



*Visiting the fortress of Sagres which, according to our guide, is situated in the centre of the world. Photograph by Erkki Herranen.*

Every year the organisers of the colloquium offer the participants a possibility to go on excursions, exhibitions, and concerts. For this we are grateful to the municipality of Tavira and other municipalities in Algarve region, the people of Tavira, entrepreneurs in Tavira and Algarve, different institutions, etc. Without their support we would not be able to immerse ourselves in our papers and conversations on proverbs and research thereof.

Liisa Granbom-Herranen

## **ORAL AND WRITTEN IN CULTURE: CONNECTIONS AND COLLISIONS**

On December 12 and 13, 2016, the annual conference of the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (CEES) and the 60th Kreutzwald Days conference were held at the Estonian Literary Museum. The event focused on the relationship between oral and written information in the Baltic cultures both historically and in the present time, when literary culture seems to be completely dominant. This was the third CEES gen-

eral conference, organised by the working group of literary culture and literary studies of the Centre of Excellence, and aimed at instigating dialogue between viewpoints of different disciplines, proceeding from the ideas formulated by the working group. In the historical field, the deep gap that had for long existed between oral and written language use due to the colonisation of the Baltic countries needed explaining. Interest centred, for instance, on the attempts of the creators of Estonian and Latvian literary languages to describe local languages on the basis of foreign language models, and the emergence of an 'interlanguage', which influenced both the oral and written language use; multilingualism and the circulation of language elements from oral to written form and vice versa; the increasing prestige of culture in the evolution and persistence of literary language; oral and written culture and their intermediate forms; written folklore genres and those in oral form related to the written world; the transitional field between the oral and written worlds – folk literacy; oral forms in the heyday of literary culture; elements of oral speech as an integral system; studying of oral forms in writing; methods of oral language increasingly used in fiction from the beginning of the 20th century. Research topics and spheres of activities were introduced in Estonian, English, German, and Russian by speakers from the universities of Latvia, Bulgaria, Iceland, Estonia, and Germany.

The following is a cursory look into the diversity of presentations and topics, with many of them unmentioned, as due to parallel sections it was possible to listen to only a part of them.

The first speaker was Andris Levans, historian from the University of Latvia, who in his presentation "Das Wort ist mein Gesicht. Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Mündlichkeit, Schriftlichkeit und Gedächtnis im Mittelalterlichen Livland" focused on the relationship between oral and written texts in medieval Livonia, where literacy was an elitist skill, as most people (including the nobility) were illiterate. In Livonia oral discourse persisted as the primary form of communication until the end of the 15th century, as there were only few centres that would have fostered the rapid spread of textual culture. The topic of medieval Livonia was continued by Gustavs Strenga, who introduced the guild account books of mainly Latvian-origin artisans.

The intertwining and collision of the oral and written as well as collective and personal memory is topical also in today's cultural studies – this became evident in the second presentation by Terry Gunnell, professor of folkloristics from the University of Iceland, who focused on legends and sagas, beliefs and holidays related to the cultural history of Iceland, folkloric drama and performance art. His scholarly field is extensive: Scandinavian, Icelandic, and Celtic traditional cultures, traditional games and holidays, and, besides folkloristic topics also literature: medieval drama, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Strindberg, theatre of the absurd, performance art, etc. All these were merged in his presentation titled "Performance and Audience, Time and Space, Sound and Vision: The Uses of the Performance Studies Approach for the Study of Folklore Past and Present". Gunnell explained how much of the oral text gets lost when 'translated' into written form – the elements perceived with different senses and therefore also the human experience of the live presentation and participation in it. He also pointed out that, similar to people, objects also present themselves and tell stories.

Anneli Saro from the University of Tartu spoke about the relationship between an experienced event and the read text in modern theatrical art or "the emancipation of

theatre from fiction”. Does post-dramatic theatre mark the final emancipation of theatre from fiction or is it inevitable to observe classical rules of dramaturgy at least in the drama theatre? For the time being the question remained unanswered; the answer depends on what comes after post-dramatic theatre. Eduard Parhomenko (University of Tartu), who discussed the rhetoric of philosophy in Tõnu Luik’s lectures, added an interesting shade into the comparison of reading and listening and watching the speaker: at lectures you have to listen to yourself, let yourself be carried away by thinking. Ulrike Plath discussed a genre in the transitional space between oral and written – sermons – on the example of those given by Karl Gottlob Sonntag, the general-superintendent of Livonia at the beginning of the 19th century. Although these sermons were meant for oral presentation, Sonntag also had them printed, this way making them available for research.

Several of the presentations were dedicated to the relationship between the oral and the written. Aivar Põldvee discussed the formation of literary language in connection to school teaching and the spread of reading skills in the 17th century. While the earliest variant of the literary language emerged on the theoretical example of a foreign language, at the end of the century attention focused more on the speaker of the language. Helle Metslang and Külli Habicht defined the Estonian literary language of the 17th–18th centuries as an interlanguage developed on the basis of Low, High, or Baltic German, the more marked features of which started to recede only in the 19th century. The presentation focused mainly on the materials of the 19th-century Estonian-origin literary language developers, including those of Fr.R. Kreutzwald. Reet Bender’s presentation gave an overview of the five stages in the development of Baltic German oral language during 150 years: Low German with elements of High German; Low German; a mixed version of Low and High German with predominant Low German elements; Low-High German with predominant High German elements, and finally the so-called Baltic German – High German with Low German relics. Liina Lindström’s presentation on dialecticism was initiated by the question whether some dialectal phenomena are just special features used in oral speech or certain dialectal features of a region that have not made their way to the literary language.

The folkloristic point of view was represented by Tiiu Jaago, who discussed the process of oral tradition becoming part of literary culture as well as changes in the folkloristic viewpoint in describing this process. Kärri Toomeos-Orglaan spoke about Seto narrative tradition. On the example of Brothers Grimm’s legends and fairytales, Liina Lukas showed how written text moves to oral lore and vice versa. The Grimms’ fairytales, which started to be translated into Estonian in the mid-19th century, quickly found their way into folklore. The influence of the Grimms’ legends (*Deutsche Sagen*, 1816–1818), however, was more indirect, exerting an impact rather on the formal means of story-telling (genre, way of telling).

In addition to history topics, the conference also discussed several phenomena of modern culture, which remain on the borderline between oral and written: interview (Triinu Ojamaa), diary (Leena Kurvet-Käosaar), dream diary (Mare Kõiva), life story (Tiina Ann Kirss), *online* commentaries (Ell Vahtramäe). Hille Pajupuu and Rene Altrov spoke about how it is possible to record and scientifically describe such an oral phenomenon as human voice.

This topic arouses interest also in the international arena; this was proved by Linda Kaljundi, who introduced a related project of the Finnish Literature Society, “Letters and Songs”, which is aimed at crossing the borders of modern nations and scholarly traditions, focusing on the materials on the crossroads of different social networks, expressive registers, belief systems, and smaller traditions. The research objects are connections between high and low cultures, ecclesiastical and secular, oral and written. The project is divided into four smaller research topics: social and religious correspondence; hymnals, manuscripts, and networks as linkages between socio-cultural strata; changes in local singing cultures; poetic registers in the junction of oral and written cultures. The idea of the project is to reassess the earlier Finnish poetics as well as social and cultural history.

Peeter Tinitis, Oleg Sobchuk and Artjom Shelaya introduced the cultural evolution seminar, which analyses cultural processes, digital humanities, cognitive research, and their related fields. Liina Lukas and Leena Kurvet-Käosaar introduced the special issue of *Methis: Studia Humaniora Estonica* (17/18), which is dedicated to comparative literature. Kanni Labi, language editor of *Methis*, spoke about the yearbook of the Estonian Literary Museum. Heinike Heinsoo opened an exhibition “Researchers of the Finnic Languages and Cultures I: Enn Ernits”.

Hegely Klaus

## **SOME THOUGHTS EVOKED BY REET HIEMÄE’S DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

On January 4, 2017, Reet Hiemäe defended her doctoral dissertation titled “Folklore as a tool of psychological self-defence: About the pragmatics of belief traditions” at the University of Tartu. The dissertation discussing Estonian folk belief is comprised of a detailed introduction and four articles, the first of which was published already in 2004, and the latest is yet to be published.

Hiemäe boldly integrates tools of different disciplines with folkloristics: various trends in psychology, narrative studies, narrative medicine, human geography, and communication studies. Interdisciplinary attempts may result in a dead end situation in case the approaches used in them cannot be connected due to their too different geneses, objectives, or theoretical baggage. Even one humanitarian discipline has no general matrix for all possible approaches and methods to be systematically arranged, not to mention a common matrix for the humanities and social sciences, in which everything could be combined with everything. It is an arduous process to search for and find compatible approaches, but if it is successful, it may result in the discovery of phenomena and regularities not noticed before, creating through this new and interesting information about the world.

In her articles Hiemäe merges different disciplines, above all, psychology, with folkloristics. The main emphasis of the dissertation is on folkloristics – a field of humanities studying culture and its expressions. Psychology – the basic principle of which is that the psyche is similar for the whole humankind – considers culture (cultural differences)