Legend, the 32nd International Conference of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, it is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you here at Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Arts.

Prague, one of the few European cities which have been the capital for more than one thousand years, is a city connected with legends since times immemorial. Even its founding, despite efforts of historians and archeologists, is shrouded in mystery, as we will learn about during our second Ghost Walk on Saturday. Its unique position in the heart of Central Europe and the multicultural atmosphere of the city gave birth to many legends of Czech, German and Jewish origin, some of them local, and some gaining worldwide prominence.

Probably the most popular of these is the famous Jewish legend about the Golem, which was first popularized by Jacob Grimm in 1808, later in *Galerie der*

Sippurim, a collection of Jewish tales edited by Wolf Pascheles (1847), and especially by the novel *Der Golem* by Gustav Meyrink (1915). The Golem legend became hugely popular in the second half of the 20th century when it was adopted by all city dwellers as an expression of local identity. Historical legends even surround the city's new coat of arms, awarded to the city by the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III in 1649 for valiant defense in the Thirty Year's War.

Prague has always linked East and West, not only by folklore but by folklore research as well. For example, the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm greatly influenced the first Czech Romantic folklorists and mythologists. Perhaps the most important scholar of this generation was Karel Jaromír Erben, a collector of Czech folktales and author of the first multilingual collection of myths and legends of the Slavonic peoples, *Vybrané báje a pověsti národní jiných větví slovanských* [*Selected Myths and National Legends of Other Branches of the Slavonic Nation*] (1865), and the popular ballad collection *Kytice z pověstí národních* [*A Bouquet of Folk Legends*] (1853/1861), which was inspired by demonological legends collected in the Czech countryside (and which is now available in a beautiful new [2012] English translation by Marcela Malek Sulak).

Charles University has always played a critical part in Czech folklore research. In 1908, literary historian August Sauer presented an important public lecture here about folklore, which influenced Central European conceptualization of folklore as a literary, narrative form of cultural expression. According to prominent Russian folklorist Viktor Yevgenyevich Gusev, this lecture defined the peculiar Central European conceptualization of folklore as part of literary studies, different from both the wider Western notion of folklore as the equivalent of folk culture and the Russian conceptualization of folklore as a collective form of art (Gusev 1967).

One of the most important Czech folklorists was Jiří (Georg) Polívka, who in 1908-1909 also served as Dean of this Faculty. He is best known for his collaboration

with German folklorist Johannes Bolte on their monumental *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm* [*Notes to the Children's and Household Tales of Brothers Grimm*], published between 1913-1932. It was Polívka who helped to overcome the Eurocentrism of this work by adding a Eurasian dimension to this important research tool, most notably with references to not only Slavonic but also East European, Caucasian and even Central Asian narrative traditions. Being a pupil of important Russian folklorists such as Alexander Nikolayevich Veselovsky, but also well versed in German, Romanic and Anglo-Saxon folklore scholarship, Jiří Polívka helped to build bridges between Eastern and Western folklore studies.

Many other distinguished folklorists of the Charles University, both German and Czech ones, also strived to connect Eastern and Western academic traditions of folklore studies. Let me mention at least Adolf Hauffen (the first folklore professor in Czechoslovakia and head of the oldest university folklore department in Central Europe, established in 1919), Gustav Jungbauer, Josef Hanika, Václav Tille, Jan Hanuš Máchal, Jan Jakubec, and Jiří Horák. And from the second half of the 20th century, let me mention at least Jaromír Jech, organizer of the first interim conference of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) held in Prague in 1966, Karel Horálek, Dean of this Faculty in 1955-1959, and especially Karel Dvořák, an expert on medieval exempla and long-term Head of the Institute of Ethnology where I now have the privilege to teach Folklore myself (Janeček 2013).

Charles University's most outstanding academic tradition connected to folklore studies is perhaps that of the "Prague School" or "Prague Linguistic Circle" of the 1920s and 1930s. Two important Russian members of the Prague Linguistic Circle, linguist Roman Osipovich Jakobson and folklorist Petr Grigoryevich Bogatyrev, greatly influenced Western structuralism of the 1960s and the 1970s, including works of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Their study *Folklore as Special Form of Creation*, first published in German in 1929 and, according to Felix J. Oinas "one of the most famous and oft-quoted articles in folkloristics" (1980:1), inspires folklore scholars even now.

Let me quote a passage which is of special importance to theme of this conference:

Nor is communal creativity by any means foreign even to a culture which is permeated by individualism. We need look no further for examples than the widespread anecdotes, legend-like rumors and gossip, superstitions and

myth-structures, and accepted customs and modes of thought in present-day educated circles. (Jakobson and Bogatyrev 1980:16)

Dear colleagues, the present conference is one of the biggest and most international folklore studies events ever organized here since the aforementioned ISFNR Interim Conference held in Prague in 1966. We feel greatly privileged to greet here more than 40 scholars from 16 nations who, during six days of the conference, will present many interesting papers divided in nine thematic panels.

We hope you will be inspired by Prague in your research, as many other folklorists before us were. Apart for that, also enjoy some of cultural events which we have prepared with our Organizing Committee to show you some of the local culture—and especially, folklore!

Petr Janeček

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PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND 2014:**ABSTRACTS**

*Mikhail Alekseevsky, Strelka Institute for Media,
Architecture and Design, Russia*

**The President in a Helicopter: Contemporary
Legends and Spontaneous Political Jokes at the
Moscow Protest Demonstrations in 2011-2012**

In Russia, the demonstrations against the State Duma election result in December 2011 became the most widespread political street protest since Perestroika. One of the distinguishing features of the demonstrations was the ‘carnivalization’ of street protest: many protestors brought comic homemade placards with absurd slogans, some people used costumes and stage props to make a political protest in an ironic way. Spontaneous political jokes and anecdotes were widespread among protest participants.

The author of the paper conducted the field research on spontaneous jokes and rumours which were circulated during the mass protests on the streets of Moscow in 2011-2012. The gathered jokes are analyzed from the point of view of their roots and ways of circulation. As a case study the author discusses spontaneous jokes about a military helicopter which flew over the protestors during the demonstrations. Many people said half in jest that Russian President Vladimir Putin was in a helicopter and observed the demonstration. These jokes are compared with contemporary legends and rumours about secret methods of surveillance for protestors used by the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (ex-KGB).

The main result of the research is a conclusion that even spontaneous political jokes are based on motifs and plots which are relevant for cultural memory of the society.
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Marina Bayduzh

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**Tyumen Lover's Bridge in Discourse of Modern
Urban Legends and Rituals**

The report deals with Tyumen Lover's Bridge (*Most Vlublennykh*) as a place which attracts various matrimonial, initiation and subcultural rituals and mythological narratives.

The pedestrian bridge crosses the main Tyumen's river. This bridge was built in 1987, but it is given a present name only in 2003. It was caused from some rites and habits of young people which began to flourish

in the end of 20th – beginning of 21st century. There are graffiti of different types; wedding rituals, such as a fixing love padlocks on a bridge's fences, wedding photography, a rite of “a farewell to her maiden name.” etc.; some spontaneous urban rituals with sculptures; narratives about “aura of love” on bridge and contrary legend about the ghost of the girl in white dress and some other teens who died on bridge; and, finally, conceptualization Lover's Bridge is one of the most substantial places for regional identification of city folk.

The Lover's Bridge is a symbol of Tyumen now. It's based on opinions of citizens, policies of the local administration and historical potential of this place. This place close correlated with the historic center of the city and may be named as “site of commemoration”. So we can talk about gradual inclusion of this bridge and surrounding places as significant objects into the physical and mental map of the city.

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**The Servant Problem: Narratives concerning
domestic help among Canadian Immigration
Foreign Service officers**

One of the overriding themes in the occupational folklife of foreign service officers is adaptation to new domestic contexts. Canadians growing up in the 1940s and 50s would rarely if ever have had contact with “servants,” yet their public role as diplomats in cultures where servants are normative required hiring and running a household with domestic help. Whether through the diplomatic expectations of hosting formal events in the home or the pressures and expectations to be an employer, Canadian overseas personnel—who tend to project an image of Canada with tones of both egalitarianism and cheerful self-sufficiency—struggle in their new roles.

This paper examines an oral history collection of Canadian Immigration Foreign Service officers about dealings with servants, through stories where the distinctions between personal experience narrative, legend, and joke become obscured. This paper builds upon a previous paper presented at PCL (Harrisburg, 2011) which examined the surprisingly rich role of and contexts for storytelling among foreign service officers.

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Monstrous Tales: Legends as Rhetorical

Constructions

In 2008, Elliot Oring applied Aristotle's basic means of persuasion (ethos, logos, and pathos) to the performance of legend and argued for a legend definition based on performance, rather than content or belief: 'A definition of legend in terms of its rhetoric would shift the assessment of legend from matters of belief to the performance of truth' (p. 160). Oring illustrated his analytic model with examples taken from orally performed legends presented as true stories by their tellers.

Taking my cue from Oring's pioneering paper, I argue for an approach to legend that connects legend studies more firmly to rhetorical and social constructionist theory, defining legend as a social construction. This implies bracketing the question 'What constitutes a legend?' and asking instead: 'What rhetorical tools do people employ to convince others that a particular story is or is not a legend?' This approach shifts attention away from the text describing the alleged event to the process of construction, focusing on the debate in which various parties seek to convince each other of these stories' veracity and value.

This perspective on legend is based on my study of crime legends in news media and on the 'vernacular web' (Howard 2005). *(P.Burger@hum.leidenuniv.nl)*

Véronique Champion-Vincent, CNRS-FMSH, France

Glurges as Exemplary Stories

This paper will present and discuss sets of Glurges (moving anecdotes carrying moral messages), their circulation and audiences.

The edifying stories built around the themes of "the lingerie" (A Story to Live By); the motto "happiness is a journey"; "the handicapped race" are picked up and reworked on the Internet personal pages that have replaced the scrapbooks of yesterday and aim at personal presentation and teaching via stories, in the line of the medieval *exempla*.

These Glurges emphasize the values of *Carpe Diem*, an immediate enjoyment of the simple pleasures of a life and of fraternity that are apparently in opposition with the mainstream view of individual success at all costs. *(championv@msh-paris.fr)*

David Clarke, Sheffield Hallam University, UK

The Angels of Mons Revisited

The summer of 2014 marks the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. Although fought with modern weapons, for civilians and combatants the reaction to warfare on an industrial scale was to reach out to a range of medieval talismans, wonders, legends and myth. For many in Britain and the Commonwealth the most inspiring and comforting legend of the war was the Angels of Mons. Although the battle of Mons, fought in Belgium in August 1914, was a mere skirmish compared to the horrors of the trenches it left a lasting legacy in the national psyche and continued to reappear at times of national crisis.

The genesis of the legend can be confidently traced to a short story, "The Bowmen," by the Welsh author of supernatural fiction, Arthur Machen, published by a London evening newspaper one month after the battle. But Machen was himself inspired by accounts of supernatural intervention in battle drawn from Greek myth, the Old Testament and the folklore of the British Army.

This paper draws parallels between the function of the Mons legend and related rumours from the First and Second World Wars. In doing so it explores what we can learn from the symbiotic relationship between literary fiction, contemporary legend and ancient myth.

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Jimmy Savile: From Rumour, To Scandal, To Investigation

On his death in October 2011, Sir Jimmy Savile was remembered as an eccentric broadcaster and prolific fundraiser (having raised an estimated £40M for charities). Less than a year later, a television documentary featured five women who claimed to have been abused by Savile. A subsequent January 2013 report by the Metropolitan Police (MPC) and the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) reported that an estimated 450 complaints of abuse had now been made against the late celebrity. A police investigation, known as Operation Yewtree, was launched into Savile and other notable 1970s/80s broadcasters.

Post-scandal, it was reported that rumours of Savile's paedophilia and sexual behaviour were made during his lifetime. A particular rumour, alleging necrophilia committed at a hospital as a form of reward for his charitable work, was described by celebrity

gossip website Popbitch as having been told to them “by probably 100+ people—including two DJs, six journalists and a member of the House of Lords”. One hospital where Savile volunteered has now been reported to have carried out an internal investigation into any access he had to their mortuary.

Further, allegations were made that Savile abused young female patients in a private room at the hospital, with the implication that the room (and his access to patients) was provided in recognition of his charitable work. The rumour—of abuse committed on the defenceless, while public authority ignored the matter in deference to his celebrity and philanthropy—thus moved from media gossip to scandal to police and public investigation.

In this paper I shall examine the rumours of Savile’s abuse made during his lifetime and incorporated into popular culture with him portrayed as an eccentric figure. I shall then re-examine the rumours post-scandal with Savile now portrayed as a monstrous figure. I shall consider the issues arising from the transformation from rumour to investigation and what this tells us of the interface of rumour and law.

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Gail de Vos, University of Alberta, Canada

Contemporary Comic Book Golem

The story of the golem, in all its guises, forms and meanings, has fascinated myriads of people since the first inception. The legend, however, did not gain great prominence in North American popular culture until fairly recently although it had been given both cinematic and print presence elsewhere in earlier times. When I first told the story of the golem over twenty-five years ago, the inaugural story in my professional career, there was no instantaneous recognition for the legend among the adult audience. This has changed dramatically since then through the publication of countless retellings, adaptations, adoptions, films, television programs and images on the Internet. Copious erudite monographs and articles discuss the phenomenon of the legend, the golem’s relationship to Prague as well as Europe as a whole, the Jewish identity inherent in the ongoing legend, and the visualization of the golem in popular culture.

This paper builds on that research to focus on the most recent contemporary comic book adoptions of the golem, both in print and online. Three illustrated texts, all published in 2013, are set in various time periods and countries extrapolating and exploring diverse elements

of the traditional golem legend. *The Golem* by Chris Kent is a story of jealousy, revenge and magic somewhere in Europe in 1897. Hilary Goldstein’s *The Golem* also revolves around the topic of revenge, but this time of a mother (the Golem) and her young son in a futuristic and horrific environment. Steve Niles and Dave Wachter’s *Breath of Bones: A Tale of the Golem* is set during World War II when the Golem is recreated to protect the inhabitants of a small Jewish stronghold and an injured British pilot. A plethora of recent webcomics featuring the golem will also be explored in light of the traditional legend.

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The Legends of the ‘Enchanted Moorish Girls’ in Portugal

My paper deals with a group of legends about the “Enchanted Moorish Girls.” These legends exist all over Portugal and in various parts of Spain, and they seem to be related to legends existing in Southern France and in some regions of Brazil and Venezuela.

The basis of these legends is the character of a Moorish girl (more rarely a Moorish man) who is enchanted in some lonely place, usually in the countryside. In my paper I will show the different plots told by these legends, and I will exemplify those plots with versions recorded in various regions.

Now rarely believed by informants, these legends are disappearing or /and have become folktales. However in some towns (namely in Southern Portugal) they underwent a patrimonialisation process and are now seen as an important element of the identity of those communities. As a consequence, these legends are present in storytelling events or in school activities, and are also used as themes in film and the fine arts, as I will show in my paper.

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A Sure Knowledge: Folk Archeology and Evidence for Belief among Mormon Missionaries

While the debates between faith and science are often framed as existing between competing groups, the desire to reconcile the two also exists in the lives of many Christians. Archeologists have sought for evidence of the flood, for Noah’s ark, and other biblical events. Many Latter-day Saints are no different as they seek for more scientific and tangible evidences to validate their faith. The most prevalent and well known of these

efforts are centered on evidence that support the truth of the Book of Mormon, which details “God’s dealings with ancient inhabitants of the Americas.” These accounts seek to bridge the world of sacred scripture with secular knowledge which sometimes conflicts with belief. Thus, tales of a white, bearded God both points to Christ’s visit to ancient Mesoamericans while explaining why Cortez was able to conquer the Aztec civilization with such a small force. While other versions of this folk archeology exist in other contexts, the attempts to explain the supernatural and sacred in realistic and tangible ways mark these and other examples as legends.

My paper will focus on the folk archeology many Japanese members and missionaries share, which, like all good legends, connects their everyday experience as the faithful to a grand and miraculous biblical narrative and tradition. While the performances of these legends do not follow rigid narrative forms, they all serve to reveal a faith-promoting narrative embedded in Japanese history, religion, and writing. This focus, for Japanese members, on local legends rather than the Mesoamerican legends common throughout America responds to and helps cope with the fears and anxieties of individuals in a homogenous culture whose religious identity marks them as very other.

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Who we are, who they are, and why we are fighting each other: War, Contemporary Legends and Identity in Post-Communist Ethnic Conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus

During the 1990s I worked as a social anthropologist and war correspondent (in total for more than 26 months) in war conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, Croatia) and the post-Soviet Caucasus (Chechnya, Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh). In the course of my field research I recorded an extensive collection of wartime contemporary/urban legends, metaphors and anecdotes with content relating to war and national identity.

In war-torn societies full of fear, hatred, and a sense of isolation on one hand, and propaganda and disinformation on the other, such wartime folklore plays an extremely prominent key part in explanation of the history of the conflict and the wartime situation, and in the self-image and political orientation of a large proportion of the public. This folklore either gets

around and replaces the official media sources, or provides them with inspiration and material rather than competing with them. It is a crucial aspect of these post-modern, so called *new identity wars* (Kaldor 1999) for national identity and self-determination.

Some of the wartime contemporary legends and associated historical myths in the different regions (often very distant from each other) are surprisingly similar and even have the same structure. In my contribution I focus on these basic similarities and the structural trends and tactics of war folklore which emerge right across the different regions studied.

One is the notion of *Us*—as an ancient great nation with roots (it is said) reaching back to the Ancient Greeks, Hittites, Egyptians, inhabitants of lost Atlantis, and which has given the world great men and great discoveries (the computer, the fork, yoghurt etc.); this land of (alleged) limitless mineral riches, miraculous healing herbs, magical mountains and air is desired by the *World* (our “ethnic enemies”, but also the *great powers of the West*, through their malignant intervention), which is trying to seize it in war at any cost. Another similarity is the idea of the pure beauty of our heroism and martyrdom, wreathed in legend and structurally a continuation of the heritage of legendary bandits, partisans or other paramilitary formations of the glorious national past. A third is the idea that “history has awoken” (from the “sleep” of communist modernity [Verdery 1999]), that “history is just repeating itself,” and that we as a people must again confront ancient menaces and the challenges of the past.

In sharp contrast, and once again mediated by contemporary legends, is the notion of *Them*—our ethnic enemies from time immemorial, who are just “bloodthirsty barbarians,” “murderous monsters,” “drinking the blood of our children,” “impaling captives on a stake,” “playing football with the severed heads of our martyrs,” and so forth. These are enemies who were always just “primitive savages,” living “somewhere in the mountains/forests/on the periphery,” who “never knew what asphalt was,” or “tap water” and even today “when put in modern blocks of flats” keep “cows in the lift” and “pigs in the bath.”

I would like to show how these contemporary legends are drawn not only from living authentic folklore traditions but also depend very strikingly on literature, film, art and national heritage museum institutions sponsored by the communist regime.

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Elissa R. Henken, University of Georgia, USA

Deadly Games

Video games have quickly joined a list of other entertainments (television, rock music) deemed harmful to the youth who enjoyed them. At first they were judged merely time-wasting and brain-dulling, but as the games became more violent and more realistic, the purported dangers increased. Reports that certain of the young men involved in mass shootings in the United States were ardent video gamers have reinforced the games' reputation for inciting violence and creating killers.

Current narratives—in a mix of oral and electronic reports, of folklore and news bulletins—present video games legends as deadly in three basic ways: causing the death of the player so caught up in the game that he fails to attend to basic biological needs; causing the player to shoot his family and/or strangers in a public setting; and causing parents engrossed in the game to kill their small children either accidentally (e.g., leaving them to drown in the bath) or out of annoyance at being interrupted.

In this preliminary exploration, I shall consider the various types of legends, the interplay of oral and electronic forms of communication in presenting them, and what they say about social concerns in the States.

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Sandy Hobbs, University of the West of Scotland, UK

The Relationship between Contemporary Legend and Rumor

Are "contemporary legends" and "rumors" entirely different types of phenomena? Some participants at early Perspectives on Contemporary Legend conferences, such as Mark Glazer and Georgina Boyes, employed the term "rumor legend". However, it then appears to have fallen out of favor, perhaps suggesting a consensus that rumor and legends are separate from each other. More recently, however, Gary Alan Fine and Bill Ellis, in their book *The Global Grapevine*, have treated the terms "rumor" and "legend" interchangeably, as witnessed by an entry in their index: "legend: See rumor".

This paper builds on and updates an earlier study (Cornwell and Hobbs, 1992). It examines the various ways in which the relationship between "rumor" and "legend" have been treated. It proposes that legend scholarship may benefit from adopting a stance that "contemporary legends" may best be considered as a special subdivision of the wider category "rumor". In

other words, to express it metaphorically, contemporary legends are a province of the empire of rumor.
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Elena Iugai, Vologda Institute of Business, Russia

The Students Legends in Moscow Gorky Literary Institute

Vologda Institute of Business, Vologda, Russia

The main goal of this presentation is to examine urban legends and students' jokes that are topical in Moscow Gorky Literary Institute. We focus on the following questions: What genre of students' folklore is timely in the institute? What is unique for this institute and what is typical for Russian students' folklore in the whole? What writers have become characters of legends about ghosts, anecdotes, jokes and why? How is the students' folklore inherited from generation to generation and what has changed in the course of time?

Moscow Gorky Literary institute is one of the most legendary educational organizations in Russia. Many Soviet and modern Russian writers graduated from this university. The country's ideology has provoked an image of "an unrecognized genius". This image is presented by two persons: Nikolay Rubtsov, a famous Soviet poet, whose legends have been still existing in the students' hostel (Dobrolubova st., 9/11) and a genius prose writer Andrey Platonov, remaining in memories by numerous legends and anecdotes about him. Besides, there are several narratives about other students. Our presentation provides the analysis of the most interesting legends plots such as "Platonov as a cleaner in Literary institute yard," "The ghost of Rubtsov in the students hostel," "Rubtsov is drinking with the writers -classics" etc.

Students' jokes, beliefs, sayings and pre-exam rituals form another class of the students' folklore. We will present the folklore of student life in Gorky Literary Institute as a complex that includes various verbal and visual genres. But the folk narratives are the principal point.
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Petr Janeček, Charles University, Czech Republic

Bloody Mary or Krvavá Máří?: Globalization and Czech Children's Folklore

Expressive cultural practice involving the ghostly figure of Bloody Mary, a staple part of folklore of children and adolescents in the West, represents unique amalgamation of ritual practices, folk beliefs and demonological narratives. This phenomenon,

extensively studied by Western folklorists since the 1970s (e. g. Langlois 1978, Klintberg 1988) is closely connected to wider discourse of youth ghostlore, often interpreted as ritual reflection of prepubescent anxiety (Dundes 1998).

The paper, using data documented during longitudinal field research of Czech contemporary folklore, presents growing popularity of this expressive practice in Czech setting in the last twenty years, starting with the late 1990s. Reflecting global, ever-shifting contemporary culture flows, especially changes in local realities of “ethnoscapes,” “mediascapes” and “ideoscapes” (Appadurai 1996) connected with repatriation, global popular culture and later vernacular internet texts, this practice seems to be both parallel to and a transformation of more traditional ritual practices such as children’s spiritism of the 1970s and 1980s.

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Mira C. Johnson, Penn State Harrisburg, USA

In the Footsteps of St. Patrick and Pagans: Syncretic Legends on the Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage

In Ireland, legend says that St. Patrick came to the mountain Croagh Patrick while he was traversing Ireland. He spent forty days and forty nights on the mountain’s summit, battling demons and, ultimately, overcoming them by the grace of God. This story is the official legend that gives the mountain Christian significance, to which there has been a tradition of pilgrimage documented since 1113 C.E. But in practice, it is clear that the pre-Christian legends of the site also play a role in the sacred significance of the mountain for pilgrims, such as the belief that the mountain was a site for the celebration of Lughnasadh; that the Croagh Patrick pilgrimage trail is part of a larger trail that stretches to the ritual mounds of Tara; and that the rock piles on the shoulders of the mountain are cairns linked with pre-Christian burial ceremonies.

These pre-Christian legends have a syncretic relationship with the legend of St. Patrick allowing pilgrims to interact with stories of St. Patrick alongside those of Lugh the sun god or ancient pagan rites. Rather than the Christian tradition subsuming the pre-Christian tradition, both legends have found a way to coexist and influence one another. When Pilgrims travel to the mountain, they are not solely interacting with the Catholic legend, but are consciously interacting with a combination of the two.

This paper considers how legend interacts with place, specifically how physical landscapes hold the

echoes of previous stories, carrying them into more current iterations of the stories and interpretations of the sites. In the case of Croagh Patrick, burial cairns, standing stones, and even the geographic positioning of the mountain itself cement stories into the place the pilgrimage occurs, allowing them to endure as long as their physical repositories last.

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Adriana Kábová, Charles University, Czech Republic **Blood in radios, heads in televisions: Identity and 'civilizing forces' beyond the Sumbanese rumors**

In many areas of South East Asia, Eastern Indonesia not excepting, head-hunting and kidnapping rumors have regularly appeared. In the island Sumba rumors in connection with construction sacrifice were noted. According to these rumors heads or other body parts are required to fortify constructions of dams, bridges or other buildings of public interest. However, in the beginnings of the 1990’s when electricity and electronics have been broadly introduced to Sumba, new fearsome images were integrated into the already established concepts. In these newly emerged rumors, blood is obtained to be transported out of Sumba and further utilized in the production of batteries and electronic devices.

The aim of this paper is to indicate blood as a matter identified with power and to reveal the notion of this substance in west Sumbanese magic practice. Besides that, characters of the rumors will be analyzed. While the kidnapping rumors were targeted towards missionaries and Dutch colonizers in the past, recently they and blood-stealing rumors alike point at tourists, Indonesian incomers from other islands and the agents of the state. The role of ‘local outsiders’ as accomplices of non-Sumbanese blood ordering party will be explored.

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Dana Keller, University of British Columbia, Canada **Digital Folklore: Marble Hornets, the Slender Man, and the Emergence of Folk Horror in Online Communities**

In June 2009 a group of forum-goers on the popular culture website, *Something Awful*, created a monster called the Slender Man. Inhumanly tall, pale, black-clad, and with the power to control minds, the Slender Man references many classic, canonical horror monsters while simultaneously expressing an acute anxiety about the contemporary digital context that birthed him. This

anxiety is apparent in the collective legends that have risen around the Slender Man since 2009, but it figures particularly strongly in the Web series *Marble Hornets*.

This 30-minute paper examines *Marble Hornets* as an example of an emerging trend in digital, online cinema that I call “folk horror”: a subgenre of horror that is produced by online communities of everyday people as opposed to professional crews working within the film industry. Works of folk horror address the questions and anxieties of our current, digital age by reflecting the changing roles and behaviours of the everyday person, who is becoming increasingly involved with the products of popular culture. After providing a context for understanding folk horror, I analyze *Marble Hornets* through the lens of folkloric narrative structures such as legends and folktales, and vernacular modes of filmmaking such as *cinéma direct* and found footage horror.

Folk horror might be a new term, but it is an old concept, one that reflects the important role that community plays in the forging of fear. It has been suggested that the Slender Man is a tulpa: a creature brought into physical existence by collective thought. As such he is truly a monster for the digital age as he reflects the many faces—positive and negative—of the increasingly “connected” individual. Through the lens of folk horror we can witness significant developments in both contemporary horror and storytelling.

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policemen find lost persons, solve crimes, but also help people achieve balance and peace, mediate “messages” between the living and the dead (*Medium of Long Island*).

Episodes of the Estonian series are built upon a single narrative telling the story of one family or one person. A folklorist would classify some of the stories as belonging to the genre of legend, memorate, lengthy belief, etc. Topical division would be also unambiguous (sudden death, curse and evil eye, portentous and come-true dreams, attempts at changing predetermined fate, etc.) The majority of the stories are similar to recorded legends—embellished with detailed visual personal experiences. Many circumstances common to narrativity are in effect: presentation of one narrative episode can spontaneously elicit presentation of another (close) narrative, the story is veined with beliefs and belief attitudes. Aside from the certain upside down aspects of the situation—the psychic (together with the show host and camera crew arrives) at the client's home not vice versa, and that most clairvoyants don't speak Estonian and need an interpreter or middle-man—the audience finds the performance a plausible belief narrative story.

My paper will examine closely the integrity aspects of such visualised transmedial belief stories, their associations with folklore, the folkloric communication process and unique traits of narrativity.

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Clairvoyants in Estonian Television. Media Influences on Contemporary Narratives

In 2013, one Estonian television channel presented a season of locally produced mystic series *Clairvoyant Come to Help (Appi tuleb selgeltnägija)*. The series featured four internationally renowned sensitives who solved inexplicable, tragic and mystical cases from Estonia. The participants included the colorful Moscovian witch Alena Orlova, the young mage Deniss Kholodnitsky, an Estonian-dwelling regular participant of international clairvoyant contests, and another season's runner up Ilona Kaldre as well as the “world famous wiseman” Veet Mano from the USA. The series mimicked a Russian television series of 13 years: *Battle of Clairvoyants*. That series was also bought in and tried for a few seasons in Estonia. Participants contested among themselves with their various skills, powers and methods of fortune telling, healing, etc. The series was modelled after the US series where psychics help

Andres Kuperjanov, Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia
Archaeoastronomy—linking legends with research

The majority of our knowledge about Estonian folk astronomy dates back to the 19th century. Since the last quarter of the 20th century, the so called movement of paleosciences has made waves. In the 1980s Estonia, being a part of this meant identifying with forces opposed to the stagnated Soviet official social sciences. An example is the book *Hõbevalge (Silverly White, 1975)* by Lennart Meri, which was a mixture of historical documents and fantasy about Kaali meteorite.

One of the leaders of Baltic archaeoastronomy was Heino Eelsalu (1930-1998). He was a professional astronomer interested in the history of astronomy. Starting from the cultural historical aspects of the history of astronomy, he ended up studying prehistoric astrognosy. One of his techniques involved translating folklore texts and runo songs using astronomic calculations. Many of his research papers (with

speculative narratives and ideas) circulated later as authentic folklore, or true documents for identity-making.
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Stag Party Gone Wrong: Legends and Ritual Order

Stag parties are commonly known rites of passage practiced by narrowly defined communities of young(er) men, private rituals organized by the groom or his best man to mark the transition from being single to being in a culturally acknowledged relationship via marriage. Ethnographic researches of stag parties in Slovenia are comparatively nothing special in showing that two predominant practical traits of these rituals—extensive consumption of alcohol and series of humiliating and bizarre tasks and pranks putting the groom's health or life in danger. As these ritual practices usually break the norms of culturally sanctioned behavior and are highly sexualized, they are shrouded in "semi-secrecy" from members of the wider community, which creates a certain intrigue that also generates a repertoire of folk narratives/legends.

When it comes to the content of these stories they are twofold. On one hand they are somewhat jovial half-true reports as they are the integral part of the pranks themselves. But on the other hand they take a dark turn as one can observe and collect stories about tasks and pranks that caused life-altering injury, mental breakdown, or death of the groom. "Stag party legends" in Slovenia are predominantly centered on the latter. A prominent example of these narratives is a fairly recent set of stories presenting cases of polyurethane foam squirted into the shoes of an unconsciously drunk groom, which caused the blood to stop flowing, resulting in amputation or even death, and always in cancellation of the marriage.

The paper is based on contextual interpretative analysis of culturally- and community-specific details of these narratives, arguing that catastrophic stag party stories are not only cautionary tales but also important means of maintaining established ritual order, private and public, as practiced by the community in general.

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Haunting the Asylum: Community Reactions to Mental Illness and Institutionalization at Indiana's Abandoned Central State Hospital

Over the last half century, psychiatric institutions have become the focal point for debates over whether institutionalizing the mentally ill allows for the best, most viable means of treatment. The deinstitutionalization movement came to the fore in the 1960s and 1970s in the United Kingdom, the United States, and parts of Europe, calling for a transition from long-term asylum care for the mentally ill to outpatient care facilitated by regular hospitals or community health centers (Yanni 2007). With deinstitutionalization came the gradual abandonment of the asylum.

However, photographers, tourists, legend trippers, and urban explorers continue to chronicle visits to these sites through books, websites, blogs, reality TV shows, and other mediums, indicating that while the function of asylums may have changed, public fascination with them has not.

Arguably, the strongest impetuses behind this fascination are narratives, which reflect and negotiate cultural views and perceptions of madness. The contemporary legend genre has continued to serve as a narrative vehicle for communicating socio-cultural anxieties regarding the mentally ill, as well as culturally acceptable means to diagnose, treat, and institutionalize them. The asylum itself often serves as the setting for such narrative reactions to madness.

Through historical and ethnographic research, this paper considers Indiana's Central State Hospital—an abandoned asylum located in Indianapolis, Indiana—as a case study, in which I examine community reactions to mental illness and institutionalization depicted through local supernatural legends. Specific themes to be explored include fears of patient maltreatment, psychiatric treatments, and false institutional confinement.
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Revisiting King Christian and the Yellow Star: A Historical Legend as Personal Journey

Many Jewish Americans of the post-World War II generation are familiar with the historical legend of King Christian X donning the yellow Star of David as an anti-Nazi protest during the 1940-45 occupation of Denmark. In 1975 I published "The Legend of the King and the Star" (*Indiana Folklore*, 1975), which became

the definitive study of that legend, describing its genesis during and after the war. The article also functioned as a debunking of the three commonly believed versions of the legend: that the king threatened to wear the star were it instituted, that the king wore the star in public, and that the king and thousands of his countrymen wore the star to confuse the Nazis as to who was Jewish and who was not. The article further offered a theory of the necessity of the legend in confronting and responding to the horrors of the Holocaust.

The continuing quasi-definitiveness of the original article is indicated by its continued citation on popular urban legend Web sites and in articles and books about Denmark's Nazi occupation. New historical revelations have substantially changed our knowledge of the historical facts surrounding the legend, its diffusion, and the rescue of Denmark's Jews to the extent that many of the original article's most important points differ substantially from what we now know to be historical truth. Most remarkably, access to the king's own wartime diary by his 2009 biographer, historian Knud J. V. Jespersen, reveals that one of the three versions of the legend has turned out to be incontrovertible fact, after all.

From my childhood to today, this legend has functioned as part of my own identity as a postwar Danish immigrant growing up in an American community with a large Jewish population, and whose parents lived through Denmark's Nazi occupation. My repeated revisit of the Legend of the King and the Star continues to be an important personal journey.

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The Apocalypse on Twitter

Just like in oral transmission, (product) rumors can circulate in written form on Twitter. These rumors get retweeted, slightly altered, as well as ridiculed. During a short term computational project in 2012 on the use of language, the identity of Twitter users and the circulation of rumors, we monitored Dutch micro messaging for four months. We didn't encounter many trending topics in product rumors in that period. The rumor that people are going to have to pay for every WhatsApp message in the future, was retweeted regularly. Quite a few retweets spread the message that many food products secretly contain pig fat (gelatin), which is bad news for vegetarians and Muslims who like Oreo cookies or Nespresso coffee for instance. Both

rumours got about 2000 (re)tweets in four months, which is not spectacular.

There was one trending topic in December 2012 however that we could have seen coming for a few years now: the New Age prophecy of the End of Times on December 21st, 2012 – all because some Mayan calendar supposedly ended on this date. For two weeks long—a week before the Apocalypse and a week after—we monitored Twitter for Dutch words concerning the End of the World. This time we caught 52.000 tweets in two weeks.

When did the stream of rumors peak? How many retweets were involved? Was there much micro variation? What was the overall content of the tweets? What emotions were expressed in the tweets? How did religious people respond? And finally: how many people confessed they were truly scared because of the prophecy? What kind of people are we dealing with? These are intriguing questions that we can answer by using a few basic computational tools.

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Traditional Christian Legend in the Contemporary Urban Folklore

The goal of the paper is to demonstrate contemporary life of old folk legends about saints in the contemporary urban oral tradition. The legends about saints are well known in the social group of so called *воцерковленные* (people who regularly participate in the church services, have their own spiritual counselor and strictly follow his recommendations). The other people usually do not know enough about saints. Their acquaintance with them begins when people are going to perform a rite at any sacred place such as a saint's or venerated *старец/старуца* (old man/woman) tomb, chapel or holy spring. The only necessary knowledge is that a sacred object helps to get their desires fulfilled after visiting the object, writing a note, touching a tomb, leaving on it or getting from it a flower, bread, egg, etc. A legend should explain why they do so, why they visit properly this object and complete properly this action. The knowledge about a saint himself does not matter, but about some miracles does. The old and well known miracles are used as a model for new ones: stories about healing or punishment use traditional text structure but contemporary circumstances and persons. These texts do not speak about faith, righteousness or sin, but about desire (of money, love, job) and its

fulfillment or about punishment of those, who are treated as "others."

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Rat or Dog?: The "Caniche Toy" Legend in Oral and Virtual Argentinean Versions

Legends regarding transformations of animals are spread all over the world, and circulate as well in the Internet. Many of them are connected with ritual discourses, regarding social beliefs supported by cosmovisional patterns which affirm the relationship between humans, animals and supernatural beings. One dominant topic of legendary discourse is the antithetical dynamics between reality and appearance. This topic, regarding the opposition between what things seem to be, and what things really are, is the axis of the legend I deal with in this paper.

This legend refers to the tribulations of a man who buys an expensive dog in the Argentinean fair of *La Salada*, which then turns out to be an ugly rat. I compare oral versions collected in the urban context of Buenos Aires city in October 2012 with virtual narratives circulating in the Internet, which reproduce as well pieces of news appeared in local newspapers. I point out the relationship of these versions with discourses regarding zoomorphic metamorphoses of devilish creatures in the ritual ceremony of "the Salamanca". Such ritual ceremony, whose climax is the contract with the devil, expresses cultural aspects regarding social beliefs in the supernatural in Argentinean local communities.

My aim is to point out the intertwining between folklore genres such as legend, rite and other narrative expressions, which express the differential identity of Argentinean communities. (inespalleiro@gmail.com)

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Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Slovak Rumours and Conspiracy Theories

The academic research of rumours and contemporary legends still belongs to a bit marginalized topics in Slovakia, even though they play a significant role in various spheres of the social life there. This contribution will deal with an ideological aspect of a specific subcategory of rumours—conspiracy theories—as well as with the legends related to conspiracism as a worldview principle. The common denominator of these

narratives is sharing feelings of threat and uncertainty. The paper will show what kind of inner and outer enemies traditionally play important roles in the conspiracism-related narratives circulating in Slovakia, which of them belong to the most persisting ones and what kind of argumentation strategies or visualisations are used by constructing the persuasive stories. The central point of the analysis is a categorical opposition of the image of hero versus antihero (connected with category of honour versus betrayal), which serves as an instrument for legitimization or delegitimization of the (real or fictional) group worldviews.

The analysis also tries to find examples of (functional, genetical or other) relations and intersections between conspiracy theories and contemporary legends. As the source will serve popular texts and discussions spread by the Internet (data were collected mostly between the years 2003-2008), which will be compared with material from the period of the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

The aim of this analysis is an attempt to understand the role of conspiracy theories and conspiracism-related legends by constructing the collectively shared self-images. The author continues in her own research on conspiracy theories as narrative genre, taking into consideration also other similarly focused studies (e.g. collection of papers *Rumor Mills* /2005/edited by G. A. Fine, V. Campion-Vincent and C. Heath etc.).

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Urban Texts and Ritual Practices in Modern Moscow

During the last three decades we have seen the rise of interest in the all sorts of "mystical" topics. This period is characterized by the rising "mystical curiosity" and thereby re-opening of the religious issues being restricted for nearly 70 years. Nowadays, legalization of Christianity and other confessions, neo-pagan beliefs, and mythologizing of Soviet reality are manifested in mythological narratives and neo-worship practices mainly associated with two groups of places in a city.

Group (i) includes historical sacred places (the graves of saints, places of worship). For example, there are Sophia's Tower of Novodevichy Convent (people put notes with wishes into the cracks of the wall), Golosov Ravine with sacred stone called Deviy ("Virgin") which is associated by modern worshipers with giving fertility to

women. Some narratives concern venerating the tombs of elders Koreysha and Sampson Sivers in Nikolo-Arkhangelskoye cemetery.

Group (ii): places associated with the contemporary (Soviet and post-Soviet) history. Muscovites tell about the "radioactive" building of the Russian Academy of Sciences (so-called the "Golden Brain"), Beria's haunted house. Basically, these types of popular myths consist of mythological versions of the political leaders' biographies, many of them concerning Stalin and Beria.

Such texts and worship practices are considered as important elements of local culture, they reflect the "images of urban places" existing in the urbanites' minds, mark the strategies of self-identification of Muscovites and people who have been living in the city for a while.

The paper is based on the field data (100 interviews collected during the field work in Moscow [2011-2013]), written sources, folklore sources circulating on the Internet. It analyses the urban legends and narratives about sacred places of modern Moscow. The main goal of the work is creating an online-map of Urban Legends and Sacred Places of modern Moscow.

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Pohádka: Birth of a Legend Tripping Site

The case of Ivan Roubal was one of the most discussed Czech criminal cases of the 1990s. Roubal, who was operating mostly in Prague and Southern Bohemia, murdered eight confirmed victims between 1991 and 1994, was arrested shortly thereafter and received a life sentence in the year 2000. After his imprisonment, his solitary cottage in Bohemian Forest, where some of these murders were probably committed, became abandoned and slowly fell into ruin.

This paper attempts to trace the emergence of a legend tripping site at this cottage, which is by coincidence named Pohádka ("Fairy tale"). Various processes related to the evolution of a new narrative may be demonstrated on this case. These include integration of older local folklore and place names into the overall contemporary meaning of the site, emergence of specific descriptions of haunting related to the cottage, and handling of the contrast between the grim history of the place and its romantic surroundings.

The internet (especially geocaching sites) and mass media also play an important role in consolidation of

the place as a legend tripping destination. Using these resources, interviews with visitors and direct observation at the site, a preliminary phenomenological and social analysis of the place was carried out, which may help to explain some aspects of site-specific behavior of legend trippers and usage of various related contemporary folklore motifs. The example of Pohádka also allows us to discuss the role of romantic and touristic approaches to "haunted" sites, which may constitute a legend tripping modus different from popular legend trips of adolescents.

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Darwin's Deathbed Confession: The Evolution of a Christian Contemporary Legend

After his famous voyage on the HMS Beagle, Charles Darwin proposed his theory of evolution in *On the Origin of the Species*. Christian aversion to the theory began early because its implications implicitly argue against creation as described in the Book of Genesis. Since the early 20th century, American Christians have circulated a contemporary legend telling of Darwin renouncing evolution and converting to Christianity on his deathbed. First published in 1915, Lady Hope penned a column in the Washington-Examiner describing a meeting with Darwin in the last year of his life. By her account, she met with an ailing, bedridden Darwin, who expressed an enthusiasm for scripture and a concern for the consequences of his life's work. From this initial piece of writing—challenged by Darwin's children—the story evolved in oral tradition to the legend American Christians tell today. While partly a legend meant to combat support for the teaching of and belief in evolution, the legend also confirms the power of Christianity to redeem sinners and reverse courses, even among heretics. The importance of examining the legend extends beyond the study of Charles Darwin's life and speaks to the many conversion legends attached to other atheists, anti-Christians, and nonbelievers, such as John Wayne, Carl Sagan, and even the still-living Richard Dawkins. Later-life and deathbed conversions are frequent legendary topics that are important to consider as part of the study of contemporary American Christian culture.

I conclude by attempting to generalize from lessons learned about Charles Darwin's legendary deathbed conversion to look at other narratives of legendary conversions and deathbed confessions in the United States.

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Lemons With AIDS Filling, or The Fears of the

Modern Human

The paper presents an attempt to investigate a part of modern Lithuanian folklore, namely, the so-called urban legends and the scary rumors that inspire them. So far this phenomenon has avoided consistent scholarly attention in Lithuania and such folklore is not systematically collected yet. Both in Lithuania and abroad the spread of modern folklore was particularly galvanized by the appearance of such forms of communication, as internet chat sites, e-mail and interactive electronic media. These were the sources from which the most popular samples of recently created Lithuanian contemporary narratives and rumors were picked up. It should be noted, however, that such electronic means of existence, completely uncharacteristic to the traditional folklore, determine the global character of themes and contents of the contemporary folklore, i.e. when narratives based on globally well-known rumors are spreading in Lithuania as well.

Comparing Lithuanian urban legends and rumors with the traditional folklore, is an attempt to establish whether or not these pieces should be rightly regarded as folklore and in what way they are similar to or different from the traditional folk belief legends and old beliefs.

The distinctive features of the contemporary narratives (such as multiple forms of expression and content, ways of existence and transmission, means of enhancing the impression of credibility, etc.) are discussed in more detail. Attention is drawn towards one of the essential factors encouraging the appearing and spread of rumors and contemporary narratives, namely, various social and cultural fears existing in the modern society. *(raganagar@gmail.com)*

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Qui Prodest: Framing Authorship and Meaning of Russian Heavenly Letters

Since the end of the 19th century and till now, media (especially press) have been an arena for the struggle against distribution of so-called "heavenly letters" by various authorities, ranging from the Orthodox Church to the Soviet officials. The reason for this was an idea that these letters are a danger for the society and individuals: the media have shown these folklore texts

as an attack on the dominant ideology, as a mode of religious propaganda, and even as a magic power.

For over one hundred years, many social groups were accused in distributing the letters, yet the general strategy turns out to be surprisingly persistent: the media tend to marginalize the distributors and demonize the suggested authors to prevent the masses from following this practice. This was predictably done using frames, pre-composed by authorities and media to find, describe and destroy the social enemy. In line with contemporary power discourse, distributors of heavenly letters are described either as malevolent forces or their victims; class enemies or religious marginals; mentally ill persons or children. On the other hand, people have composed their own narratives on the nature and purpose of these letters, only partially based on the frequently changing official viewpoint.

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Vernacular Religion, Orthodox Doctrine, and Communist Ideals in the Holy Spring of Iskitim

Iskitim, a city in western Siberia, is the home to a "new" holy spring that is attracting significant attention in the local community. Visitors come year-round (even in the harshest of winters) to collect and drink the water, to bathe in the spring, or to be baptized. The local parish priest, Father Igor Zatolokin, has been the impetus behind construction of the Cathedral of the New Martyrs and Confessors and various other buildings on the territory of the spring. The spring is located at a former rock quarry that served as a *gulag* (prison camp) until the 1960s. The legend of this spring states that a group of *gulag* prisoners were executed there, an event that has led to the spring's classification as holy. Even though little to nothing is known about the prisoners supposedly killed at this spot, the congregation views them as martyrs to the Orthodox faith.

This paper will examine how the spring represents an intersection of vernacular religious belief, Orthodox doctrine and the experience of the Soviet past. The development of this spring in the context of Soviet history and the post-socialist Orthodox understanding of the Soviet period will be emphasized as the basis for belief in this holy spring. These conceptions of the past lead people to conclude that the *gulag* victims were indeed Orthodox martyrs. Ironically, a majority of Siberians still votes for the Communist party in elections

while simultaneously professing a faith in Orthodoxy. These opposing cultural strands represented by the spring illustrate the complexity of folk religion as a phenomenon. (j.rouhier@uky.edu)

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Narratives in Sacred Places: Role of Legends in Pilgrimage Traditions of Modern Belokrinitskie Old Believers in West Siberia

Modern Belokrinitskie Old Believers (also known as Russian Old Believer's Orthodox Church) present one of the most numerous and striking denominations of Old Belief in Russia. Its center is situated in Moscow, while several communities exist in West Siberia. The research was connected with investigation of pilgrimage traditions of the latter. All materials were collected by the author within the Siberian Ethnographical Crew, affiliated to Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Science.

In the last twenty years there have emerged a large number of new sacred places revered by that religious group. Some of them have become especially significant to Old Believers of the region and that importance has launched pilgrimage to the shrine. Uppermost, eight-pointed crosses should be mentioned. They are erected on places where Belokrinitskie churches and monasteries had been situated from the second half of 19th century to the beginning of the 20th, until they were closed and destroyed by the Soviet Government, mainly in the 1930s. Nowadays that process of "reritualization" is followed by active commemoration and creation of narratives dedicated to the sacred place. Narratives appear as commentary to events, historical or miraculous, that happened in the place, or to people whose lives elapsed there. West Siberian Old Believers attach a particular value to stories about martyrs who died protecting their Church and Faith. Such martyrs as the archpriest Avvakum, the bishop of Tomsk and Altai Tikhon and other saints have been canonized and hallowed by Russian Belokrinitskie Old Believers' Church. Narratives, pronounced when the procession arrives at the erected cross, are thought to clarify for pilgrims the meaning of the place and maintain tradition. That works on reproduction of group identity of Belokrinitskie Old Believers as well.

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Wedding Revenge: Legends and the Culture of Fear

This contemporary legend, aka "The Groom's (or Bride's) Revenge," tells the story of a wedding reception that goes horribly wrong. The Groom (or Bride), during the reception, reveals that his or her spouse slept with the maid of honor/ best man. Then the aggrieved party storms out. Sometimes a photograph of the offending couple in delicto flagrante is produced as evidence of the betrayal. This legend has circulated since the mid 1980's with a flurry of activity in the mid 1990's. Contemporary legends reflect society's fears, anxieties, and areas of stress. However, there is a group of legends like this one that actively creates those fears, not simply perpetuates them. This legend has no moral, no lesson, no wisdom imparted to its audience. Moreover, these legends "testify to an overwhelming condition of fear and to our own sense of impotence within it." They reflect our anomic world. It constructs a culture of fear or as Gerbner called it "The Mean World Syndrome." At one level the legend does comment on love, betrayal, and humiliation, but these legends also have a profound effect on their audiences.

Drawing on the work of Henry Jenkins, we argue that these legends provide a fantasy of empowerment and transgression, show that the world is not all "sweetness and light," and offer an intense emotional experience. We investigate this narrative in order to explore the relationship between legends and fear. It is not a fear of bogeymen, killers with axes lurking in backseats, or madmen with hooks, but the fear that we live in a dangerous world—a fear that even in our most cherished occasions terrible shit happens.

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Snow White and the Legend of Margaretha von Waldeck

The Waldecker Land in the state of Hesse, Germany is known for many sagas and legends, especially surrounding witches and dwarfs. One particular legend however told by the people in the city of Bergfreiheit and in the region of the Kellerwald forest, has significantly gained in popularity these past years, attracted national media attention, and caught the interest of scholar Eckhard Sander. It is the urban legend of beautiful Margaretha von Waldeck, the daughter of the Count of Waldeck, who allegedly was not only one of the fairest maidens in the region and

travelled past the Siebengebirge (Seven Mountains) but also became the victim of a murderous plot by being poisoned with Arsen.

Modern legend has it that Margaretha was the “real” Snow White and that the story of her tragic fate found its way into the fairy-tale collection of the Brothers Grimm. The story of Margaretha goes hand in hand with other local contemporary legends: (1) *Zwerge* (dwarfs), *Wichtelmnännchen* (imps), and *Heinzelmännchen* (brownies) are said to have lived in the caves and rocks in the region (presumably based on prematurely aged children who used to work in the mines); (2) a sorcerer named Kohl allegedly enchanted an apple tree as a warning to prevent children from stealing the apples, but later healed the girl who was poisoned by an apple from that tree; (3) the ghost of the (harmless) “white woman” whose coffin slipped down during transport on the way between Hüdgingen and Albertshausen; and many more. Based on these contemporary legends, the town Bergfreiheit has adopted the term “Snow White village” and has become an important tourist attraction.

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Ariel Castro’s House of Horrors: Legend Settings and Characters in the News

On May 6, 2013, three young women and a child emerged from a house in Cleveland, Ohio, where a bus driver named Ariel Castro had held them captive for years. All three of the women had been designated “missing,” and their families had feared they had died. As the women told police about the rapes and forced miscarriages they had endured during their captivity, public outrage grew. This outrage was expressed in news articles on the Internet, as well as on television and in printed newspapers.

As Russell Frank explains in *Newslore* (2011), public reactions to major current events can take various folkloric forms, including legends, jokes, altered photographs, and parodies. Articles about the captivity and rescue of the three young women in Cleveland show the influence of both legend settings and legend characters. In particular, the concept of a “house of horrors” brings Castro’s house into the legend’s domain. After the conclusion of Castro’s trial, as part of his plea bargain, the house was torn down: a traditional expression of disapproval that has been practiced since ancient times.

In addition to this well-known legend setting, certain characterizations demonstrate the legend’s influence. Castro fits Jeannie Banks Thomas’s analysis of the “Extreme Guy,” an excessively violent man who violates social norms in horrific ways. The three captive women are all victims of coercion and violence; portrayed together, they represent the legend’s concern for women’s safety, as well as worry about violence against women in American society.

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Star Power: The Collision of History and Legend in Children’s Literature

At first glance, the common denominators between “The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian of Denmark” by Carmen Agra Deedy and “Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt” by Deborah Hopkinson seem limited. Both are recently published popular children’s books but the former is set in World War II Denmark with a privileged white king as its hero and the latter is set in the antebellum American South with an ostensibly powerless young slave girl as its plucky heroine.

Yet there are many provocative similarities between the two narratives. Both are based on contemporary legends that have been documented by folklorists as superficially inaccurate but that re-surface repeatedly as historical reality. Indeed the authors of these books seem to be aware that the stories that they are rendering lack veracity but, nonetheless, they opt to commemorate the legends in books that are often used as mini-history lessons for children. This ambivalence about authenticity has earned the authors of these (and similar other books on the same subject) the wrath of some critics.

This paper will scrutinize multiple connections. It will examine the links between the contemporary legends themselves and the corresponding children’s book. It will also explore the similarities between the two stories, a surprising number of character, plot, and narrative elements are common to the two legends and the two books. The potency of stars, for example, is a key element in both narratives. It will also document the praise and criticism the books have earned. By increasing our understanding of the factors that contribute to the popularity of the children’s books, we can also further anticipate what narrative motifs when

found in a contemporary legend will contribute to the public's persistence in believing it to be true.

(pturner@college.ucla.edu)

Aurore Van de Winkel

Catholic University in Louvain, Belgium

French Politicians versus Contemporary Legends and Rumours: Reactions, Denials and Consequences

The advent of the new technologies of information and communication contributes to the international diffusion of many and varied informal discourses, disorganization of the hierarchy of enunciators, and finally journalism influenced by the illusion of live information. In this context, varied information which is not confirmed (rumours, hoaxes, gossip and contemporary legends) circulates rapidly and extensively. This information creates or interprets, among others, current politics and can target politicians. These unofficial discourses retake either, true but not still official information, or simply false information.

These are created or retaken and adapted by citizens and political opponents to anticipate current politics and the consequences thereof, to tackle them, to understand them, to make sense of them, to combat them or to traverse them.

In parallel or in reaction to the storytelling proposed by political leaders, these unofficial discourses co-construct themselves with tweets and posts on social networks, blogs and forums. They are relayed by the media to a public at large and sometimes, they also crystallize them in attractive scenarios with high impact.

How are the recent rumours and contemporary legends constructed to target French politicians? How do these rumours and legends describe French political personalities? What reactions do these create within the public? How do these personalities try to deny them and with what results? In this paper, based on an analyse of discourses and press articles diffused on the Internet, we analyse three cases from French current events: the contemporary legends and rumours targeting the Minister of Justice, Christiane Taubira in 2013; the contemporary legend of 9-3 touching several French middle town mayors; and thirdly, the rumours of President François Hollande, his ex-partner and his mistress in 2014. (aurore.vandewinkel@uclouvain.be)

The following abstracts were accepted but were ultimately not presented at Prague: the editor includes them for reference.

Tamara Goryaevna Basangova

Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

Kalmyk Legends and Traditions (On the Classification)

Legends and traditions holding a special place in the oral poetic art of all nations are the most interesting and significant genres in the folk prose of Kalmyk people. Legends and traditions have been functioning since the depth of unrecorded time. Being integral part of the spiritual culture, it contains the facts of its ethnogenesis. Tale prose of Kalmyk people is represented by myths, legends, traditions designated in all Mongolian languages as “*domog*” which was mentioned as early as in “The Secret History of the Mongols” (120 “*domog*” 201 “*domogci*” tale-teller).

The word “*domog*” is derived from “*dom*” which means “magic, magic medicine, quackery, sorcery.” In the combination “*am dom*” it serves as a tack (clip), the ending formula in magic ritual texts. The designation of prosaic genres of folklore by this term shows that the reproduction of oral folklore texts had influence on the listeners and was therapeutic by nature. Narrative style used by the tellers of Kalmyk tale prose (myths, legends, tales) based on the popular terminology bears the name “*хуучан келх huuchan kelh*”—“to speak of, narrate antiquity.” Legends and tales are classified on the themes, but any thematic classification is relative.

These are cosmogonic legends about creation of the world, origin of the Earth, the Sky, the Stars, the Sun and the Moon, Buddhist legends and tales (The Tale of Burkhan Bagshi [the image of the Teacher]), Maidary, Ochirvany, etiological legends about the origin and particular qualities of animals, birds, insects, plants, some natural phenomena, demonological legends and tales about supernatural beings and evil spirits (demons, devils мангус, dragons, лус etc).

Historic legends and tales: tales of historical characters—khans, war chiefs. Toponymic tales and legends: explaining the origin of geographic objects and their names (different places, rivers, springs, mountains, burial mounds).

Legends and tales of sacred people (singers and narrators of folk tales, bonesetters, medlegchi—learned, skilled gelyungs [Buddhist priests] and lamas).

Household living legends and tales: about the origin of traditions, rituals and feasts.

Genre of legends is interesting for its ties with myth-making, heroic tales and animal tales. Heroic tales are dedicated to events and real personalities who have left a mark in history. They represent the storage of information about the history of the region and sociopolitical life of the nation. Frequently when restoring the earliest stages of ethnic development, such folkloristic evidence can serve as the only historical and ethnographic source.

(basangova49@yandex.ru)

Mare Kalda, Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia

A Supernatural Attack. On Similar Experiences from Different Times

Among factual information, church registers of the historical parish of Rõngu, Estonia, include a tale of the suffering of Torsten Grön, a Swedish manor cobbler, who lived in the late 17th century. In his youth, the man had lived and worked in Lithuania and had come upon a hidden treasure. Years later, after he had settled in Livonia, this past event was forced upon the cobbler by haunting women, who used to dance and torment him in the manor hall at nights. As a result, Grön fell ill and died. Before his death he had promised a considerable donation to the local church, but his fortune was nowhere to be found. The tale that dealt with his fate was also published in some legend anthologies, but later on was probably forgotten.

In addition to the diachronic analysis of the narrative, the nature of the experience of Torsten Grön, the protagonist of the tale of suffering, attracts attention. It remains to be questioned how typical this kind of situation is in traditional beliefs, or how ordinary it is when people tell about a supernatural attack that leaves actual traces of physical conflict on a human body. It appears that people who experience things perceive particular situations as a supernatural attack even in the 21st century. Rare personal experience narratives and highly individual and deeply emotional accounts about encounters with supernatural beings can be found, for example, on an online discussion forum on spiritual matters.

In folklore studies, the interpretation of such personal experience narratives diverges: they are interpreted either as culturally acquired narratives or as an expression of the complex influence of beliefs shaped by models of individual perception.

(kalda@folklore.ee)

Eda Kalmre, Estonian Literary Museum, Estonia

Baby Carrots and Salad Rinsing: Commercial Legends and Rumours in Estonian Consumer Society

My paper will explore the emergence and origin of two rumour cycles which have recently spread in Estonia, popular views about contemporary consumerism and trade that these rumours, discussions, online forums and newspaper articles reflect, and also people's concerns, fears and stereotypical beliefs.

The first so-called commercial rumour that will be discussed is most likely of Estonian origin. In autumn 2009, a rumour started to circulate in Estonian social networks and later also in newspapers that local store chains were selling salads past their expiration date, with spoiled dressing washed out and replaced with new. The second rumour, probably of US origin, was associated with international market and trade and began to spread in Estonia at the beginning of 2013 through Facebook. It emerged in the form of a cautionary chain letter about baby carrots. Reasons for distrust in baby carrots were their alleged chlorine content and the technology of making the small carrots. The history of baby carrots can be traced back to the 1980s when Americans turned their attention to healthy food choices. In fact, healthy food became a huge and profitable industry.

These two rumour cycles that will be analysed on the example of (social) media sources were probably the first ones to introduce the topic of store chains, producers' influence, collusion and distrust at such a large scale in Estonia. Here we have the sellers' and producers' desire to profit on the one hand and the pressure of modern lifestyle (limited resources of time, constant concern to stay healthy) and frustration, distrust and fears stemming from it, on the other. To put it differently, this conflict lies between capitalist consumer logic—the more we consume, the more we can produce, the greater the owner's profit and the happier life for all—and the information society, thanks to detailed but not often black-and-white or unambiguous information on any product and producer is always only a few mouse clicks away.

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*Monika Kropelj, Slovenian Academy of
Sciences and Arts, Slovenia*

(martin@orloj.cz)

The Role of the Radio Broadcasted Contemporary Narratives in the Modern Society

The paper focuses on contemporary narratives which people tell in the broadcast *Do you know what happened to me?! (A veš, kaj se mi je zgodilo?!)* each Friday morning on Radio Slovenia – Val 202. People share their experiences, adventures or incidents in animated narration or in conversation with the moderator of the broadcast. These stories are also available on the web pages of the Radio-Television Slovenia.

The author will analyse the main topics of narrators'—mainly younger generation's—adventures or incidents, which they also like to tell the most to their friends and when being in a company; and discuss why people tell such stories to such a broad audience.

These narratives often contain elements of contemporary or urban legends which are circulating not only in Slovenia, but are also internationally spread. Analysis will be on how these contemporary legends influence and provide a pattern for some of the narrators' 'personal stories'; and if and how do such 'personal stories' or 'memorates' influence further dissemination of these themes.

The research will also focus on the culture and worldview reflected in such narratives and on their role in everyday life and in contemporary society. It will analyse which aspects of the narrative culture of current Slovenian younger generation are specific and what are the similarities in the genre of such stories in other countries. *(monika@zrc-sazu.si)*

Martin Soukup, Charles University, Czech Republic

Lady with the Towel: A Contemporary Legend in Colonial Papua and New Guinea

The objective of the paper will be the analysis and interpretation of the widely told contemporary legend "Lady with the Towel" in colonial Papua and New Guinea in the 1920s-30s. Analysis of this legend could help to understand the sexual anxieties and racial prejudices of the colonial power in Papua and New Guinea. Special attention will be devoted to the structure of the Australian colonial power and the history of the Australian settlement in Port Moresby.

The aim of the paper is to demonstrate that the legend expresses the desire of the colonizers to maintain a separation from the natives within their community in Port Moresby and to protect themselves.

PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND 2014: A REFLECTION

Visiting a conference in a foreign country is often an enriching experience, but having an international meeting in your home country has some up sides too. Yes, of course, everything is easier, no airline tickets are necessary, you can sleep at home etc., etc... —but there are also some more complex benefits arising from such a situation. For example: the possibility to see your neighborhood from a very different perspective (or perspectives).

Perspectives on Contemporary Legend is the annual conference of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. It usually takes place in North America on every odd year and in Europe on every even year. The event was hosted by the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague this year, with Petr Janeček being the head organizer. Charles University students and ISCLR secretary Elissa R. Henken are to be also mentioned among people who should certainly receive credit for the fact that everything went smoothly.

The conference began on Tuesday, June 3. We had a small room used for movie projections at first, a creaking hall where benches were decorated with one and a thousand fascinating ancient pieces of art created by bored students in bygone aeons. I will not describe all presentations and the entire programme, but even the first contributions—Theo Meder's analysis of apocalyptic 2012 Twitter messages, Elissa R. Henken's discussion of rumors and stereotypes related to computer gaming and Petr Janeček's report on local variations of Bloody Mary—showed that the conference will certainly be very interesting. By the way, I really have to finish my PhD studies so I can say "Hello, I am a Doctor and this is my companion" on every conference that both I and Kawi will attend.

On Tuesday evening there was also a tour to parts of Charles University that are usually not open to general public, a great opportunity to see the main hall and some other rooms in Carolinum without too many people around. I wonder how common is it for a university to have a bedel as many conference visitors were not familiar with this job and wondered who that well-dressed dignitary must be. The Tuesday tour was concluded at Café Louvre, one of many places Kafka has visited. It seems that Kafka was almost everywhere here: I am puzzled what would such an introverted man

say had he suddenly reincarnated to Prague, where almost every corner shop bears his name nowadays.

Wednesday morning found us in an another, bigger and better room. I had a presentation on this day, a quick overview of legend tripping at Pohádka, an abandoned Czech farm with history of serial murders.

A ghost tour was scheduled on the evening. I have noticed that there are some ghost tours in Prague before, but I thought that only one company probably organizes them. It turned out that there are many—at least our ghost tour, the Russian Reaper, the monk with the cross and that steampunkish group with lanterns. Seeing Prague from a viewpoint of a ghost tour participant was quite interesting, I suddenly noticed other ghost tours, patterns of their movement, props they are using and the brighter side of sometimes controversial tourist industry.

Thursday was dedicated to a tour to Český Krumlov. It seems that I have an innate tendency to talk about the landscape and its stories when I have some guests from another country. This is nothing to be ashamed of and can be quite beneficial for both of us, but I wonder what actually motivates me to do so. It is not a desire to look clever: I do not know many details anyway, nor a feeling that official guides are somewhat wrong (they usually aren't). But I still somehow feel that some minor stories and details just matter and other are important for understanding. Maybe travelling though these stories is another form of small talk that provides most the important information without actually mentioning it directly. And these stories are probably important to link various contexts known from tourist guides or personal experience together. Prague Castle may be in every tourist guide, but many truths and myths about Bohemia dwell in the underground of Blaník Hill or weekend cottages in the valley of Sázava too.

Krumlov itself is a very nice town, popular among tourists but not as metropolitan as Prague. For me, the Bohemian South is in a poetical sense always associated with themes like gentle stubbornness, golden evenings by the river, a bit of nostalgia as described by C. S. Lewis, undecipherable pre-Celtic echoes, wandering on field ways, small cobblestoned towns, hills of blue hue and mythical darkness of slowly rising Šumava mountains. Krumlov has many connections to these moods. I have visited it before and will again (at least when Once again shall we return as one poet says), to sit by the river, walk in the old streets both renovated and time-wear, up and down and up again, and talk with familiar looking canoeists by the weir.

The tour in the castle was nothing I would not expect, as I was already there one or two times before, but we have also visited the baroque theatre, a fascinating machine-artform. Someone should show this to Neal Stephenson—or better turn the Baroque cycle into an unimaginably long play and perform it here for a truly nerdgasmic experience.

I was not attending most of the conference of Friday—I had to be elsewhere, where the Museum required me to be, but have returned in time to see at least some presentations and get a lunch in Kolkovna.

The programme was continuing on Saturday, when some people already had to leave, but it was still one of most fruitful conferences I have visited recently, with many interesting topics discussed and perspectives revealed. Another ghost tour was scheduled on the evening. Petr and I have guided some of conference participants to Vyšehrad castle, a place related to many national myths (including fake ones) and a nice vista above Prague. Vyšehrad was claimed to be the oldest seat of the first Bohemian princes of the Přemyslid Dynasty in the Dark Ages, but is actually not as old as Prague castle. Its contemporary appearance is strongly influenced by its transformation into a baroque fortress, but there are still many connections to legends both ancient and recent.

The conference ended on Sunday, and we simply visited the Ethnographic museum where I work, said many goodbyes and parted our ways for a while, still staying connected thanks to the internet anyway. I have attended only two ISCLR meetings yet, but yes, I like them a lot and am looking forward to the next one.

Jan Pohunek

A version of this first appeared as a post on Jan's blog [<http://tlachy.prebral.net/2014/06/32nd-perspectives-on-contemporary.html>]: thanks to him for allowing *FOAFTale* to reproduce it in a modified form.

ISCLR AND THE SHEFFIELD SCHOOL

The conference on Perspectives on Contemporary Legend organized by Petr Janecek in Prague was a great success. One of the few downsides for me was the fact that there seemed little awareness of the origins of this series of meetings. It was even wrongly stated that ISCLR had been founded in 1982! This has inspired me to draw attention to what our origins actually were.

I shall offer a few personal reminiscences, but first wish to stress that the origins of the conferences and the society are available on record and easily available.

FOAFtale News Number 11, on-line, is largely devoted to describing the inaugural meeting of the society in 1988. It lists the members of the society's first council, only one of whom incidentally, myself, was at the Prague meeting.

The early conferences are the subject of a book edited by Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith, *Contemporary Legend: The First Five Years*, which contains abstracts of all the papers. A preface by Bill Nicolaisen and an introduction by the editors convey something of the circumstances of these early meetings. (I have checked; this book is still available on Amazon.)

One major point worth emphasizing is that until 1988 every meeting was held in Sheffield, England. Paul Smith had been unsuccessful in trying to persuade the Folklore Society to sponsor a conference on such a topic. That the conference ever took place depended on the support of John Widdowson, Director of the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language (CECTAL) at the University of Sheffield. To those names as founders of these conferences must be added Gillian Bennett, who played a major role in organizing these early meeting and, of course, in editing the series of books containing some of the papers presented at them. Without their efforts, it is possible that the conditions which made possible the founding of the society might never have arisen.

As may be seen from early issues of *FOAFtale News*, some of the scholars brought together by the Sheffield meetings began organizing symposia on contemporary legends at meetings of the American Folklore Society. The idea of forming our own society began to emerge and at the 1987 conference a provisional committee was set up which arranged for the founding meeting in 1988.

Paul Smith named the first event *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend: An International Seminar 1982* (seminar and conference seem to have been employed interchangeably to describe the events since then). I was not a participant but am proud to say that I had a ghostly intellectual presence as Jan Brunvand describes in his book *The Choking Doberman* (pages 44-46 of the Penguin Books edition). His conference paper on that legend contained a provisional theory of how it developed, but his attention was drawn to a paper I had published which contained evidence which led him to revise that theory.

My first physical presence at a Sheffield meeting was ghostly in another sense. It was in 1984, the meeting with no number. In 1983 the seminar was called the second, in 1985 it was called the third. But there was

indeed a meeting in 1984, albeit one lasting only two days. The reason was that there was a Folk Narrative meeting in Bergen that year, which some "Sheffelder" attended, so the Sheffield meeting was scheduled for just after the Bergen conference closed.

I had published a few papers on contemporary legends by then, but not using that term. However, I was working largely in isolation from other scholars interested in the topic. My first contribution, published in *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend Volume II*, was thus planned as a calling card, introducing myself to some of these scholars. It is not appropriate for me to make a judgment of the paper's merits. However, my main feeling afterwards was how friendly the small audience's reactions had been. After that meeting, I definitely felt I wished to be part of the group, which some were beginning to call The Sheffield School. I attended every meeting from then until 1991 – and most European meetings subsequently.

My react to the reception for my paper was not unique. One of the characteristics of these sessions, which has been largely retained, is that the overbearing atmosphere is one of tolerance. Participants do not always agree but debate is friendly and undogmatic. I recall that once Gillian Bennett insisted on buying me a brandy because I had challenged a speaker who, most unusually for these meetings, had adopted a particularly dogmatic approach.

It may be clear that I have a certain nostalgia for those conferences in the 1980s. However, that is not my motive for writing this note. That we have a society today depends to quite a large extent on the efforts of the Sheffield pioneers, by whom I mean not only the three based in Sheffield, whom I have already mentioned, but also North American based participants, such as Bill Ellis, Mark Glazer, Keith Cunningham and Bill Nicolaisen, who played their part in establishing this long lasting series.

Sandy Hobbs

In the belief that society members should have no difficulty in identifying and accessing works to which I have referred, I have not constructed a reference list. [Sandy]

I concur, and remind readers that all back issues of *FOAFtale News* are available at <http://www.folklore.ee/FOAFtale/> [Ian]

PRIZES AWARDED

Adriana Kábová of Charles University won the David Buchan Student Essay Prize for her paper "Blood in

radios, heads in televisions: Identity and 'civilizing forces' beyond the Sumbanese rumors."

Eda Kalmre won the Brian McConnell Book Award for *The Human Sausage Factory. A Study of Post-War Rumour in Tartu* (Amsterdam & New-York: Rodopi, 2013). For a review see *FOAFTale News* 82.

REMEMBERING LINDA DÉGH, 1920-2014

As members have probably heard, Dr. Linda Dégh passed away on August 19th. Her presence at our meetings was palpable and memorable, and her influence on our work as legend scholars is inextricable. A fuller encomium is being prepared for the next issue of *Contemporary Legend* by a person far more gifted than I.

At meetings she was often introduced as a "living legend," a sentiment no less true despite its potential for cliché. Hers was the stuff of legend: she was certainly a figure of fascination for my generation, taught by the generation in turn taught by her and, in hushed tones, stories of her exploits—some just shy of the fantastic—would be shared by those who might have a hint more authority to do so than we.

Inspired by Richard Reuss's "'That Can't Be Alan Dundes! Alan Dundes is Taller Than That!': The Folklore of Folklorists," and as a tribute to someone who understood legends as lived things, I am asking for submissions of Linda Dégh personal experience narratives and friend-of-a-friend stories, to be compiled for the next issue of *FOAFTale News*. Moreover, as scholars of legend, I don't think we should feel compelled to keep it to our "fondest memories": Dr. Dégh was a complicated figure in many of our lives, who profoundly informed our way of thinking while profoundly terrifying many of us. Surely she is a staple in our occupational folklife and our personal experience narratives: and surely some of these stories are private communications, directly and interpersonally imparted, with endings that do not resolve until teller and listener negotiate themselves to one.

PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND 2015

San Antonio, Texas

33rd International Conference

May 27-31

The 2015 Perspectives in Contemporary Legend Annual Conference will be held May 27-31, 2015, at the historic Menger Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. Many of you know the Menger Hotel, since ISCLR has held several meetings there over the years. Built in 1859,

the five-story Menger Hotel is next to the Alamo, just one block from the Children's Museum and steps away from the wonderful San Antonio Riverwalk, the Witte Museum, and the Institute of Texas Cultures. The Menger advertises itself as the oldest continuously operating hotel west of the Mississippi. The hotel is known for exquisite architecture, including a stunning 3-story lobby, a restored wing adorned with 19th-century Victorian furniture and paintings, a bar where Teddy Roosevelt recruited his Rough Riders cavalry, and a few ghosts.

As usual, the 33rd Perspectives on Contemporary Legend meeting will be organized as a series of seminars at which the majority of attendees will present papers. Concurrent sessions will be avoided so that all participants can hear all papers. Proposals for special panels, discussion sessions and other related events are encouraged.

Proposals for papers on all aspects of "contemporary," "urban," or "modern" legend research are sought as are those on any legend or legend-like tradition that circulate actively at present or have circulated at an earlier historical period. To submit a proposal, please forward a title and abstract (250-300 words – by e-mail) by February 1st, 2015 to:

Diane Goldstein

diagolds@indiana.edu

AND

Cathy Preston

prestonc@colorado.edu

LEGEND IN THE NEWS DIGEST

Compiled by David J. Puglia

With over six hundred members and dozens of posts per month, not to mention follow up comments, ISCLR's Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/ISCLR>) has been a fun and active way to share legend-happenings around the globe with our fellow enthusiasts. In case you have missed the action, we have digested and summarized some of the highlights from the last half-year. While covering every story, article, or link shared on the Facebook would take an incredible amount of space, we have tried to identify some of the top stories that legend scholars have been talking about this year.

"Can couples really get stuck together during sex?"

Stories of couples becoming stuck during sex have been around for centuries. Doctors call the condition "penis captivus," which occurs when the penis engorges

during intercourse and the vagina contracts during orgasm, trapping one in the other. The phenomenon generally only lasts a few seconds.

“Recent NM ‘skinwalker’ photo ignites fear”

A picture of a “skinwalker” from the Native American tradition allegedly taken in New Mexico near the Jicarilla reservation circulated on Facebook. Debunkers proved the image was, in fact, taken from the 1980s science fiction film *Xtro*.

“Noises in her head were flesh-eating maggots”

Rochelle Harris became the unknowing host to a family of eight maggots after a New World Army Screw Worm fly lodged in her ear on a visit to Peru. Concerned the maggots could eat into her brain, she underwent emergency surgery to remove the maggots from her ear canal.

“There Is No Hell Fire; Adam & Eve Not Read—Pope Francis Exposes”

A satirical article that, if true, would have far reaching implications for the Catholic Church and its leader Pope Francis. In the article, the Pope refers to the biblical story of Adam and Eve as a fable, argues that all religions are true because they are true in the hearts of their believers, and embraces homosexual and pro-choice individuals. The article was taken as true by many and widely circulated.

“Whistle Blower Claims She Forged Obama’s Birth Certificate, Guess Who She Is?”

The article accuses Obama’s birth certificate of being “10 layered in Photo Shop and thought to be fake.” A whistleblower has come forward claiming to have doctored both the long form and short form birth certificates for the Mexican drug cartels.

“Florida family falls ill after eating meat with LSD”

A pregnant woman and her family ate bottom round steak tainted with LSD. The family bought the meat at Wal-Mart, and police are conducting an investigation into how the meat came in contact with the drug.

“Woman, 63, ‘becomes PREGNANT in the mouth’ with baby squid after eating calamari”

A South Korean woman eating a cooked whole squid bit into the “ejaculatory apparatus” which shot twelve baby cephalopods and attached to the inside of her mouth. The phenomenon is more common in the East, where more raw fish is consumed. In the West, the internal organs are removed, which eliminates the risk of eating spermatophores.

“Kenyan HIV Positive Woman: ‘I Infected 324 Men’”

An anonymous woman at Kabarak University in Kenya has confessed to intentionally attempting to infect 324 men with the HIV. The confession came through Facebook on the Kenyan Scandals page. After being infected in September of 2013, the woman has made it her mission to infect 2,000 men. She claims to have sex with four men per day. The story is unconfirmed, but a newspaper did publish a picture from the woman’s Facebook account.

“Penis “pumping party” killing men”

African American men are allegedly dying from amateur injections of silicone into their penises in an attempt to increase their size.

“RIP ET: The Legend of the Long-Buried Video Game

E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial is best known as the beloved Steven Spielberg film, but it’s also known among Atari aficionados as one of the worst Atari games of all time. A legend circulates that the game sold so badly that the unsold cartridges were backing up Atari’s warehouse. Atari dumped the entirety in the Alamogordo landfill in New Mexico. A film crew is now attempting to get permission from New Mexico to dig up the pile of cartridges.

“Twitter and the glory of ‘Marine Todd’”

Marine Todd is a story of a liberal, atheist professor and a veteran, god-fearing student that made the rounds on the rightwing email forwards circuit. The professor challenges God, if He is real, to knock him off his podium. Marine Todd walks to the podium and knocks the professor out, telling the professor God was busy so he sent the Marines instead. Twitter got a hold of the story and spun it into ever increasing ridiculousness, such as Marine Todd throwing a menorah at a Wal-Mart greeter who dares to wish him “Happy Holidays.”

“PSA: Teach Your Friends and Family About “Tech Support” Scams”

The article educates about the “tech support” scam where a caller claiming to be from Microsoft phones a home saying they’ve detected a problem, asks for remote access to the computer, and then offers to charge their credit card to fix the computer and provide maintenance.

“New Photos Reveal True Purpose of Mysterious Boston Marathon Roof Man”

A photograph of a mysterious man on an apartment rooftop near the blast site led to speculation that the man on the roof may have been part of the conspiracy.

As new conspiracies quickly rose and the true suspects were eventually apprehended, conspiracy theories lost interest in the images. In pictures later shared by “Maria,” the man proves to be lounging and barbecuing on his roof with friends.

“Missing Boy Existed only on Facebook”

A woman, her daughter, and a cousin created an imaginary family on Facebook so that they could report the son missing. Police searched for two-year-old Chayon Basinio for days before noticing inconsistencies in the woman’s story. Police intend to prosecute the woman for filing a false report.

“Facebook Wants to Know Why You’re Sharing This Bogus Obamacare Story”

Based on a photograph of an errant Cabela’s receipt, an image has been circulating with an attached rumor that a “medical excise tax” is being charged as part of the Affordable Care Act.

“All Americans Will Receive a Microchip Implant in 2017 Per Obamacare”

According to this article, all Americans will be implanted with identification microchips by 2017. The bill is allegedly is part of Obamacare.

“Dozens of Venomous Spiders Burst from a Bag of Sainsbury’s Bananas”

Consi Taylor found dozens of baby Brazilian wandering spiders on her Sainsbury bananas. The Taylors had to evacuate their house while it was fumigated, and Sainsbury picked up the bill for their hotel room.

“Catholic Church Condemns Black Mass Reenactment at Harvard”

Harvard hosted a historical reenactment of the Black Mass in the basement of Memorial Hall. The reenactment was preceded by a lecture that put the reenactment in its historical and social context. The participants were not admitted Satanists and claimed to only be interested in it for educational purposes. Christians, including the Archdiocese of Boston, asked Harvard to stop the event. Harvard refused, and the Catholic Church ran an opposing “holy hour” instead.

“Woman Beaten to Death After Being Accused of Witchcraft On Facebook”

After Brazilian news outlet Guaruja Alerta spread a rumor on its Facebook page that Fabiane Maria de Jesus kidnapped kids to perform black magic rituals, the woman was beaten to death by an angry mob that had read the rumor. The news outlet subsequently took

down story, but claimed they could not be held responsible, as they were simply passing along a rumor.

“3-Year-Old Remembers Being Murdered In a Past Life and Leads Adults to Proof”

Many years ago, Dr. Eli Lasch witnessed a Golan Heights boy who remembered being murdered by an axe in his past life. The boy identified his killer and found the murder weapon. German therapist Trutz Hardo subsequently wrote about the boy in his book on children and reincarnation.

“Police Warning Re ‘unusual chalk markings”

The West Midlands Police sent out an urgent message asking citizens to remain vigilant for chalk markings on city sidewalks. Any strange markings should be reported to police immediately, they announced. Police believe the chalk markings provide a code to potential burglars. The newspaper received so much verbal abuse for posting this story that they chose to turn off the comments section.

“Two 12-Year-Olds Allegedly Stabbed Third to Please Mythological”

Two girls playing hide-and-seek in the woods in Waukesha, Wisconsin attacked a third friend, stabbing her nineteen times. Investigators say they wanted to “please a mythological creature they learned about online.” The victim survived the attack.

“Hamilton Co. mom: Daughter’s knife attack influenced by Slender Man”

A twelve-year-old attacked her mother with a knife. The young girl has had mental health issues in the past, and her mother believes the girl’s obsession with Slender Man may have played a role in the attack.

“The Ghosts in the Machine”

Folklorist Timothy Evans gives an overview of the Slender Man phenomenon for the New York Times.

“A full moon on Friday the 13th? Pass the garlic please”

Friday the 13th and a full moon fall on the same day, and although studies have provided no good evidence, emergency workers and medical personnel agree that either brings a busier night.

“Woman gives birth to a lizard. Yes, really.”

In Indonesia, a midwife expecting to deliver a newborn baby delivered a gecko instead. Indonesian authorities are launching an investigation, although they believe the woman may have been suffering from pseudocyesis, a phantom pregnancy. Others in the

community claim the real reason for the inhuman birth is that the woman practices witchcraft.

“Migrants Flow in South Texas, as Do Rumors”

In an intriguing counterbalance to United States immigration legends, legends swirl around Central America that illegal immigrants with children are being given temporary permits, when they are, in fact, being given summonses to attend court rather than being immediately deported.

“Shopper finds label detailing exploitative labour in Primark dress”

A woman at Primark’s Swansea store found a noted stating “forced to work exhausting hours” sewn into her dress.

“Man Pinched by Scorpion in Box of Bananas At South Hills Wal-Mart”

A scorpion pinched a man in the Pittsburgh area when he reached into a box of bananas. The man killed the scorpion, and Wal-Mart paid for his medical bills.

“Rumors swirl after girls mysteriously collapse at Fukuoka school”

In Japan, a gaggle of high school girls fainted during school hours. While some say it was a mass panic triggered by the first collapse, others say it was a vengeful spirit.

“Murder of Arab teen reminiscent of Jewish custom of baking matzas with blood”

The editor of the Hamas affiliated newspaper Al-Risala connected the unsolved murder of seventeen-year-old Mohammed Hussein Abu Khdeir to the blood libel legend that Jews use non-Jewish blood to bake matza during Passover.

“Politician Explains Why Sodomy Is Causing AIDS Due to ‘Sperm Enzyme’”

Minnesota House of Representatives hopeful Bob Frey explains his problem with homosexuality is not the lifestyle but the anal sex. Frey claims sperm has an enzyme that burns through an egg. But when deposited in the anus, it bounces around, burning everything in its path and causing HIV.

“The 19th-century health scare that told women to worry about ‘bicycle face’”

In the late nineteenth century, doctors warned that bicycle use could lead to “bicycle face,” especially among women. This was the wearied and exhausted look brought about by the constant unconscious effort to maintain one’s balance. Descriptions vary as to whether or not the infliction was permanent. The

author argues that “bicycle face” was an attempt by men to restrict the newfound freedoms the bicycle granted women.

“Has a Mexican bridal shop been using an embalmed corpse as a mannequin?”

Although “highly circumstantial” and “rooted in local mythology,” a legend says that the mannequin in the La Popular bridal shop in Chihuahua, Mexico for the past eighty-five years is, in fact, an embalmed corpse. The mannequin’s features are unusually delicate and lifelike, only some staff are allowed to dress her, and rumors of the paranormal swirl around the shop. One story claims the mannequin is the past proprietor’s daughter, who died of a Black Widow spider bite on her wedding day.

“Half of Americans Believe One of These 6 Medical Conspiracy”

According to a study by researchers at the University of Chicago, half of Americans believe on the following six rumors: 1) Companies dump dangerous chemicals into the water under the illusion of fluoridation; 2) The U.S. government first infected African Americans with HIV; 3) The U.S. government encourages children to be vaccinated even though it increases the chance of autism; 4) The U.S. government is withholding the cure for cancer so that pharmaceutical companies can profit; 5) Cell phones can cause cancer; 6) Genetically modified food is a plot to shrink the global population.

“Human Meat Found in McDonald’s Factory”

A fake news story claiming the human meat—child human meat, in fact—was found in McDonald’s food processing centers.

“State-Run News Station Accused of Making up Child Crucifixion”

Speaking to Channel One from a refugee camp in Russia’s Rostov region, Galina Pyshnyak claimed to have witnessed a three-year-old boy tortured and crucified by the Ukrainian military in a public square in Slovyansk. Despite the prominent location, reporters who followed up on the story with local residents could not find anyone who had even heard of the crucifixion. The story is being written off as Russian propaganda.

“No Way the Obamas Are Buying This House in Rancho Mirage”

A rumor is circulating among local real estate agents that the Obamas are interested in buying a house in the Thunderbird Heights neighborhood in the city of Rancho Mirage, one hundred miles east of Los Angeles. The city has been called “the playground of presidents,” and Gerald Ford lived in the neighborhood after his

presidency. The White House denies that the Obamas have any interest in the property.

“Investigators Solve Mystery of Porcelain Dolls Left on Doorsteps”

Eight families in the Talega community of San Clemente have found porcelain dolls on their doorsteps. Each bears a close resemblance to one of their ten-year-old daughters. The families felt threatened and contacted the police. The donor turned out to be a woman who attended church with the girls and thought she was doing something nice.

“Body Found Under Motel Bed, Police Say It Has Been There At Least 5 Years”

In a fake news story posted by Empire News, a man staying in a motel dropped the television remote control. When he went to retrieve it, he found the corpse of a young woman under his bed. Authorities said it had been there at least five years.

“Man detained for spreading false rumors”

A Chinese man in Beijing was arrested by police for spreading a rumor online that 200 organ traffickers were on the way to Beijing to harvest organs from children. The man had seen the rumor about another location and thought it would be fun to change it to Beijing. Zhang is charged with disturbing the social order.

“Surgeons find 10-year-old sex toy inside woman’s body”

A Scottish woman was found to have a sex toy stuck in her vagina for the last ten years. The woman had used the sex toy ten years ago with her partner. She had been intoxicated and could not remember if she had removed it. The woman underwent a successful surgery to remove the sex toy and repair her punctured bladder.

NEW FEATURE: BIBLIOGRAPHY

“CRIME LEGENDS”

The idea for an ongoing, peer-contributed bibliography was suggested by Mikhail Alekseevsky at the Annual General Meeting in Prague, and was met with general approval by the membership. Mikhail gave “Crime legends” as an example, so I took him up on it and that became the theme for this first installment.

Contributors were encouraged to interpret the somewhat vague “Crime legends” as they saw fit. Some provided annotations for their entries, which was especially useful for non-English language contributions.

I imagine the format for the bibliography will evolve over time.

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«Товарищи, послушайте, московочку спою...»

[“Comrades, listen to me, I will sing you a ‘moskovochka’ song...” *Живая старина* [Living Antiquity] 1: 12-15.

The paper is devoted to “moskovochka” songs, folk ballads about real crimes and accidents; during the 20th century these songs circulated among peasants of the Central Russia as a kind of «oral newspaper». The author compared the songs with legendary narratives about the same crimes and accidents.

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Czech crime legends are presented and discussed on pages 18-25 (*The Roommate’s Death*), 26-33 (*Killer at the Backseat*), 33-36 (*The Boyfriend’s Death*).

More typical crime legends include stories about various assailants in public spaces such as public transit systems and cinemas (48-53). A whole chapter is devoted to xenophobic crime legends and rumours dealing mostly with ethnic, anti-Romani bias, including narratives about razors hidden in swimming pools and AIDS-infected syringes left in public spaces (70-100). Similar are food contamination legends connected mostly with Chinese and Turkish restaurants (102-129). Comical legends about clever drunk drivers, smokers of marijuana, etc. outsmarting the police (and vice-versa - 182-187, 230-232, 241), alleged homosexual rapes (197-201) are also presented, as well as stories about clever thief scams (205-208) and organ-theft legends (262-272).

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POLICE LORE

The following examples of legends about the police were incidentally collected as part of a participant observation based ethnography of a street kid community in downtown Toronto in 2000. As a population which is routinely brought into contact with the police it is little wonder that a series of contemporary legends and belief statements are part of their traditional practices (Bodner 2003). The first instance emerged out of my first meeting with Hippiie-Chic, a teenaged street involved youth from the Canadian east coast who arrived in my fieldwork area in June. After introducing myself Hippiie-Chic said she would be happy to talk with me and then checked herself.

HC: You're not a cop are you?

Me: No.

HC: Because if you are you have to answer that question honestly.

Me: What? I'm not a cop. [Pause as she looks sternly at me]. Ask the question again.

HC: Are you a cop.

Me: I am not a police officer.

While I can yet find no scholarly material on this belief it is commonly acknowledged in popular sources. Snopes.com cites it as part of "hooker lore" which was debunked in the sexworker support pamphlet by COYOTE in 1986. Cracked.com cites the movies *Rush* (1991), *Deep Cover* (1992) and the television show *Monk* (2002-9) as perpetuating the belief.

For my research participants who sold small amounts of marijuana or acted as a runner for heroin dealers, techniques for spotting the police were especially important. Matthew claimed that he could spot a cop based on their standardized foot ware. This belief dovetails into the "shiny shoes" motif in contemporary legends about the Men in Black (Rojcewicz 1987). In practice, neither Matthew nor my other participants used a single identity indicator to spot the police. Rather, a complex reading of dress, comportment and speech were minutely examined to determine whether or not a person was a police officer. Because these policing legends partially constitute a material practice with serious consequences there is an element of ostention with these proto-narratives and a clearly displayed praxis as discourse.

John Bodner

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PLUGS, SHAMELESS AND OTHERWISE

David Clarke. *Britain's X-traordinary Files*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014

“David Clarke opens The National Archives' own X Files to uncover the secret, official accounts behind legendary paranormal and extraordinary phenomena. From mediums employed by the police to help with psychic crime-busting to sea monster sightings reported to the Royal Navy, *Britain's X-traordinary Files* brings to light a range of secret documents created by military intelligence and government agencies who have investigated and even used extraordinary phenomena or powers in recent history.”

Ian Brodie. *A Vulgar Art: A New Approach to Stand-Up Comedy*. Folklore Studies in a Multicultural World Series. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014

“In *A Vulgar Art* Ian Brodie uses a folkloristic approach to stand-up comedy, leveraging the discipline's central method of studying interpersonal, artistic communication and performance. Because stand-up comedy is a rather broad category, people who study it often begin by relating it to something they recognize such as literature or theatre, and analyze it accordingly. *A Vulgar Art* begins with a more fundamental observation: someone is standing in front of a group of people, talking to them directly, and trying to make them laugh. So this book takes the moment of performance as its focus and shows that stand-up comedy is a collaborative act between the comedian and the audience.”

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BACK MATTER

FOAFtale News accepts short articles, reports, queries, reviews, and collectanea pertaining to contemporary legend. To submit, contact the Editor, Ian Brodie (ian_brodie@cbu.ca) or the Assistant Editor, David J. Puglia (djp5303@psu.edu).

All back issues of *FTN* can be found at <http://www.folklore.ee/FOAFtale>. Thanks as ever to Eda Kalmre and the *Haldjas* server at the Estonian Literary Museum for hosting.

Ian Brodie would like to thank David Puglia for his help in this issue and welcome him to his new position as Assistant Editor.