

Introduction

This collection of studies on contemporary folklore and its relations to media, internet communities and their folklore make up an important milestone of folklore research. The first print of the book you are holding in your hands was published in a very small run in 2002, in the middle of economic difficulties and that is why we decided to publish a second, improved collection of the studies.

Contemporary Folklore 4 is also dedicated to the memory of Harry William Mürk (8 June 1954 – 24 February 2009) and Anu Vissel (16 December 1952 – 6 September 2005).

As a linguist who had studied language and literature at the universities of Helsinki and Toronto and defended PhD on Estonian morphology at the Indiana University in 1991, Harry Mürk understood the nature and dangers of language segregation. During his scholarly and teaching career he published a handbook of Estonian language in the Uralic and Altaic series at the Indiana University in 1997, and worked as professor and teacher of Estonian language and literature at the University of Toronto, later as teacher in the school. His ever increasing work load made Harry Mürk use his spare time for work, and his unexpected death left many unfinished manuscripts lying on his table. Harry's contribution to mediating Estonian culture was incredible. He translated fiction, the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg*, folk songs, and choir songs by Veljo Tormis, also scholarly texts, compiled the monumental text anthology of Estonian Kalavala-metric songs *Taevased kosilased*. It is only short list of his everyday duties.

Since the collection action in 1992, school lore and children's folklore became Anu Vissel's primary research interests. For more than a decade, she as ethnomusicologist observed the transformation of traditions on the isolated Kihnu island and the Setu

region. The focus of her research was on the renewing of game tradition and musical culture, including children's song repertoire.

Studying contemporary folklore in Estonia has been closely related to collection initiatives (1992 – pupil folklore in Estonia and Finland, 1993 – Estonian Russian school folklore, 1993 – Estonian student folklore) and research projects but first and foremost with the researchers' own interest in cultural and societal change. This was what led to the 2007 collection initiative targeting Estonian schoolchildren with a questionnaire adapted from the 1992 one. The task force included initiators of the Estonian-Finnish 1992 collection Mare Kõiva, Astrid Tuisk, researchers of contemporary folklore Risto Järv, Piret Voolaid and coordinator Ave Tupits.

The actions of collecting contemporary folklore were preceded and followed by seminars and conferences on the subject: 1991 – anecdotes, spiritism in schoollore, scare stories, games, children's songs, etc., 1992 – Estonian school folklore just collected, 1993 – Russian Estonian school folklore, 1994, 1997 – media influences on folklore, 2007 Kiidi seminar on school folklore and the 2008 winter folklore conference panels – concentrating on the material gathered in the 2007 initiative. Compared to the school folklore collected in 1992, there had been profound changes in the whole mosaic of youth traditions, both in the genres and topics, certainly related to the transformed social cultural setting. The seminars analysed the renewed genres and topics, offering first in-depth analysis of internet folklore. Attention was also paid to youth folklore phenomena that had previously received little attention: versebooks, anecdotes, chain letters, gestures, horror stories.

Accepting change takes a while in the academic research discourse. This is well illustrated by the 1990s habit of considering the flourishing new folklore subgenres like the visual droodles or the word games bordering on linguistics and gaming as part of the periphery of riddles. Internet communities were a brand new phenomenon, and from the point of view of classical folklore, the very periphery of peripheries. Collecting internet folklore, observation of internet communities became actual only in late 1990s and resulted in databases, working papers, articles and monographs.

Conference papers and articles outlined in addition to social and political influences also the constant continuing impact that media has on the folklore process, but also the trends of merging phenomena. In many areas, the question of authorship or, in other words, the role that the personal and the individual in reinterpretation and representation of folklore, not to mention its creation.

Besides providing feedback for the society and studying the transformation of traditions in the changing society, the inquiry into contemporary folklore rejuvenated Estonian folkloristics, emphasizing new approaches, metamorphosis of folklore genres and the issues of transplantation. The latter is largely characteristic of internet folklore.

Popular text anthologies and readers compiled by Eda Kalmre, Piret Voolaid, Astrid Tuisk, Anneli Baran were met with great reader interest. The same can be said about the series *Tänapäeva folkloorist* (1995-) and *Contemporary Folklore* (1996-) that she signed initiated and has edited. In 1993, after the collection campaign for school lore from Estonian Russians, Anu Vissel and Mare Kõiva published and edited a collection of school lore with parallel Estonian and Russian texts. This publication (*Koolipärimus* 'School Lore') was the first in the *Pro folkloristica* publication series.

Mare Kõiva



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