

BOOK REVIEWS

MISSION POSSIBLE: ONLINE BOOK PRESENTATION

Tatsiana Valodzina, Mare Kõiva (comps.) 2020. *Missiia vypolnima-2: Perspektivy izucheniiia fol'klora: vzgliad iz Belarusi i Estonii*. Minsk: Belaruskaiia navuka. 402 pp. In Russian.

On 25 January 2021, Belarusian and Estonian folklorists held an online presentation of the recently published volume titled *Missiia vypolnima-2: Perspektivy izucheniiia fol'klora: vzgliad iz Belarusi i Estonii* (Mission Possible-2: Prospects for Studying Folklore: Belarusian and Estonian Perspective). The volume's compilers, Tatsiana Valodzina (National Academy of Sciences of Belarus)

and Mare Kõiva (Estonian Literary Museum), have provided an overview of the joint Estonian and Belarusian projects, seminars, and publications. Tatsiana Valodzina emphasized the importance of studying older forms of folklore and described the joint endeavours of Estonian and Belarusian scholars in this field. Mare Kõiva focused on the multitude of joint projects and introduced ideas for further collaboration.

The presentation featured short discussions by the authors of the articles in the collection. Several of them were based mostly on the archival materials and earlier fieldwork data. The authors provided a new look on the traditional folk genres. In her presentation Tatsiana Valodzina not only gave an overview of her paper on Belarusian spells, but also revealed the source for her inspiration to work with this topic – her research questions emerged during one of the earlier Estonian-Belarusian seminars. Siarhei Hruntoŭ talked about Belarusian rural cemeteries. He (re)negotiated their marginal status and suggested that their interpretations should adopt a complex perspective on their various elements. Eda Kalmre presented her paper on imaginary death which has been a popular component both in old and contemporary folklore. She provided a historical context for the popularity of this folk motif and pointed to the generic diversity of folk narratives about imaginary death. The article by Mare Kalda discussed legends on treasures in Estonian folklore. In her talk she presented a classification of these folk narratives based on their connection (or lack thereof) between the legends and real events. Yuri Patsyupo adopted a multidisciplinary approach to folk songs and analysed them from the perspectives of folkloristics and poetry studies. He also underscored the



necessity to make a distinction between poetry recitations and singing in the studies of folk music. Andres Kuperjanov created a statistical representation of etiological legends about trees that are related to the life of Jesus Christ. His presentation shed light on the popularity of the aspen in these legends and brought numerous examples illustrating how different tree types can feature in these texts. Piret Voolaid showed how colours are used in Estonian riddles. In her presentation she discussed what colours are recalled most frequently in the classical riddles and how colours can be used to create metaphors and symbolic meanings in folklore.

A number of presentations touched upon the most recent folklore and covered not only theory but also practical aspects of vernacular heritage. Tatsiana Marmysh warned about the possible dangers in Belarusian intangible heritage preservation. She argued that the inclusion of the elements of folklore into the UNESCO intangible heritage list might not only help its preservation but can also pose a threat to their authenticity. Elena Pavlova outlined the most common rituals and traditions of Belarusians living in Estonia. She mentioned her fieldwork in several Estonian cities and said that she keeps in touch with her research participants and has plans for further collaborative projects with them. Mare Kõiva presented one of her most recent studies which analyses the life on Saaremaa Island during the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic and discusses Heidi Hanso's quarantine blog.

As the article collection features scholarly works by both Estonian and Belarusian researchers, it comes as no surprise that some of the presentations explicitly compare Estonian and Belarusian folklore. Elena Boganeva and Mare Kõiva presented their comparative study on mythical pharaohs in Belarusian and Estonian folklore, which covers a wide variety of subtopics, including pharaohs' appearance, their communication with people, and their connections with other folklore characters. Irina Smirnova drew parallels between Belarusian candle transfer ritual and worshipping of the Seto agricultural deity Peko. The work was inspired by her work at the folklore archives of the Estonian Literary Museum. The paper by Liisi Laineste, Anastasiya Fiadotava, and Tõnno Jonuks compared clergy jokes in Estonian and Belarusian folklore. The authors argued that such jokes cannot be regarded as an attack on religion, but rather ridicule the clergy because they belonged to a higher social class.

Along with the authors' talks the book presentation included the volume reviewer Mikalai Antropau's analytical overview. He discussed the dynamics of Estonian and Belarusian academic cooperation and expressed his hope for future edited volumes, with a particular focus on further comparative studies into Finno-Ugric and Slavic folklore. The participants of the online presentation

also discussed plans for future volumes in the series “Mission Possible” and invited each other to take part in joint academic conferences and seminars.

Although the online format of the book presentation lacked the immediacy and materiality of face-to-face gatherings, the authors and listeners still had a chance to discuss each other’s work, share their latest research findings, and just engage in informal conversations with long-time colleagues and friends.

Anastasiya Fiadotava