

# Folklore Fellows' NETWORK



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King, Poet, Seer

Greek Magic Tales

The Role of Theory  
in Folkloristics and  
Comparative Religion

Narrative  
in the Modern World

# Folklore Fellows' NETWORK

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A view of the Vileišiai House, now the premises of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius. Photographs by Justė Kuodytė.



# The Individual and the History of Science

Last August saw the international conference take place in Turku on ‘The Role of Theory in Folkloristics and Comparative Religion’, whose theme was the influence of Prof. Lauri Honko (1932–2002) on later scientific developments. Epic research was a particular focus, along with the perspective of tradition ecology, genre theory, tradition processes and the safeguarding of tradition. The conference also sought to investigate what the significance of the individual may be for a scientific field and for folkloristics – is it overemphasised, or held in too little regard, when collectiveness is a central research characteristic?

History has been criticised as a scientific field for concentrating too much on great men, and events easily become personalised, instead of investigating structures and people that generally feature as a faceless multitude on the pages of history, even though they participate in the events promulgated by the great men and make them possible. Does the same danger exist if developments in folkloristics are examined through the workings of one individual? I believe a natural way of uniting these approaches exists, and I present a couple of instances of how one researcher has managed to eternalise his name in the history of science.

Antti Aarne, a Finnish researcher of fairy tales, at the beginning of the twentieth century developed a type index of fairy tales when he realised, after extended work with concrete empirical material and cooperation with foreign colleagues, that the plots of the tales seemed to have a certain logic and a system could be created based on this logic. Later this type index was further developed by Stith Thompson, and the well-known AT system was created and widely used in the organisation of materials in archives and publications. Several national type indexes have been produced, based on the international AT type index. In the early part of the new millennium, Hans-Jörg Uther again revised the system and introduced in 2005 the ATU-types. The whole principle and system have been discussed and criticised repeatedly throughout the history of folkloristics, but this is the way Aarne has made a lasting impact: he created a system which has later been critically re-evaluated and

developed, and, thanks to this, all folklorists know the name Aarne.

My other example is of more recent origin. Albert Lord created together with Milman Parry in the middle of the twentieth century a theory of the characteristics of oral epic poetry, and the way it is received, learned and performed. The theory is usually called oral formulaic theory or composition in performance theory, but it is known as the Lordian theory as well. The classical book of Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, was published in 1960, and several reprints have been made since then. Initially it provoked critical discussion among many scholars of epic, particularly in Finland, where the old Finnish School still had importance, and it took several decades before it became widely known and accepted. Nowadays no serious researcher of epic can ignore this perspective and the name of Albert Lord. His theory has been critically re-evaluated and developed further, and it has its adherents and opponents. But above all, it has been intellectually very fruitful and productive. Lauri Honko has been one of many prominent researchers whose work on epic is clearly based on the theory initially developed by Albert Lord.

These are but two examples. It would be easy to continue the list of the great names of folkloristics, and every country has its own heroes. Lauri Honko belongs to this list, not just as a great man of Finnish folkloristics, but for his significant international career. One aspect of his activity was the various leadership roles in international learned organisations, and his editorship of the FF Communications series over thirty years.

To return to the opening question: what is the basis for talking about the heroes of folkloristics, and from what perspective? Such a status may be gained through long and painstaking research into a phenomenon which others too are interested in, and by developing a theory and concepts in collaboration with a broad international body of researchers. A researcher must have something important to say but also needs an audience willing to hear his news. ■

## Aspects of the Celtic Wild Man legend in medieval literature

One of the most enigmatic figures haunting the medieval imagination was that of the Wild Man of the Woods.<sup>1</sup> From learned theological speculations to folktales, and from margins of manuscripts to coats of arms, the pervasive presence of the Wild Man throughout the Middle Ages testifies to the enduring importance of the figure as the most widespread symbol of the blurring of the boundaries between nature and culture. In his various guises, the Wild Man is conventionally portrayed as human in form, but marked by some bestial or abnormal characteristics such as a covering of shaggy hair, unusual size or lack of essential human faculties of speech and reason. Seeking solitude in the barren wilderness, the figure inhabits the uncultivated areas beyond the confines of society, remaining nevertheless in tantalising proximity to civilised life, as an ever-present Other of the Western imagination. (See e.g. Bernheimer 1952, Bartra 1994.)

While the pedigree of the Western Wild Man can be traced back to such characters as Enkidu of the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, King Nebuchadnezzar of the Old Testament and the hairy anchorites of early Judaeo-Christian legends, the development of the medieval image of the animal-like forest-dweller in its recognisable literary form has generally been dated to around the twelfth century (Bartra 1994: 63). This article looks at the representation of the figure in two contemporary compositions which are of particular interest in this process, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* ('The Life of Merlin', c. 1150), and the Middle Irish tale *Buile Shuibhne* ('The Frenzy of Suibhne', c. mid-twelfth century).<sup>2</sup> In these texts, the Wild Man appears as a human being who is driven mad after a profoundly distressing experience in battle, and consequently flees to the forest, succumbing to an animal-like life in the wilderness. As a result of his derangement, he gains a supernatural gift of prophecy or poetry, which allows him to appreciate the wonders of his natural habitat and also to share his experience with others. Thus instead of simply signalling degeneracy in either psychological or moral terms, the Wild Man's madness in both instances is portrayed as a fundamentally transformative experi-

ence, which endows him with a special kind of spiritual authority that ultimately gives the impetus for recording and transmitting his story in textual form (Clarke 1973, O'Keeffe 1913).

Based on the many clear parallels in the depiction of the Wild Man's madness in these two texts, scholars have long held the view that Geoffrey's *Vita* and *Buile Shuibhne* are essentially versions of a single underlying story pattern, commonly known as the Celtic Wild Man legend (see e.g. Parry 1925, Jackson 1940, Jarman 1991). Historical and literary scholarship has demonstrated that traces of this legend can be found throughout the Insular Celtic culture area, including Scotland and Wales, suggesting that some of its basic elements may possibly have existed in oral form long before the surviving medieval texts were produced.<sup>3</sup> The following examination compares the appropriation of the legend in the *Vita* and *Buile Shuibhne* in order to illustrate that, apart from the recognised similarities, the treatment of the Wild Man's inspired insanity in these medieval compositions also reveals some notable variations in the conceptualisation of their main protagonists' condition. These deviations, as illustrated below, are especially pertinent in highlighting the different cultural understandings of both 'madness' and 'wildness', and the various strategies in which the meaning of these fluid notions was negotiated in the Middle Ages in psychological, as well as social and spiritual terms.

### Defining the madness of the Wild Man

At the beginning of the *Vita*, Geoffrey introduces Merlin as a renowned king and prophet of south Wales, who, when joining his allies in combat, is driven insane after a profoundly distressing experience of witnessing the death of his three companions. Grief-stricken, he

1 The writing of this article has been funded by the Academy of Finland project 1138310.

2 In the following, the texts will be referred to as *VM* and *BS* respectively, using the numbering of lines and sections as given in the editions of Clarke (1973) and O'Keeffe (1913).

3 The tradition survives only in fragmentary form in Scotland (Lailoken) and Wales (Myrddin). The so-called Lailoken fragments have been preserved in a fifteenth-century manuscript of an incomplete Life of St Kentigern, which was originally composed in the twelfth century. For the Welsh Myrddin material, the primary sources comprise a collection of prophetic poems of varying date, but no prose version of the tale is extant (see Jarman 1991). Geoffrey's portrayal of Merlin in the *Vita*, as well as in his earlier *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1138) was demonstrably influenced by the figure of Myrddin, whose name he originally Latinised presumably to avoid any connotation with the French *merde* (Clarke 1973: viii).

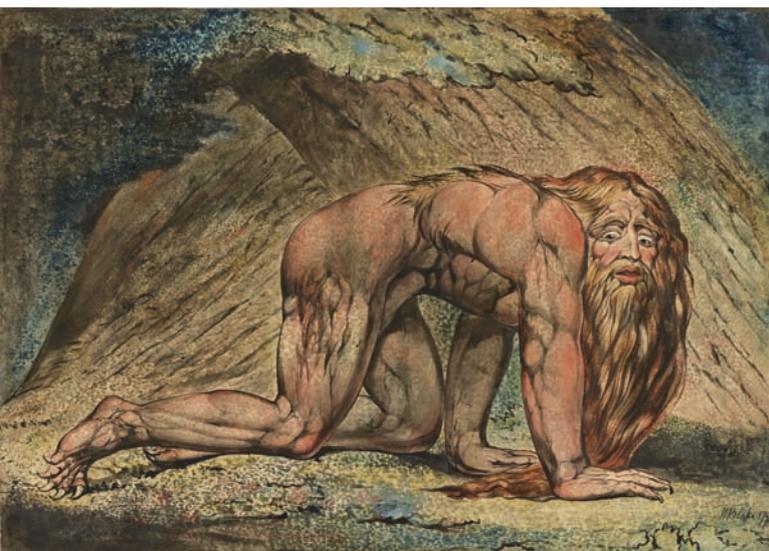
mourns their passing inconsolably: for three whole days he weeps and laments, throws dust upon himself, tears his clothes and rolls on the ground (VM, lines 38–71). In this state of debilitating sorrow, he feels ‘a strange madness’ (*furor*) coming upon him, which makes him flee from the scene of battle and seek solitude in the wilderness:

He crept away and fled to the woods, unwilling that any should see his going. Into the forest he went, glad to lie hidden beneath the ash trees. He watched the wild creatures grazing on the pasture of the glades. Sometimes he would follow them, sometimes pass them in his course. He made use of the roots of plants and of grasses, of fruit from trees and of the blackberries in the thicket. He became a Man of the Woods, as if dedicated to the woods. So for a whole summer he stayed hidden in the woods, discovered by none, forgetful of himself and of his own, lurking like a wild thing. (VM, lines 74–83)

Although Geoffrey’s account presents the battle-induced trauma as the main catalyst of Merlin’s madness, his actual loss of sanity is attributed to the all-consuming sadness that gradually drives him to wistful dejection. Thus it is the initial experience of the overwhelming ‘disgust at the homicidal effects of the battle’ (Thomas 2000: 34), as well as a profound sense of disillusionment with the world, that motivates Merlin’s desire to withdraw to the wilderness, and even after recovering his senses to renounce his kingship for a peaceful life in the woods:

I will not reign again. While I remain under the green leaves of Calidon, its riches shall be my delight – a greater delight than the gems that India produces, or all the gold men say

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The figure of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had a seminal influence on the literary representations of madness in medieval literature. *Nebuchadnezzar* by William Blake, 1795. The Miscellaneous Works on Art Purchase Fund, 1957.

is found along the banks of the Tagus ... Nothing can please me so, nothing can tear me from my Calidon, ever dear to me, I feel. Here I will be while I live, happy with fruit and herbs; and I will purify my flesh with pious fasting, to enable me to enjoy endless everlasting life. (VM, lines 1280–91)

In terms of the immediate psychological effects of Merlin’s trauma, the representation of the Wild Man’s derangement in the *Vita* appears indebted to classical medical diagnoses of melancholic depression (see Porter 2002: 43–8). Yet the emphasis of the narrative lies less on the anatomy of this condition *per se* than on the exploration of the process that ultimately leads Merlin to privilege the ‘madness’ of his wild lifestyle over the opportunity to resume his previous position in society.<sup>4</sup> As noted by Neil Thomas (2000: 33), Merlin is not a fugitive driven from the combat by fear, guilt or shame, but rather an émigré consciously distancing himself from the evils of the world. This understanding of the Wild Man’s madness as a virtuous pursuit of spiritual perfection (see Doob 1974: 139–58; cf. Frykenberg 2006) is arguably one of the most notable differences between Merlin and his Irish cognate King Suibhne, whose career is from the start manifestly associated with negative qualities that foreground the moral justification of his impending fate.<sup>5</sup> In *Buile Shuibhne*, he makes his first appearance as a proud and arrogant ruler who, after repeatedly affronting the Christian saint Rónán, commits the ultimate offence on the battlefield by violating the truce mediated by him, and killing one of Rónán’s psalmists before attempting to take the life of the saint himself. The enraged holy man curses Suibhne, beseeching God that he would spend the rest of his life wandering around Ireland, naked and restless, and be ‘one with the birds’ (*BS* §10). When the two hosts raise their battle cries, Suibhne is suddenly overtaken by a sense of furious panic (*geltacht*), which literally sends him flying out into the wilderness:

Now, when Suibhne heard these great cries together with their sounds and reverberations in the clouds of Heaven and

- 4 Mania and melancholia were recognised as the two main manifestations of mental disturbance throughout the Middle Ages. In the *Vita*, the manifestations of Merlin’s condition (anguish, dispirited gloominess, lack of appetite) as well as the effective measures taken to cure him (playing of music, drinking of clear spring water) are reminiscent of the symptoms and therapies described in contemporary medical traditions, with which both Geoffrey and his learned audience were most likely well familiar with.
- 5 In her study of the literary conventions of madness in the Middle Ages, Penelope Doob (1974: 154) associates Merlin’s insanity with the sinfulness of his secular lifestyle as a king, as well as to the excessive nature of his grief, noting moreover that it is only after his ‘rebellion against the pain and apparent injustice of the world’ that Merlin gradually comes to accept suffering as a ‘necessary consequence of sin’. This interpretation has been challenged by Thomas (2000: 32–4).

ban brouher. Seith guaew ny  
 ochel in eu ferthran. **Myrddin.**  
 Seith tan. Vuelly. Seith kad  
 ky uerbin. Seith ued kinve  
 ly y pop kinhuan. **Taliesin.**  
 Seith guaew gowanon. Seith  
 loneid awon. O guaed kinre  
 inon y dylanuan. **Myrddin.**  
 Seith ugem haelon. aaechan  
 yg willon. yg coed kelton. y.  
 daruan. Can y f m myrddin

The thirteenth-century Black Book of Carmarthen includes four Welsh poems attributed to Myrddin. Image from Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin, or the Conversation between Myrddin and Taliesin. Peniarth MS 1, f3v. By permission of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / National Library of Wales.

in the vault of the firmament, he looked up, whereupon turbulence (?) and darkness, and fury, and giddiness, and frenzy, and flight, unsteadiness, restlessness, and unquiet filled him, likewise disgust with every place in which he used to be and desire for every place which he had not reached. His fingers were palsied, his heart beat quick, his senses were overcome, his sight was distorted, his weapons fell naked from his hands, so that through Rónán's curse he went, like any bird of the air, in madness and imbecility. ... He halted not from that headlong course until he left neither plain, nor bare mountain, not bog, nor thicket, nor marsh, nor hollow, nor dense-sheltering wood in Ireland that he did not travel that day, until he reached Ros Bearaigh, in Glenn Earcain where he went into the yew-tree that was in the glen. (BS §§11–12)

The remarkable attention given to the physiological symptoms of Suibhne's terror notwithstanding, this passage bears little similarity to Geoffrey's almost clinical portrayal of Merlin's condition. Most importantly, the

unfolding events leading up to Suibhne's loss of sanity establish an explicit causal relationship between his initial attacks against Saint Rónán's authority and the subsequent divine intervention that leads to his demise. To quote Joseph Nagy (1996: 14), there is no question that this 'monarch on an anticlerical rampage' is responsible for the consequences of his own actions, and deserving of the punishment that reduces him to madness and bestiality. This presentation of the causes and consequences of Suibhne's condition has important implications for the interpretation of the narrative as a whole, as the symbolic and moral connotations of his deranged state give a distinctively penitential and purgative meaning to his suffering in the wilderness. Indeed, in terms of his physical and spiritual deformity, the Irish Wild Man is most closely related to the biblical King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4), whose false sense of omnipotence leads in a similar manner to divinely inflicted exile and bestial degeneration (see Bergholm 2012: 133–40).<sup>6</sup> To the extent that there is any virtuous quality to Suibhne's tribulations, then, it only becomes discernible when the Wild Man gradually acknowledges his own sinfulness and the justification for the punishment he has received:

I give thanks to the King above  
 with whom great harshness is not usual;  
 'tis the extent of my injustice  
 that has changed my guise. (BS §27)

### Poetry and prophecy

As noted above, in both the *Vita* and *Buile Shuibhne*, the notion of the loss of sanity is essentially intertwined with the gaining of supernatural insight and inspiration, which grants the Wild Man access to special prophetic or poetic knowledge. This inspired quality attributed to the Wild Man's derangement appears to have been part of the original story nucleus of the Celtic Wild Man legend (see e.g. Jackson 1940, Jarman 1991), but the manner in which it has been adapted in the *Vita* and *Buile Shuibhne* is particularly revealing of the different development of the theme in the literary context of the medieval period.

<sup>6</sup> Like Nebuchadnezzar, Suibhne in his bestial state is depicted as having feathers and bird-like claws (e.g. BS §§ 23, 40, 45, 60, 61), and it is possible that the biblical exemplum served as one impetus for the development of the idea that the Irish bird-like Wild Man was actually endowed with powers of levitation. This notion, which is particularly pronounced in *Buile Shuibhne* is also encountered in a thirteenth-century Old Norse-Icelandic text *Konungs Skuggsjá*, which describes the terror-struck battle fugitives who have feathers on their bodies and fly along the tree-tops in the wilderness as one of the wondrous phenomena of Ireland. See further Bergholm 2012: 68–76.

In the *Vita*, where the obscure historical prophecies attributed to Merlin constitute the clearest link between Merlin and his shadowy Welsh predecessor Myrddin, the allusions to the Wild Man's vaticinary powers are integrated within a series of other learned discourses, which expound upon Merlin's encyclopaedic knowledge of cosmology, geography, animals and the weather. The implication that this information – received when Merlin 'was taken out of [his] true self' in spirit (*VM*, line 1161) – is in essence supernatural or revelatory is nuanced by other passages, in which the primary emphasis is placed instead on the progressive nature of Merlin's understanding of God's creation. Thus when Merlin wishes to learn more about various natural phenomena, he does not solely rely on his own observations, but also engages in a lengthy exchange with another prophetic figure Taliesin, who 'with the aid and direction of Minerva' (*VM*, line 736) gives him the desired explanation, eloquently echoing the prevalent scientific conceptions of medieval post-classical heritage (see Clarke 1973: 7–11).

When compared to Merlin's role as a seer, it is evident that there is no equivalent scientific dimension to the knowledge acquired by Suibhne, whose madness is first and foremost marked by poetic inspiration rather than by understanding of 'the secrets of nature, bird flight, star wanderings and the way fish glide' (*VM*, lines 1163–4). Whereas the madman's poetic compositions occupy a greater part of *Buile Shuibhne's* prosimetric structure, the idea of the Wild Man's prophetic knowledge in the narrative has become attenuated and secondary. Only traces of this conception are identifiable in allusions to the so-called motif of the threefold death – which in the *Vita* features prominently as a proof of the madman's gift of clairvoyance (see Jackson 1940) – and, in a more distinctly Christian guise, in passages where Suibhne hints at his supernatural abilities when conversing with Saint Moling:

[M:] An early hour is it, thou madman,  
for due celebration.

[S:] Though to thee, cleric, it may seem early,  
terce has come in Rome.

[M:] How dost thou know, mad one,  
when terce comes in Rome?

[S:] Knowledge comes to me from my Lord  
each morn and each eve. (*BS* §75)

For Suibhne, then, the main driving force behind his revelatory insight is the Christian God, but it is through his poems that he ultimately gains the power to voice his experiences as a wild outcast (Nagy 1996: 11). In the narrative's long passages of introspective and contemplative verse, the Wild Man's natural surroundings often take on a symbolical significance as a vehicle for

conveying the sufferings of the madman and the inner workings of his disturbed mind:

Gloomy this life,  
to be without soft bed,  
abode of cold frost,  
roughness of wind-driven snow.

Cold, icy wind,  
faint shadow of a feeble sun,  
shelter of a single tree,  
on the summit of a table-land.  
...

Yea O great Lord,  
great this weakness,  
more grievous this black sorrow,  
Suibhne the slender-groined. (*BS* §45)

The lack of any distinct penitential element in Merlin's insanity entails that the overall effects of his madness are arguably not as dramatic in the case of Suibhne. Yet it is only after his withdrawal to the forest that Merlin can gain full appreciation of the wonders of the universe, and thus attain the special kind of knowledge arising from secluded contemplation in the wilderness. Looking back to the time of his wild frenzy at the moment of his death, Suibhne also acknowledges that despite the occasional hardships, there was nevertheless joy and harmony in the wild nature that surpassed all the delights of the society:

There was a time when I deemed more melodious  
than the voice of a beautiful woman beside me,  
to hear at dawn  
the cry of mountain-grouse.

There was a time when I deemed more melodious  
the yelping of the wolves  
than the voice of a cleric within  
a-baaing and a-bleating.

Though goodly you deem in taverns  
your ale-feasts with honour,  
I had liefer drink a quaff of water in theft  
from the palm of my hand out of a well. (*BS* §83)

### Madman and the saint

The composite image of Suibhne's madness in *Buile Shuibhne* encompasses the totality of his experience in a manner which intertwines the theme of retributive suffering with the more positive aspects of becoming spiritually reformed through enduring the trials of the wilderness. In the nar-

rative, the centrality of the figure of Saint Rónán in the events preceding Suibhne's loss of sanity anticipates a symbolical symmetry in the ending of the story, where the madman finally achieves reconciliation after his divinely inflicted penance. This role of bringing closure to the Wild Man's tribulations is attributed to Saint Moling, with whom Suibhne develops an amicable and mutually beneficial relationship.<sup>7</sup> Rather than seeking to detain him, Moling only asks the madman to return to his monastery each evening for supper in exchange for the permission to write down his adventures, thereby creating a quasi-therapeutical setting that subtly lures the Wild Man back into contact with society (Nagy 1996: 25–6). Although Suibhne ultimately never fully regains his royal rule or his sanity, the arrangement ensures that the ultimate outcome of his penitential madness is not thoroughly negative: in the end, his spiritual transformation is made manifest when Saint Moling restores the Wild Man to the membership of the Church, by giving him the last sacrament and burying him in holy ground after his death.<sup>8</sup>

With the absence of the essential element of personal sin or guilt in Merlin's condition, it becomes more readily apparent why there is no need for a similar divine intervention either at the beginning or the close of the *Vita*. Instead of requiring the assistance of a saintly character to restore him to his former self, Merlin himself assumes a saintly role, and having resolved to spend the rest of his life in the wilderness, he encourages others to do the same. He is joined in this pursuit by Taliesin and his own sister, as well as a wandering madman, whom Merlin persuades to stay in their community after he has been cured:

You who have for many years lived and gone about in wild places like a beast, without a sense of shame, you must now continue steadfastly in the service of God, who has restored you to being the man you now see you are. And now that

7 The association between Suibhne and Moling, a historical seventh-century Leinster saint, is well-established in early Irish literature. The development of this tradition has been subject to lively scholarly debate in the past; see e.g. Jackson 1940, 1953–4; Carney 1955.

8 This 'saintly resolution' of Suibhne's mad career bears some resemblance to the story of the Scottish Wild Man Lailoken and his relationship with Saint Kentigern, but its absence from other versions of the Celtic Wild Man legend suggests that the two tales may have in this instance drawn independently upon a common hagiographical device (Clarke 1973: 2; Frykenberg 2006).



Merlin dictating to his scribe Blaise. Illustration from XIII century manuscript of *Histoire de Merlin*, Paris BNF fr. 95, fol. 223.

you have your reason back do not flee from the green groves you haunted in your derangement, but stay with me: then you may make up for all the time stolen from you by the distorting mania, in the service of the Lord. All I have I shall share with you from now on as long as each of us may live. (*VM*, lines 1442–51)

As Thomas (2000: 37) has aptly put it, Geoffrey's Merlin is thus truly a character worthy of a *vita* in a hagiographical sense, and 'a protagonist of towering spiritual distinction: not a babbling social outcast and sinner or *homo fatuus* but rather a *homo sanctus*.' In this role, he is

not only capable of comprehending the true nature of worldly life, but also of helping others to turn away from its madness. From a theological perspective, then, the suffering of Merlin that originally arose from the painful realisation of life's cruelty and injustice, reaches its appropriate closure like the story of Suibhne does, albeit radically inverting the pattern of its 'saintly resolution': instead of seeking to remedy the 'disorders' that brought about his madness in the first place, he takes on the suffering of the world voluntarily, and foregoes earthly pleasures in quest for eternal happiness.

## Conclusion

Both 'madness' and 'wildness' can be seen as concepts that 'do not so much refer to a special thing, place or condition as dictate a particular attitude governing a relationship between a lived reality and some area of problematic existence that cannot be accommodated easily to conventional conceptions of the normal or familiar' (White 1972: 4–5). Therefore, the understanding of the meaning of these categories is linked not only to their dialectical opposites 'civility' and 'reason', but also to the negotiable boundaries of what is accepted or tolerated in a given cultural context. From this perspective, the comparison of the two medieval literary renderings of the Celtic Wild Man legend in the *Vita* and *Buile Shuibhne* can be seen as offering one valuable viewpoint into the complex process of development, by which the shared story pattern of the madman's inspired derangement has been continuously reinterpreted and reappropriated to reflect the needs and values of the historical present. In terms of its overtly moralising portrayal of the causes and consequences of the Wild Man's condition, *Buile Shuibhne* invites its audience to focus on the penitential aspects of Suibhne's terror-stricken frenzy, underscoring the reading of his madness as a symbolic representation of the king's spiritual degeneration. This

framing of the tale stands in striking contrast to Geoffrey's *Vita*, which appears to attend to Merlin's insanity with almost pathological precision, and to transfer any discernible moral fault from the Wild Man to the surrounding society that drives him to melancholic despair. If Suibhne's *geltacht* is the most dramatic expression of divinely inflicted exile, Merlin's *furor* is 'the most radical form of social dissent possible' (Thomas 2000: 39). Between these opposite poles of power and powerlessness opens up the interpretative space, from which the medieval Celtic Wild Man emerges as a sinner, a seer and a saint. ■

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## A new publication in the FF Communications



### Songs of the Border People

Genre, reflexivity, and performance in Karelian oral poetry

by Lotte Tarkka

Rune-singing in the Kalevala meter is one of the few European oral poetries to survive the long nineteenth century. In her comprehensive study of the poems collected in the Archangel Karelian parish of Vuokkiniemi, Lotte Tarkka places this tradition within historical and ethnographic realities, contexts of local and elite ideologies, and the system of folklore genres. The songs of the border people emerge as praxis, the communicative creation of individual and collective identities grounded in a mythic-historical view of the world. The bond between the songs and their singers is articulated through an intertextual analysis of key cultural themes and the textual strategies used in their elaboration. In performance, singers and their audiences could evoke alternative realms of experience and make sense of the everyday in dialogue with each other, supranormal agents, and tradition. The poems, as powerful representations and performatives, endowed those who voiced them with godlike creative capacities, as coined in the proverb "The things I put into words, I make real."

Lotte Tarkka is Professor of Folklore Studies at the University of Helsinki. Her areas of expertise include Kalevala-meter poetry, Finnish mythology, oral poetries and textualization, genre, and intertextuality, especially in the context of archival sources.

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# Greek Magic Tales

## Aspects of research in Folklore Studies and Anthropology

The study of the Greek folktale needs to take into account three important factors as well as their mutual interplay: *a.* the historical depth of the Greek folktale; *b.* the enrichment of the existing corpus with new versions, since folktales still form a living reality in rural Greece; and *c.* the vast cultural exchanges with the narrative traditions of other peoples, which, nevertheless, are subjected to a constant procedure of appropriation. The edition of the *Catalogue of Greek Magic Tales* published in the FF Communications series offers, from this point of view, an additional point of reference for comparative studies as well as a framework for the study of the particularities of Greek folk narratives. The following brief contributions draw attention to different aspects of our research on this rich and varied material, framed by theoretical and methodological concerns. Of an essentially introductory and fragmentary character, these notes could be used as an ‘Open Sesame’ phrase in Greek folktales, or as the similar Greek phrase goes ‘Open Koudoumoundou!’

### Images in dreams and tales: some examples from Greek magic folktales by Anna Angelopoulos

Oral Greek folktales seem not to have attained the glory of the great Greek myths and epic stories; for centuries, they were considered a sort of minor, popular genre, appropriate for children or regressed adults. Appearances can deceive, however. It has now been shown that folktales transmitted orally constitute a coherent space in the imagination, which, in all types of stories, consistently brings together typical images of the most archaic collective memory. Folktales have been created and disseminated since the most remote antiquity and form an imaginary, phantasmic system among the most closed and remote communities. They are transmitted orally in societies with or without writing and constitute both the original and the ultimate expression of human myths.

What are these typical images? They are the irresistible attraction of the folktale because they are shared by everybody, regardless of gender, race, class, religion. These are images that have a dreamlike character and suggest ideas that speak to us in an enigmatic way. They

come close to being personal but are also collective dreams, if we accept that there are dreams that belong to all of us. For example, who has not dreamt that they were falling or flying at some point in their lives? Or even that they were naked and ashamed because everyone else was clothed?

The stereotypical image traverses the dream but also the narrated story. These mental images that run across epic poetry, tales, legends and riddles were called ‘motifs’ by anthropologists.

As far as psychoanalysis is concerned, Freud very early on dedicated a chapter of his *Interpretation of Dreams* to typical dreams, where he says:

We have seen that, as a general rule, each person is at liberty to construct his dream-world according to his individual peculiarities and so to make it unintelligible to other people. It now appears, however, that, in complete contrast to this, there are a certain number of dreams which almost everyone has dreamt alike and which we are accustomed to assume must have the same meaning for everyone. A special interest attaches, moreover, to these typical dreams because they presumably arise from the same sources in every case and thus seem particularly well qualified to throw light on the sources of dreams. (Freud 1900: 339)

There can be no doubt that the connections between our typical dreams and fairy tales ... are neither few nor accidental. This symbolism is not peculiar to dreams but is characteristic of unconscious ideation, in particular among the people, and it is to be found in folklore, and in popular myths, legends, linguistic idioms, proverbial wisdom and current jokes, to a more complete extent than in dreams. (Freud 1900: 468)

I am using the example of Freud himself in order to present an image that is common to both the dream and the tale. I will tell you a story that does not appear to have been known to Freud. In his passages that relate to the typical dream, in the chapter ‘Dreams of the death of persons of whom the dreamer is fond’, he says:

During an analytic session a lady told me that a dream had occurred to her – a dream which she had first dreamt when she was four years old and at that time the youngest of the

family, and which she had dreamt repeatedly since: A whole crowd of children – all her brothers, sisters, and cousins of both sexes – were romping in a field. Suddenly they all grew wings, flew away and disappeared. She had no idea what this dream meant; but it is not hard to recognise that in its original form it had been a dream of the death of all her brothers and sisters, and had been only slightly influenced by the censorship. The young dreamer, not yet four years old at the time, must have asked some wise grown up person what became of children when they were dead. The reply must have been: ‘They grow wings and turn into little angels.’ ... It is as if the child was led by the same chain of thought as the peoples of antiquity to picture the soul as having wings. (Freud 1900: 354)

In this image of young brothers becoming birds and flying away, storytellers and folklore specialists will have recognised the beginning of a well-known European wonder tale, *The Maiden Who Seeks Her Brothers*. This story forms the basis of three of the tales in the Grimm collection (*The Twelve Brothers*, no. 9, *The Seven Ravens*, no. 25, and *The Six Swans*, no. 49). In the *Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales*, we find 38 versions of the story known as *The Maiden Who Seeks Her Brothers* (451):

A number of boys are compelled to flee from home when their young sister is born. The next stage of the story is the transformation of the brothers into ravens or swans. The sister knows of the transformation and undertakes to find them. At the end of the story, she succeeds in disenchanting them, removing the curse.

The story has a long literary history. It is included in folktale collections from all parts of Europe in well over two hundred versions in all. This eloquent image or ‘motif’ of the brothers’ transformation into birds fulfils a narrative function in the story. In the *International Motif-Index for Folk Literature* (1955–8), together with other typical images, you can easily find this one and learn, for example, about its dissemination. This motif belongs to the Chapter ‘Transformation through wish’, no. D 521, or, ‘Transformation to raven’, no. D 151.

To me, it is a fantasy about boys fearing the moment a girl will be born to her mother. This powerful image functions as the fulfilment of a parental death wish that makes the brothers disappear in the sky, just as in the dream work of Freud’s young patient. Typical images like this are common both in dreams and in stories, as they use a symbolic enigmatic language of their own, like riddles. Tales imply a secular secondary revision through oral transmission.

In one of my essays I compared the concept of the ‘typical dream’ in psychoanalysis to that of the motif in folklore. ‘Typical dreams’ are a creation of the unconscious under the form of a repetitive and stereotyped image common to all dreamers, employing symbolic elements in the content of the dream, with a permanently fixed meaning, like the grammalogues in shorthand.

The ‘motif’ in folklore is a recurring enigmatic image, incorporated in a narrative sequence of images, lending a coherent meaning to the hero’s trajectory. Dreams and stories make use of this symbolism for the disguised interpretation of their latent (hidden) thoughts. In this way the mental images of the story become inseparable from the narrative.

In folktales there is an itinerary. The characters leave their place and usually start a new life. Viviane Labrie, who worked for a long time alongside storytellers in Francophone Canada, discovered the existence of intricate systems of visualisation that storytellers themselves described in the course of the recall and narration phases. The memory of the content of the tale is described as being mainly visual. Her informants talk about a silent movie, a set of slides, or even a dramatic



Gravure from the *Griechische und albanesische Märchen*, edited by the Austrian J. G. von Hahn in Leipzig (1864). It is considered the first independent edition of Greek folktales.

play (Labrie 1992: 91). For the narrator, nothing is accidental or unconnected.

Of course one could ask: and what prevents the storyteller from subtracting or adding from his own experience, or from mixing different stories together? It is very simple: the stories will not please the audience; nobody will repeat them at the next gathering; they will be forgotten and will never be incorporated in the local tradition. And of course they will not travel and be disseminated. They will be spontaneously rejected from the body of tradition. This is how things functioned when the oral tradition was alive. Today, as we struggle to revive it, we need to understand its integrity, its cohesion. So storytellers tell a story that is usually meant to negotiate a fundamental human problem. They often use parables and allegorical images to express the ideas of the tale.

For example, let us take the following dilemma. A gardener planted an apple tree, watered, fertilised and pruned it, and finally it produced beautiful red apples. Who should eat these apples? Some stranger, or the gardener who owns the tree and who toiled to see his red apples one day? We would all spontaneously say 'the gardener', but, when the question is posed in the context of a tale, as is the case in the story of *Mary Woodencoat*, better known in Greece as *Xylomaria* (type 510B), our answer may be different: there the king assigns this prob-

lem to the bishop in order to allow him to marry his own daughter. We now identify with the heroine, who puts on a wooden coat and runs away. It is here that perhaps we understand the contradiction that exists between the timeless questions (and people's unconscious hopes) and social reality, which of course prohibits their realisation.

Anthropologists studying prescientific thought know that incest is a conundrum for the human mind: in different degrees and prescriptions it is prohibited in all societies (marriage between cousins may or may not be allowed in some places; however, no social formation has ever allowed parents and children to marry and procreate).

Here, in the story of *Mary Woodencoat* (better known as *Cap o' Rushes*, 510B), we have the confrontation with the inconceivable, the impossible dilemma: how does a daughter find a way to balance two opposing forces, one that is centripetal (she wishes to stay at home) and one that is centrifugal (she must leave her father's house). She must make her way between a psychological value system that is incestuous (endogamic) and a social reality that encourages exogamy. So our heroine gets into a closet or a piece of wood and runs away to escape her (lecherous) incestuous father. She suffers in various ways until this 'walking wood' meets a prince, who, after various adventures, marries the heroine.

These mental images are the so-called 'motifs' of the



Private collection of Marianti Kaplanoglou

Storytelling event with pupils in the Hill School of Athens, who are listening to a folk narrator from the island of Antiparos (Central Cyclades).

story. A motif is the smallest decomposable (irreducible) unit of a story, and it stems from the unconscious, which in this case is considered to be collective. Typical images recount a mini-sequence that helps the narrator to remember the rest of the plot.

In an earlier essay I observed that the hero's moniker is often emblematic: Iron-John, Katie Woodencat, Born-of-his-Mother's-Tears, Little Red Riding Hood. Nicknaming a character means drawing his picture, and also creating a mnemonic unit of the story. The storyteller thus invents a blazon, a symbolic emblem with a motto, ready to accompany the main character in his travels. The nickname of the hero consists of an eloquent image, producing a key to the latent content of the story. This is a formation that rises from a timeless psychic space.

Motifs exist in all kinds of discourse; in traditions, riddles, epic poetry and dreams. They are extralinguistic images: the image is usually more powerful than the word and can easily be translated into various languages, thus helping the story to travel as far as its translation can reach. The motif marks the trajectory of the narrative and is used by the storytellers as a mnemonic device in order to recall tales through the principal images that each contains. For example the name 'Cinderella' in Greek (*Stachtopouta*, type 510A) means the 'the female pudendum in the ashes'. Perrault calls her 'Culcendron'. Other synonyms are: 'Stachtogata' ('La Gatta Cenerentola', the 'Hearthcat'), 'Achylopoutoura' (vessel, pot, in the ashes), which is close to 'Aschenputel' of the Grimms, 'Askepot' in Denmark, and so forth.

The motif of the blackened cauldron or cat refers to the daughter grieving for her mother, especially when we know from the Greek variations of the cannibalistic Cinderella that the heroine herself contributes to the death of her mother together with her evil sisters, who kill her and eat her. Her widowed father remarries and now the daughter finds herself with her evil stepmother. As long as the image is translatable, the story can travel a very long way. But when, during this trajectory, the image no longer means anything to anyone, the transmission of the tale stops.

Of course, a nexus of disconnected motifs does not constitute a story, which is never just the totality of its episodes or the sum of its motifs. It is something more than that. The story has a beginning, it leads to an end, and it is produced as a significant totality. Its realisation requires poetry, staging, orchestration, action through a process of initiation and a conclusion.

The hero or heroine goes far away, suffers a rite of passage and returns transformed. They come to experience fear, awe, trauma, death. Upon return they have lost the initial infantile egocentric omnipotence that characterised them at the beginning of the tale and can finally freely love another person. And they live happily ever after.

The transmitter's point of view is unknown to me. As part of the audience, I realise that the storyteller reorganises the basic mnemonic knowledge into a piece of literature, transmitting images and their hidden meaning through verbal and non-verbal performance. The performance then is a super-form of the tale since it goes beyond the individual to involve a whole group.

The narrators' task consists of depicting, for the initially blind audience, what they see as it unfolds from their memory into consciousness. They have at their disposal a pool of narrative and semantic elements, like motifs, verbal opening and closing formulae, names and nicknames for characters and places, but at the same time they know that transmission takes place mostly through their physical presence during the performance. ■

### The narrative episode of the 'story within a story' in Greek magic tales

by Marianthi Kaplanoglou

Information about the vitality of tale-telling during the twentieth century in the local communities of rural Greece can be derived from several contextual as well as textual indications. By contextual I mean the multiple factors that favour and influence traditional storytelling, depending on different groups of people (defined by age, sex, profession, family or social status), places (public, private or local working places) and time (season of the year or hour of the day).<sup>1</sup> It is worth noticing the multiple terms in Greek to designate the different forms of an unofficial gathering of neighbours or villagers where stories were exchanged: *veggera*, *nichter*, *geitonema*, *aposperida*, *sergianni*, *rouga*, etc.

Contemporary Greeks devote much time to social contacts with friends and relatives and storytelling holds a central place in their communicative practices. These everyday talks can also contain different genres of folk speech close to folktales, like personal stories, religious tales, legends, anecdotes, proverbs, speech metaphors, allusions, etc. By contrast, folktales are not narrated just anywhere or whenever. They are communicated in specific performance situations.

The constant movement of Greek populations during the twentieth century deeply affected the continuity of their oral traditions.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the migration of a large portion of the Greek population to the big cities

1 For a detailed account of the social context of tale-telling in the islands of the Aegean Sea, see Kaplanoglou 2002.

2 Economic migratory movements from Greece to the countries of Western and Northern Europe, the USA, Canada and Australia; domestic migration from rural to urban areas, settlement of the refugees from the Greek – Orthodox communities of Asia Minor in Greek territories, etc.



The gifted folk narrator Katinko, born in 1896, in the Greek Orthodox village of Milia in the Propontis. In the photograph, taken in Athens during the 1990s, she is holding one of her great-grandchildren.

did not interrupt the contact of the city-dwellers with the village. This facilitated the survival of the cultural expressions of the past and their adaptation beyond the local community's borders, in the everyday reality of the present. It is exactly these adjustments to the cultural necessities of particular social groups that justify the frequency and popularity of folktales to this day.

By textual, I mean indications given by the texts themselves regarding tale-telling: the hero or heroine of the Greek folktales is a traveller, a doer, as is stated by Max Lüthi for the fairytale hero in general. But in contrast to the many silence taboos which are imposed on him or her, he or she is a narrator too. In Greek folktales, narration occurs at different points of the plot (for example in versions of ATU 311, *Rescue by the Sister*, it may occur at the beginning, where an old man recites his troubles to the Lord of the Underworld) and this influences the ways it is used or functioned. But more usually, it occurs just before the end of the tale, when the hero or the heroine arrives unrecognised at the house of relatives (or of the beloved) and narrates in the presence of the rival(s) what had happened in the form of a tale (while the story continues nobody is permitted to leave the room). So narration as a narrative episode has a repetitive or summing-up rather than a framing quality.

Narration is a common but not stable attribute of the folktale hero or heroine, since it can be used alternatively with other narrative equivalents or allomotifs (following Dundes 2007) where speech is not involved: for example recognition between the spouses can occur through an embroidery the heroine sends the king, wherein are embroidered all her sufferings,<sup>3</sup> or by the ring inside some food the heroine has sent to her beloved.

From the point of view of the narrator's performance, the story-within-a-story episode also constitutes a narrative technique which permits the narrator to recapitulate all the preceding story<sup>4</sup> at the most crucial point of the plot, prolonging the audience's anticipation. From a narrative point of view we have the tale's resolution, since narration brings recognition between the spouses or among the relatives, as well as the necessary (and usually cruel) punishment of the villain(s). In this framework the narration episode brings about the completion of the hero's or heroine's course of initiation, the deliverance of the hero or heroine from a 'shadowy state' (a term used by Max Lüthi), 'in their being allowed to emerge from the condition of being underestimated, or in the revelation of the magnificent reality hidden under the false appearance – the ugly kitchen maid in the wooden dress' (Lüthi 1987: 144). Anna Angelopoulos, referring to the Greek versions of the folktale types 705 and 851, argues that this story-within-a-story episode, which presents all the 'prehistory' of the hero or the heroine of the tale in the form of an enigmatic children's song, demonstrates his or her possession of the narrative capacity and comprises a resolution in his or her secret journey towards the amorous encounter (Angelopoulos, in print).

In narrative terms this final episode restores the narrative's balance or even symmetry, since, in many cases, the damage created by a story which must not be narrated (for example, the revelation of the enchanted husband's name) is complemented by another narration that must be performed in order for the happy ending to occur.

Another similar motif is the inn with the folktales: usually a girl in search of her lost magic husband buys or builds an inn (restaurant or hotel), where everyone can stay for free, provided that they tell a folktale, a device that leads to the recognition of the two spouses. This motif was known as early as the fourteenth century from the Greek novel *Livistros and Rodamni*, where the stolen bride is rediscovered by exactly the same method.

3 The motif is known from ancient mythology, from the myth of Philomela and Procne.

4 As Christine Goldberg notes in her article (1995) about the worldwide dissemination of *The Knife of Death and the Stone of Patience* tale.

It is also found in the *Thousand and One Nights* ('The Lovers from Syria'), where the heroine builds a caravan-serai, sets up a statue there in her own image, and sets her guards to watch the reactions of those who set eyes upon it. A grotesque version of the motif of the inn with the folktales is found in the neohellenic versions of ATU 950: the king, in order to expose the thief who entered his treasure builds an inn where everyone is offered a night with the king's daughter under the condition he tells to her a story. A version of this episode is found as early as in Herodotus' *Histories* about the thief of the treasury of King Rampsinitus (Herodotus 2, 121).

Let us see which tale types this episode occurs in according to the *Catalogue of the Greek Magic Tales* (FFC 303) and – wherever possible – according to some micro-data collected from more recent field research in contemporary oral tradition.

Type 301A, *The Golden Apples* (AT, *Quest for a Vanished Princess*; ATU, included in type 301). The hero arrives unrecognised at the palace and narrates his story to his father the king.

Type 304, *The Hunter* (ATU, *The Dangerous Night-Watch*). The princess recognises her beloved when he tells their story in the inn, in this way exposing his rival.

Type 313, *The Magic Flight*. Recognition is accomplished when the forgotten maiden narrates at the wedding of her beloved to another girl a story which is that of herself and the youth, arousing in this way his memory.

Type 400, *The Man on a Quest for His Lost Wife*. The hero departs to find his wife. After wearing out three (or forty) pairs of iron shoes he builds an inn and makes the travellers tell tales.

Type 402, *The Animal Bride* (AT, *The Mouse, Cat, Frog etc. as Bride*). The hero departs in order to find the enchanted maiden, who had vanished into another world, and arrives at an inn where his wife is having wayfarers tell tales.

Type 403A, *The Black and the White Bride* (ATU 403). The heroine narrates her story at the palace in the presence of the other girl who had taken her place.

Type 408, *The Three Citrons* (AT/ATU, *The Three Oranges*). The king invites the maiden to the palace, where all the guests tell stories; the maiden narrates her own story like a fairy tale, with the doors locked and everyone compelled to listen to her; in other versions the heroine has a child, leaves it on the palace staircase, is hired as its nursemaid, and is recognised by the lullaby she sings to it.

Type 425, *The Search for the Lost Husband*, Subtype D. The heroine builds a bath or inn where visitors may stay without payment, if they agree to tell a fairy tale. Thus, the heroine finds her husband once more on the basis of information from a child or elderly man.

Type 425, *The Search for the Lost Husband*, Subtype G (ATU, included in 425A). In this most widely disseminated subtype in Greece, with 118 versions, the narration of the heroine is somewhat differentiated since it is done not to humans but to objects: the heroine requests from the prince leaving for a journey three magic objects: the knife of slaughter, the hanging rope and the stone of patience. When she receives them, she tells them her story, wishing to hang or stab herself. The prince, who overhears the narration, realises that she is his saviour, and in turn saves her life by preventing her from killing herself. He marries her and they punish the intrusive slave girl.

Type 425, *The Search for the Lost Husband*, Subtype R (type 432). The heroine narrates the whole story to the young man-bird who recognises his saviour and is reconciled with her.

Type 433B, *King Lindorm*. In the lullaby the maiden sings to her infant, and she finally expresses the choice she had made between the two enchanted husbands.

Type 461, *Three Hairs from the Devil's Beard* (*What's Written Can't Be Unwritten*). The hero, a Moorish boy, turns white, marries the princess and narrates his story at the king's table, thus revealing his identity.

Type 510B, *Xylomaria/Tomarou* (AT, *The Dress of Gold, of Silver and of Stars*; ATU, *Peau d'Asne*). The heroine narrates her story at the table in the presence of her husband and her incestuous father is punished.

Type 705, *The Artificial Child* (AT, *Born from a Fish*; ATU 705A, *Born from a Fruit*). The goose-girl narrates her story at the palace in the form of a folktale.

Type 707, *The Three Golden Children*. The story of the children is narrated, usually like a folktale, with the doors closed and everyone obliged to listen.

Type 710B, *The Ghoulish Schoolmaster* (AT/ATU/Megas 894). The heroine narrates her story to objects (the knife of slaughter, the stone of patience, etc.) asking whether she should be patient, or be killed; the prince overhears her words and asks for his wife's forgiveness.

Type 712, *The Honest Woman* (AT/ATU, *Crescentia*). The heroine narrates her story at the table in the presence of

her husband or the heroine narrates her story to her dis-taff and is heard and recognition follows.

Type \*735E, *The Luckless Maiden*. In the final episode the princess's father passes by and she makes him narrate his story.

It is interesting to note that in folktales, as in reality, narrative procedures consist of collective activities which gather different groups of people. Accordingly, more or less everyone can tell a story. Moreover, the details of this folktale episode seem to depict aspects of actual storytelling situations: in an unpublished folktale version of ATU 705 told in the Dodecanesian island of Kalymnos the persecuted heroine is abandoned by her mother-in-law in the forest, bears three children and, in order to feed them, wanders around the village, where at night she tells her own story in the form of a fairy tale to the villagers in exchange for food; the story meets with such success that the king asks her to come to the palace and repeat it there. This Kalymnian story bears an impressive correspondence with real-life storytelling situations: beggars, refugees or other outsiders who wandered around rural Greece in the destruction following the Second World War narrated fairy tales to secure food and shelter.

Moreover, despite the entertaining aspect of storytelling gatherings, their underlying seriousness cannot be missed. When the maiden narrates her troubles in the form of a folktale to a gathering at the palace, the false bride, feeling she is about to be revealed, attempts to get away, but the doors are locked, and while the story continues nobody is permitted to leave the room. In real life, storytellers themselves used to stress the serious nature of their narrations by demanding absolute silence from their audience as well as by certain introductory and closing phrases. These phrases, along with the story-within-a-story episode, form metanarrative devices (as Barbara Babcock [1977] has pointed out) which comment on the narrative performance itself.

However, the main analogy between the real and the fictive tale-telling situations is the appeal of the story itself. In the framework of the folktale the value of the narration episode is evident not only from its functional role (since it brings the resolution of the plot) but also from the therapeutic dimension it usually acquires; M. G. Meraklis, commenting on the Greek versions of type 425G, accentuates the need of the heroine to express her pain by talking even to objects (the knife of slaughter, the hanging rope and the stone of patience): 'the motif is a vivid expression of this instinctive externalisation – which most times is proven liberating – of our problems, it is a wonderful depiction of the need for announcement and the consequent exodus from the depressive and self-destructing loneliness (Meraklis

2012: 167)'. This announcement of a problem can constitute its solution, if it is heard by someone who is fit to understand it (like the prince who overhears, who is the heroine's deceived husband). This therapeutic role of narration is virtually materialised in a version of the Greek oikotype 883C\* where the unjustly accused sister, who had cursed her brother so that a tree should grow from his ear, arrives unrecognised at her brother's house and relates what had happened in the form of a tale: while the story was being told, the branches of the tree fell down.

In an analogical way, for the storytelling communities of rural Greece the main criterion for adopting and preserving a certain narrative seems to be the appeal of the story itself: this appeal was evaluated in terms of its symbolic, aesthetic and moral use, as well as its use as a medium for learning and sharing common family and social ties.

Though appreciated, storytelling is perceived as something ambivalent: the goose girl (or other persecuted hero or heroine) attends a tale-telling session and insists that she will narrate a fairy tale; but, as the narration proceeds, the audience of the goose girl (as well as her opponent) gradually realises that the fairy tale is in fact a life story; in other words what is understood in a metaphorical or symbolic way (as a story of fantasy) is meant finally to be interpreted literally (as a true story). This subversion is accentuated in cases where the supposed fairy tale is articulated through other folk expressions with strong symbolic connotations (riddles, lullabies, etc.).

Nevertheless what the audience of the goose girl should realise as clearly distinct (imagination versus reality) the audience in the real world might think of as interconnected through the effect of the storytelling procedure itself. Greek narrators as well as their audiences clearly perceive folktales as something untrue or imaginative. This is obvious in the terminology they use to designate folktales as a narrative genre; the term *paramythi* (folktale) is used for a narrative where the fictive aspects dominate. But it is the appreciation of the tale in terms of its aesthetic and symbolic value as well as the appreciation of a specific narrator's art that made these tales more 'truthful', meaning that these narratives made real life more 'transparent' and understandable. This can be inferred from the fact that gifted storytellers were highly esteemed and appreciated in their local communities.

Moreover, the episode of the story within a story emphasises the playful aspect of folk narration: it is a play with words, of literal meanings with metaphorical ones, of symbols in need of decoding, of truths disguised as lies and realities as appearances. Resolution relies precisely on this dynamic use of speech. Thus it is the narrator who offers access to his or her audience through

the use of metaphors, and their complex and multiple meanings. This gradual understanding of metaphors and symbols forms valuable knowledge in the framework of folk speech, where allegorical meanings were usually assigned to explicit images. It is even more valuable when we consider the social base of a storytelling audience in rural Greece. There are many examples in Greek tradition of how folktales confront problematic aspects of social relations and moral issues, and give voice to people deemed voiceless and underprivileged. From this point of view, the story-within-a-story episode is revealed as a substitute for real action. ■

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## A recent publication in the FF Communications

### Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales



† G. A. Megas,  
Anna Angelopoulos, Aigli Brouskou,  
Marianthi Kaplanoglou, Emmanouela Katrinaki

ACADEMIA SCIENTIARUM FENNICA

### Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales

by G. A. Megas, Anna Angelopoulos, Aigli Brouskou, Marianthi Kaplanoglou and Emmanouela Katrinaki

The *Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales* comprises an epitome in the English language of the 'Greek Catalogue of Magic Tales' published originally in five volumes in the Greek language. The collected texts cover a period of more than a century of recordings (from the second half of the nineteenth century up to the mid-1970s) and geographically cover not only the entire Greek territory and Cyprus but also other areas where Greek populations live(d) and Greek cultures thrive(ed) (Asia Minor, Pontus, Cappadocia, Southern Italy). It was Georgios A. Megas, the eminent folklorist, who drafted the first (unpublished) catalogue, gathering and indexing all published and unpublished Greek folktale versions, so that the number of texts finally exceeded 23,000. A group of specialists continued for nearly 30 years carrying this project, consulting, classifying, and commenting G. Megas' handwritten card indexes, and finally editing this rich material, scattered in public and private archives.

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# Ave Maria!



Mikael Agricola, *Abckiria*. Photos: SKS, Literary Archives.

In 1543, Mikael Agricola, Bishop of Turku and the leading figure of the Lutheran Reformation in Finland, published in his *Abckiria*, a primer of the Finnish language and basic religious instruction, a versified poem that arouses many questions.

Terue maria armoitettu  
 Herra on sinun cansas,  
 Sine olet hyuesti siugnattu  
 pälen caiceden waimodhen.  
 Sille ette hyuestisiugnattu  
 on sinun rumis hedelme  
 Jhesus Christus Amen.

Hail Mary [full] of grace  
 The Lord is with Thee  
 Thou art well blessed  
 Above all women  
 For well blessed  
 is the fruit of Thy body  
 Jesus Christ. Amen

In folk poems of Kalevala metre that were collected in later centuries, it was customary to address the Virgin Mary with forms that have been suggested of having a connection with the Ave Maria prayer: Neitsyt Maaria emonen, rakas äiti armollinen! [Virgin Mary, mother, dear merciful mother!] A few of the verses of Agricola's Ave Maria are very close to the metre of folk poetry (Ter-ue Ma-/ri-a /ar-moi-/tet-tu; on si-nun / ruu-mii-/si he-/del-mä). Should one wish to do so, the whole poem could be sung to the classic Kalevala tune even though it does not follow the Kalevala metre proper in all its verses.

The Ave Maria was one of the few texts that were already taught in the vernacular in the Middle Ages, also in Finland, although there are no direct Finnish sources from that period. During the Reformation, the Angelic Salutation, or the Ave Maria, was no longer an important religious tenet. Professor Simo Heininen, a researcher specializing in Mikael Agricola, has come to the conclusion that this Finnish translation in verse partly dates from the Catholic era. In his written work, Agricola typically kept to prose, as in his translation of the corresponding passage in the New Testament in Finnish (1548).

Publishing this text in verse can be regarded as an indication of how the Archdiocese of Turku was oriented towards tradition, seeking to maintain religious teachings that were already familiar to the common people. We do not know how much Agricola altered this prayer, which had previously existed mainly in oral form, or how much the prayer itself may have varied. In his Prayer Book (*Rukouskirja*, 1543), Agricola published the poem with a few changes, with the salutation reading "Hail Mary, merciful!"

Indeed, this poem suggests a number of questions about with what historical periods should it be associated, what it tells about the relationship between the Lutheran Reformation, the Catholic Church and folk poetry, what its metre is, and what it indicates about the evolution of metres in Finnish poetry.

This discussion on poems about the Virgin Mary is related to the Finnish Literature Society's research project *Oral and Literary Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region*, investigating Baltic-Finnic folk poetry, the literature of the region in Latin, perceptions and images of pagans, linguistic and musical registers and communicative networks dominated by Low German and Old Swedish in Finland, Estonia, Karelia and Ingermanland (Ingria) from the 13th to the 18th century.

The members of the research team are Kati Kallio (folklore), Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen (head of the project), Irma-Riitta Järvinen (folklore), Linda Kaljundi (history), Ilkka Leskelä (social history) and Senni Timonen (folklore).

For more information, see [www.finlit.fi/english/research/baltic\\_sea.htm](http://www.finlit.fi/english/research/baltic_sea.htm)

## The Performance of Christian and Pagan Storyworlds

The research project The Nordic Countries and the Medieval Expansion of Europe: New Interpretations of a Common Past of the Nordic Centre for Medieval Studies was partly carried out within the Finnish Literature Society between 2005 and 2011. It studied the expansion of Western Christianity to Estonia and the Baltic Countries with focus on its social consequences.

The Performance of Christian and Pagan Storyworlds presenting the results of the project was published in the spring of 2013 and it contains several articles that are also of interest to researchers of folklore and culture.

See [www.finlit.fi/tutkimus/ncms.htm](http://www.finlit.fi/tutkimus/ncms.htm)

For more information on the book:

[www.brepols.net/Pages/ShowProduct.aspx?prod\\_id=IS-9782503542362-1](http://www.brepols.net/Pages/ShowProduct.aspx?prod_id=IS-9782503542362-1)

## A History of the Romany in Finland

The Finnish Ministry of Education awarded the State Award for Public Information of 2013 to *Suomen romanien historia* (A History of the Romany in Finland, SKS 2012).

As far is known no similar comprehensive and integrated presentation of the centuries of Romany history based on thorough research has yet been prepared in other countries.

Containing a wide range of new information and visual materials, this book presents the rich survival story of the arrival of the Romany to Finland, their years of wandering and their present life within Finnish society while preserving their own cultural identity.

*Suomen romanien historia* was published as the result of the Finnish Literature Society's research project on the history of the Romany in Finland.

See [www.finlit.fi/english/research/romany\\_history.htm](http://www.finlit.fi/english/research/romany_history.htm)

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### Identities in Practice

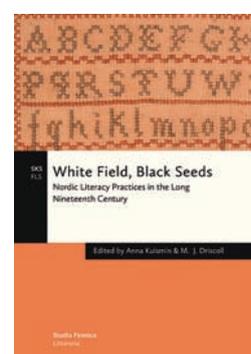
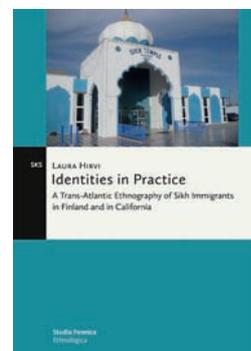
*Identities in Practice* draws a nuanced picture of how the experience of migration affects the process through which Sikhs in Finland and California negotiate their identities. Laura Hirvi's rich ethnographic account highlights how the construction of identities is a creative process conditioned and infiltrated by questions of power. *Identities in Practice* will appeal to scholars who are interested in the study of cultures, identities, migration, religion, and transnationalism

Laura Hirvi, *Identities in Practice. A Trans-Atlantic Ethnography of Sikh Immigrants in Finland and in California*.  
SF Ethnologica 15. SKS 2013.

### White Field, Black Seeds

White field, black seeds – who can sow? This riddle refers to the ability to write, a skill which in most Nordic countries was not regarded as necessary for everyone. This collection presents the work of primarily Nordic scholars from fields such as linguistics, history, literature and folklore studies who share an interest in the production, dissemination and reception of written texts by non-privileged people during the long nineteenth century.

Anna Kuismin & M. J. Driscoll (eds.), *White Field, Black Seeds. Nordic Literacy Practices in the Long Nineteenth Century*.  
SF Litteraria 7. SKS 2013.



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# The Role of Theory in Folkloristics and Comparative Religion

## Turku, 21–23 August, 2013

This has been a historic year for the study of folkloristics and comparative religion in Finland. It was fifty years ago that a combined chair in folkloristics and comparative religion was founded at the University of Turku, with Lauri Honko (1932–2002) as its first incumbent. This chair in comparative religion was the first in Finland, since the founding father of the science of religion in Finland, Uno Harva, actually held a chair in sociology at the University of Turku. The Finnish Society for the Study of Religion, which Honko presided over for a number of years, also celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. The double chair and this particular combination of disciplines is the outcome of the gradual growth of the comparative study of religion from folklore studies. In Turku these disciplines were firmly interconnected by this joint chair until the early 1990s, when they finally were separated into independent branches of learning.

Lauri Honko promptly established himself as a leading scholar in both disciplines and secured Finland a position as one of the internationally leading nations within these two fields. He was a multifaceted scholar who promoted research in several capacities, assuming a key role in various kinds of national and international academic organisations. For some time, Honko was director of the Nordic Institute of Folklore, he was elected to the executive committee of the International Association for the History of Religions and he acted as chairman of the International Society of Folk Narrative Research. He also reorganised the Folklore Fellows, an international network for folklorists, and the Folklore Fellows' Summer School, and he headed the UNESCO heritage programme for safeguarding folklore. In addition he set his mark on the publishing field. For three decades Honko acted as editor-in-chief for *Folklore Fellows' Communications*, the highly regarded series in the field of folklore studies. He initiated the Nordic journal for Comparative Religion, *Temenos*, in 1965 and acted as its first editor-in-chief. This is just a small selection of his impressive academic merits.

The Honko conference, 'The Role of Theory in Folkloristics and Comparative Religion', was arranged both to celebrate these academic milestones in the Finnish study of folklore and comparative religion and to commemorate Honko's scholarly achievements, some eighty years after his birth and ten years after his death. Honko's work was also honoured by a new publication, *Theoretical Milestones: Selected Writings of Lauri Honko* (FF Communications 304). The editors, Pekka Hakamies and Anneli Honko, have compiled fifteen articles by Honko, many

Tommi Laitinen



A break during the conference in the vestibule of the Arken building of the Åbo Akademi University.

of which can be considered as classics within the field of folklore studies and the study of vernacular religion.

Lauri Honko had a wide range of interests. He was a ground-breaking theoretician, making substantial contributions to theories of genre, genre analysis and the study of functions and the ecology of tradition. Another field where he made his mark was in the study of folklore processes, as well as in research on tradition and identity. Honko was also an internationally leading scholar within research on epics. The conference was largely structured around these central topics. Its aim, however, was not only to dwell upon Honko's methodological and theoretical achievements in the past, but, first of all, to assess the state of the art today within those fields to which he had contributed during his five-decade-long research career. The keynote presentations and many of the session papers sought to assess Honko's theoretical contributions from new theoretical angles and to test their applicability to the study of cultural phenomena and processes in the present day. Speakers strove to identify the topics where Honko's findings were still fully relevant and areas where Honko's theories could benefit from new theoretical approaches in order to meet the specific challenges that are posed by the study of contemporary traditions in modern contexts.

Matti Kamppinen's opening paper gave a general overview of Honko's construction and use of theories at different stages of his long career. He scrutinised Honko's theory of culture, which, he argued, is functionalism. He also discussed the relevance of Honko's theories to



Participants of the conference waiting for the transportation to the excursion.

present-day folkloristics and comparative religion and found that they can easily be combined with prevailing theoretical frameworks, especially within Kamppinen's own specialist field, cognitive studies, even though Honko himself was reserved about cognitive theories in the 1980s. Kamppinen also discusses Honko's theoretical achievements at length in a recent publication, *The Theory of Culture of Folklorist Lauri Honko, 1932–2002*, co-authored with Pekka Hakamies (The Edwin Mellen Press, 2013).

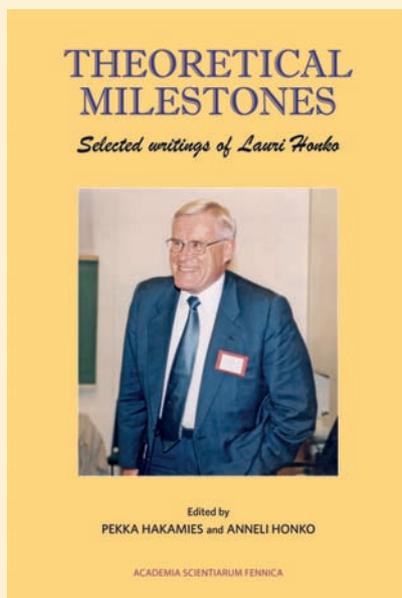
The historian of religion Håkan Rydving devoted his presentation to Honko's work on the ecology of religion and tested its bearing on the study of contemporary religion, especially its virtual expressions, which in many ways challenge traditional scholarly theories within the study of religion. Rydving found that Honko's ecology of tradition still serves as a valuable heuristic device for the

Photos by Tommi Laitinen



Some of the keynote speakers of the conference: (from the left) Viveka Rai, Lauri Harvilahti and Regina Bendix.

## A new publication in the FF Communications



### Theoretical Milestones

#### Selected writings of Lauri Honko

edited by Pekka Hakamies and Anneli Honko

Lauri Honko (1932–2002) was among the leading folklorists of his time. In particular, he developed theories and concepts relating to folk belief, genre and epic. This collection represents a selection of Honko's key articles, which he considered worthy of republication himself. They relate to Honko's own research, to the debates and discussions he took part in; some are introductions to article collections produced by groups of researchers.

Honko's writings combine a typically strong empiricism with clear theoretical thought. His own theoretical framework was above all one of functionalism, within which he united other currents within folkloristics, such as 'composition in performance', 'ecology of tradition' and 'textualisation'. He was occupied by the question of how the individual performer used folklore, be he a teller of proverbs or jokes, a singer of oral poetry or a producer of written epic.

Honko was at no stage a representative of the traditional 'Finnish school' of folklore research, and origins and developments were a research challenge to him particularly from the perspective of how folklore adapts in different ways to its setting and circumstances of performance by means of variation, and how regularity may be discerned within this.

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study of present-day religion. Marion Bowman, for her part, applied Honko's theoretical findings to the study of contemporary spirituality and vernacular religion, specifically in Celtic contexts. She still regards genre as a useful tool, as she finds Honko's theories on the meanings and uses of folk religion and folklore helpful in the study of present-day spirituality.

Honko's position as a leading scholar of epics was reflected in the large number of keynote lectures and presentations which dealt with this topic, addressing research on epics from varying angles and in various contexts. Joseph Mbele dwelt on the complex and contradictory relationship between epic and national identity. Viveka Rai, who collaborated with Lauri Honko in the Oral Epics Project, India group, and in the publication of two volumes concerning the Siri epic, discussed Tulu and Kannada oral epic traditions. Lauri Harvilahti in turn considered issues of textualisation, which Honko was preoccupied with to a high degree, in his paper with the conclusive title 'Textualising Oral Epic – Mission Completed'.

Finally, Lauri Honko's work in UNESCO's World Heritage board was highlighted by Regina Bendix's plenary presentation, which gave a historical overview of his work with the UNESCO Heritage Convention and the nature of its conventions regarding culture. She also dwelt upon the various positions scholars have taken over the years when working at the intersection of academe and policy-making.

The Role of Theory in Folkloristics and Comparative Religion, or the Honko conference, was a much-welcomed initiative, offering an important opportunity for discussing the state of the art in the core areas of Honko's scholarship. Since Honko very much set the tone in these scholarly fields, it was timely to balance the books by shedding light on earlier achievements and assessing them in the light of future challenges. ■

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# Narrative in the Modern World: Unity and Diversity

## Vilnius, 25–30 June, 2013

The 16th ISFNR congress took place in Vilnius, Lithuania, in June 2013. The theme was Folk Narrative in the Modern World: Unity and Diversity. The subtitle ‘unity and diversity’ was evident among the participants, within the subject matter and the theoretical orientations. Folkloristics conferences feel like great family gatherings, yet a wide plethora of phenomena and approaches are afforded space within.

The main theme of the congress is a current issue: the place of folklore and its methodologies are constantly changing with the development of channels of communication and social behaviours. In the face of these questions we encountered many types of reaction both in the plenary sessions and the conference presentations. There was an expression of regret, albeit subdued, that folklore and research into it are not what

they used to be in the good old days. For the majority, change has meant new viewpoints and new phenomena to research within the folkloristics field. As the ISFNR president, Ulrich Marzolph, emphasised in his opening speech, the subjects of our research are perennial, even if their forms of expression alter over time. One of the biggest changes is that folklore has moved onto the internet, as have communities. There were many panels and sessions devoted to folk narrative of the internet and modern technology. Commercial links, author’s rights and the cultural heritage conservation too form the new contexts for the deployment, mediation and valorisation of folklore. Valdimar Hafstein’s plenary lecture was an excellent exemplification of the countless new dilemmas which the protection of folklore can afford against factors deemed to threaten it. Hafstein’s



Edmundas Paukštė

The participants of the 16th Congress of ISFNR gathered on the stairs of the Vilnius City Hall.

lecture described examples of protected objects of intangible cultural tradition, adjudged as internationally significant, and their fortunes. The status of folklore as a cultural tradition is evident too on a local level, where folklorists have an even more active role in promoting folklore within the consciousness of the wider public and in preserving it as part of local culture. A good example of this is the legend trails and thematic routes assembled by folklorists, in which tourists, through texts, maps and auditory devices, are informed about the local narrative tradition.

Old folkloristic topics continue to be researched, and new approaches to them are being forged. Giedrė Šmitienė's plenary lecture, 'The world that thinks itself in me', was a refreshing breeze on field work carried out in the Lithuanian countryside, interpreted through the phenomenology and material functionality of Merleau-Ponty. Šmitienė's thoughts evoked a keen discussion on the differences between animism and the world view based on the reciprocity of perception. Traditional folk poetry and mythological materials continue to be investigated on the basis of archive holdings, and, as was seen in the panels on 'Homo narrans, mythic knowledge and vernacular imagination', research viewpoints and questions may be similar regardless of the age of the materials. In past decades, archive materials have been characterised as being without contexts and hence only of limited use as texts, but as Pertti Anttonen highlighted in his plenary presentation, contexts can be found for archive texts as well. One way is to see the archive text as a genre in its own right within the context of archiving, which does not describe the performance situation in an authentic manner but points to tradition and the many possible circumstances of performance. In the round-table discussion on 'Why should folklore students study "dead" legends?', international folkloristics authorities reiterated, one after another, how valuable archives are, and what interesting research perspectives they make possible. Theories come and go, but archives live on! It was recognised, however, that even theories do not actually disappear, but rather that even they can be viewed as material, and they have a tendency to be reborn in a rejuvenated form.

The fields of the congress included questions of genre, the social contexts of narrative and theoretical questions. There were generally seven thematic sessions and in addition panels and round-table discussions. Two symposia were also held within the framework of the conference. The symposium of the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming was entitled 'Charms on Paper, Charms in Practice'. The Belief Narrative Network also held its symposium, entitled 'Boundaries of Belief Narratives'. There were five separate sessions in the symposia. The variety of presentations was broad, and this aptly describes the belief

narrative research field. Topics included Swedish belief narratives on the supernatural world, Russian Pentecostals, ghost lore, birth narratives and images of vampires in a television series.

Religious tradition was one of the most represented themes of the congress, and here both old and new elements mixed naturally. The congress had three panels on Alternative Beliefs: From Vernacular Narratives to Practices. The panels examined vernacular beliefs and their verbal expressions in their social contexts past and present. Belief narratives were interpreted as counter-discourses that contest the hegemonic truths upheld by institutional authorities, such as state, church, education system, medicine, etc. Topics included for example the beliefs and practices of Russian vedism, extraterrestrial future visions, afterlife beliefs and disbeliefs, and alternative pilgrims. Genres discussed ran from mantras to memorates and from jokes to autobiography and beliefs. In many papers it was noted that authoritarian and folkloric discourses are interdependent and co-exist and even if and when they clash, the alternative voices are not suffocated.

Particular to the Vilnius congress was a panel devoted to Lithuania's Jews, which also included a social programme. The topic was also aired in Haya Bar-Itzhak's plenary lecture, in which she considered Jewish folklore research and collection in the early twentieth century, and the status of Yiddish and Hebrew and their special usage within Jewish communities.

The setting of Vilnius University was pleasant, and arrangements for the most part went without hitch. A problem with any broad conference was evident here too: participants could only manage to listen to part of the presentations in which they were interested. There were bound to be cancellations when several hundred had registered, but this merely had to be borne. The problem did not appear to be as widespread as in earlier conferences.

The following congress will be held, it was decided in the general meeting, in Miami in the USA in 2016 in conjunction with the AFS annual conference; no other suggestions were proposed. This raises the problems of running the academic programme in parallel to another level, but on the other hand it offers more options and possibilities than before. The experiment will be interesting, and it remains to be seen what experiences the shared conference will offer. Before the Miami conference an interim meeting will be held in Ankara, Turkey, in September 2015. ■

Kaarina Koski is University Teacher, Pekka Hakamies Professor and Kirsi Hänninen Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Folkloristics, University of Turku.

## Folklore Research at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius, Lithuania

Folklorists working at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore are grouped into three departments: the Department of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives, the Department of Folksongs and the Department of Folk Narrative. Each of these sub-structures has its own special tasks and objectives, although some major projects and initiatives are carried out jointly.

### The Department of Lithuanian Folklore Archives

The Lithuanian Folklore Archives is the largest folklore repository in Lithuania, and one of the biggest archives of its kind in the world. Its origins can be traced back to the activities of the Lithuanian Science Society, established in Vilnius in 1907, with collections from 1907–40 making up the oldest part of the preserved materials. As many as 1,254 separate manuscript files of these early folklore recordings have survived. Altogether, the Lithuanian Folklore Archives today stores over 10,000 manuscript collections from 1800–2012, comprising over 1.9 million folklore pieces (including nearly 700,000 folksongs, nearly 200,000 folk narratives and over 730,000 samples of small genres of folklore). Also, there are about 10,000 hours of sound recordings and over 46,000 photographs preserved in the Archives.

Archived materials form the solid basis for all folklore research carried out at the Institute and elsewhere; however, the most important task for the staff of the Archives is digitisation, ensuring preservation of the collection and facilitating its availability. The first digital databases were created at the Archives in 1998, while the most significant recent achievement in this field is the completion of a digitisation project of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives, carried on in 2010–12 and sponsored by the Research Council of Lithuania, which enabled digitisation of the above-mentioned collection by the Lithuanian Science Society. These materials are now available on the inter-

net, while the sound recordings are included in the database of audio materials. The earliest phonograph recordings were restored and digitised even earlier, as a result of a programme financed by the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture and carried out in 2001–7. It is important to note that in 2008, the Lithuanian folk music phonogram collection from 1908–49 was included by UNESCO in the *Memory of the World Register* as an object of documentary heritage of regional importance. In 2009, the Institute was invited to submit samples of Lithuanian folklore to the digital library Europeana.

Justė Kuodytė



A view of the Vileišiai House, now the premises of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius.



Folklorist Lina Būgienė, secretary of the local organising committee of the ISFNR Congress, talking to a Litvak, Professor Dan Ben-Amos (USA), during the closing dinner at the Vilnius City Hall.

### The Department of Folksongs

The archived materials are the main subject of research for scholars working in the two other departments of folklore. One, the Department of Folksongs, specialises in editing and publication of the source materials of the folksong tradition. The folksong researchers continue publication of the fundamental multivolume 'Book of Lithuanian Folksongs', the first volume of which appeared in 1980,<sup>1</sup> and so far some 22 volumes of this comprehensive compendium have been edited and published. About 10 more volumes are still planned. For this fundamental edition, all available sources of the folksong tradition are used, including both archived and published versions, and rigid principles of text selection are strictly adhered to. The aim of this compendium is to represent the whole recorded Lithuanian folksong tradition. The volumes are compiled according to folksong genres, and not only are the folksong texts presented but also the melodies, and the established structural and textological patterns, related to the historical development and spread of the variants in various contexts, are elucidated. Each volume is provided with exhaustive introductions, several indices and summaries in foreign languages. Since its very beginning, all the volumes of this publication follow a common, uniform structure, which is the result of methodological preparatory work. As a rule, two compilers work on each volume, dealing with texts and melodies respectively, and assisted by several editors and consultants. After the whole corpus of

1 The first volume of the 'Book of Lithuanian Folksongs' comprised the traditional children's songs: *Lietuvių liaudies dainynas 1. Vaikų dainos*, parengė Pranė Jokimaitienė, melodijas parengė Zofija Puteikienė, Vilnius, Vaga, 1980.

this qualitatively and structurally new and unparalleled source publication is completed, more varied and broader opportunities for researching Lithuanian folksongs as a rich and unique branch of European cultural heritage are expected to open up. The folksong researchers also publish numerous and varied popular collections of folksongs, which answer the needs of broader audiences outside academia. Research of the folksong tradition is another important sphere of scholarly activity.

Recently, so-called long-term research programmes were introduced in Lithuanian research institutions, granting the basic financing for some priority research projects over five years (2012–16). The editing and publication of folksong sources was acknowledged as a nationally important

field of humanities, and the programme for 'Folksong Sources and Research' was established at the Institute.

### The Department of Folk Narrative

The third folklore department of the Institute, that of Folk Narrative, focuses on oral folk tradition, embracing not only classical folk narratives (such as folk tales, legends, anecdotes, etc.), but also proverbs, riddles, charms and popular belief tradition. The research group working on Baltic mythology also belongs to this department. Editing and publication of folklore sources is also the major objective for this department; in particular the source publications of the 'Lithuanian Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases' (vol. 1, 2000; vol. 2, 2008; the publication of the first volume was awarded the Lithuanian Science Award in 2001) and of the 'Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms' (2008) should be noted here. Comprehensive volumes of Lithuanian folk tales and aetiological legends are currently being edited, as is a compendium of Lithuanian mythical imagery. The major research tasks carried out by this department have also been granted basic financing within the long-term research programme entitled 'Studies of Baltic Mythology and Lithuanian Oral Folklore' (2012–16).

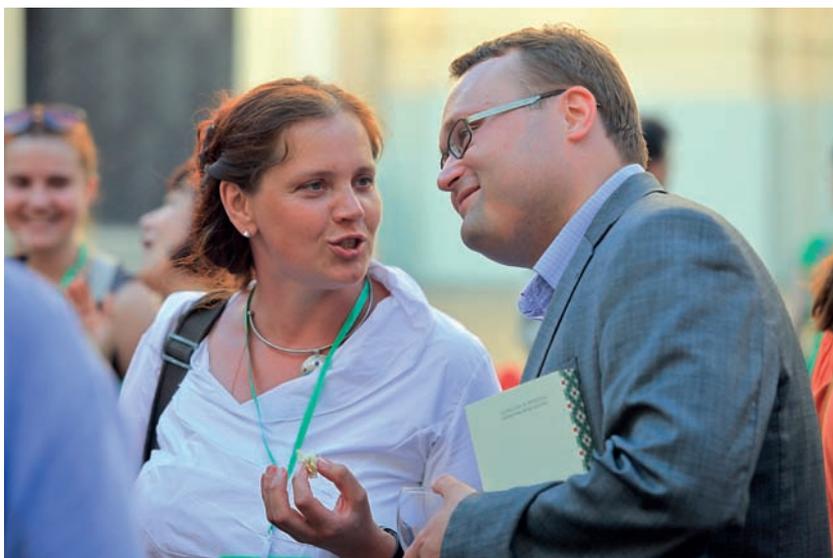
### Studies of modern folk culture

However, the spirit of the age encourages the specialists of separate folklore genres to broaden their research interests, although the spheres of classical folksong and folk narrative research still provide the indispensable way to represent both the uniqueness of Lithuanian traditional culture and its intercultural affinity. Over the last decade, studies of modern folk culture have de-

manded joint projects of a thematically much broader character to be carried out by the researchers of all three folklore departments of the Institute together. As often as not, such projects embrace not only the customary aspects of cultural manifestations, but also those that had hitherto practically escaped our attention. A fitting example of such a joint project is the one carried out in 2010–12, entitled ‘*Homo narrans*: Studies in Folk Memory’ (sponsored by the Research Council of Lithuania). The objective of this project was the study of the current state of folk culture. For this purpose, several fieldwork trips to various regions of Lithuania were organised, the fieldworkers recording a variety of forms of folk narrative, filming, taking pictures, painting the people and their surroundings and the objects of the cultural landscape, and recording their own personal observations and experiences in their diaries. The results of these fieldwork trips make up the basis for interpreting the current state of traditional culture.

Another important source is modern media, which also allows for observation, recognition and noting down contemporary folklore manifestations. Bearing in mind that modern Lithuanian folkloristics no longer perceives folk culture as solely the relic of inherited tradition, but rather attempts to highlight the original folklorised system of cultural values, which has been formed on a basis of tradition and is manifested through the self-consciousness of modern people and their creativity and other specific cultural (including ethnographic) forms of expression, this interdisciplinary collective research also aims to establish methodological approaches that allow for the recognition and revelation of expressions of folklore in modern contexts, when the classical folklore tradition is nearly extinct.

The chief result of the project has been the editing and publication of the collective study ‘*Homo narrans*: Folk Memory at Close Range’, consisting of contributions by 17 authors.<sup>2</sup> To be employed as the main research tool, a multi-level narrative is favoured by modern Lithuanian folkloristics, under the assumption that it is no longer limited by purely verbal forms of expression (like stories or mere utterances), but is instead considerably enlarged, incorporating also visual, musical, written and many other contemporary forms of folk culture. Such being the case, a narrator of a broader range and status



The congress plenary speaker from Lithuania Giedrė Šmitienė and the Director of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Mindaugas Kvietkauskas during the opening of the Congress.

is called for. Therefore the term *homo narrans* was opted for, elevating his or her traditional function of narrating to the status that could be metaphorically described as the storytelling world. Yet the horizon of this narrative is methodologically delimited by a purposefully drawn line of folk memory. Among the main tasks of this study, the intention to clarify and elucidate the increasingly relevant concept of folk memory was taken account of, to facilitate the discernment of the current state of relics of past folklore. Introducing the paradigm of folk memory was in this case somewhat constrained, since a common denominator to define the state of the modern folklore was sought.

Among other joint initiatives carried out by the folklorists working at the three departments of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, editing and publication of the research journal *Tautosakos darbai / Folklore Studies* may be named. This peer-reviewed research journal is published twice a year and provides a forum not only for the folklorists, but also for authors representing a much wider field of humanities (it publishes articles in foreign languages as well).

### International cooperation and research

Lithuanian folklorists are becoming increasingly active and visible internationally. Although the number of publications in English is limited, our participation in conferences and membership in international research societies has been increasing ever since the fall of the Iron Curtain. As one of the most recent successful initiatives, the co-operation agreement with the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore of the University of Tartu could be named, resulting in the establishment of a tradition of organising annual academic meetings of young folklorists alternately in Tartu and in Vilnius. The

2 *Homo narrans: folklorinė atmintis iš arti (kolektyvinė monografija)*, Vilnius, LLTI, 2012 (with summaries in English).



Lithuanian folklorists Salomėja Bandoriūtė, Jūratė Šlekonytė and Radvilė Racėnaitė at the closing ceremony of the ISFNR Congress in Vilnius.

recent event in Vilnius took place on 16–17 April 2012, and was entitled ‘Theoretical Frames and Empirical Research’. On 14–16 May 2013 it was followed by the third conference in Tartu, and now the next conference of this sequence is planned in Vilnius again, to take place in the spring of 2014. Together with doctoral studies in ethnology and folklore, recently established by our institute, such joint international initiatives provide a sound basis for ensuring that research projects started or continued by folklorists working at the institute at present do not lack capable and active successors among the younger generation of folklorists.

Another major international event, recently organised by the Lithuanian folklorists, especially the Lithuanian members of the International Society for Folk-Narrative Research (ISFNR) working in the Department of Folk Narrative, was the 16th Congress of ISFNR, entitled ‘Folk Narrative in the Modern World: Unity and Diversity’, which took place in Vilnius, 25–30 June 2013. 264 participants from 35 countries gathered for the congress, which was the largest international forum of folklore research held in Lithuania to date.

The topic of the congress indicated the broadest possible understanding of folk narrative: not only as the totality of the ‘classical’ folklore genres (tales, legends,

etc.), but also as the variety of forms of verbal expression and acts of social communication taking place in modern society – from individual life stories to miscellaneous internet folklore, media discourses, stereotypical images and the like. A separate subtopic of the congress (‘What is Folk Narrative? Theoretical Definitions vs. Practical Approaches’) aimed to elucidate the theoretical definition of folk narrative. Special attention was also given to the category of the story-telling person (*homo narrans*) and the narrative ways of the memory construction, as well as the social role of the narrative. Issues of the global vs. the local, similarities, differences and interactions between various traditions, and the means of narrative existence in the age of modern technology were focused on by congress participants. Separate panels were organised dealing with diverse topics such as folklore in translation, child-lore and the youth-lore, local food culture, the listener/witness, mythic knowledge and vernacular imagination, etc. Notably, as the congress took place in Vilnius, an extensive panel on the Jewish tradition (‘The Litvaks: Perspectives on the Folklore of the Jews of Lithuania’) was initiated by the folklorists from Israel, Galit Hasan-Rokem and Dani Schrire. In the framework of the congress, two separate symposia were organised: The Belief Narrative Network (BNN) held its symposium, entitled ‘Boundaries of Belief Narratives’, while the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming held a symposium on ‘Charms on Paper, Charms in Practice’. Altogether, 12 Lithuanian researchers and doctoral students in folklore and ethnology gave their presentations at the congress (including the plenary speaker Giedrė Šmitienė), representing the current state of Lithuanian folkloristics. ■

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### Websites

The 16th Congress of ISFNR <<http://www.isfnr2013.lt>>

Collections of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives <<http://www.tautosakos-rankrastynas.lt>>

Database of audio materials, Lithuanian Folklore Archives <<http://archyvas.lti.lt/irasai>>

Europeana <<http://www.europeana.eu>>

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore <<http://www.lti.lt>>

*Tautosakos darbai – Folklore Studies* <[http://www.lti.lt/tautosakos\\_darbai/](http://www.lti.lt/tautosakos_darbai/)>

# Reviews

## Theory and Practice Hand in Hand

**Theoretical Milestones: Selected Writings of Lauri Honko**, ed. Pekka Hakamies and Anneli Honko, FF Communications 304, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2013. 338 pp.

Matti Kamppinen and Pekka Hakamies, **The Theory of Culture of Folklorist Lauri Honko (1932–2002)**, Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2013. 114 pp.

The folklorist and comparative religionist Lauri Honko (1932–2002) passed away suddenly in July 2002 amidst work, seminars and developing ideas and thoughts. On the same scorching summer day the already traditional Folklore Fellows' Summer School was beginning, whose organiser and leading light that year was Honko himself. This time he did not make it to the venue, but his thoughts were keenly felt during the two weeks of the school. Years passed. Things went quiet as far as Honko was concerned. Yet the enthusiasm towards the *Kalevala* (1835, 1849) in Finland which Honko had brought about led to the anthology *Kalevala ja laulettu runo* (2004), and later the fine *Kalevalan kulttuurihistoria* (2008). Researchers here took up their positions on Honko's ideas about epic and on Lönnrot as a singer.

Eleven years later, Honko is again current. This year two English-language books have been published on the basis of Honko's theories and articles, and an international conference on 'The Role of Theory' has been held at Honko's own university of Turku (21–23 August, 2013).

### Two books, one outlook

The works published on the basis of Honko's ideas and writings, *Theoretical Milestones: Selected Writings of Lauri Honko* and *The Theory of Culture of Folklorist Lauri Honko (1932–2002)*, should be read in an interlinked way alongside each other. Honko's long and esteemed career spanned the decades from the 1950s to the turn of the millennium. He was a productive writer who sought to test the viability of his ideas through concrete material examples. The multiplicity of Honko's theorising and his applied creation of knowledge come through in both works, whether it was a question of writing an article or arranging a conference, as well as his ambition and thoroughness.

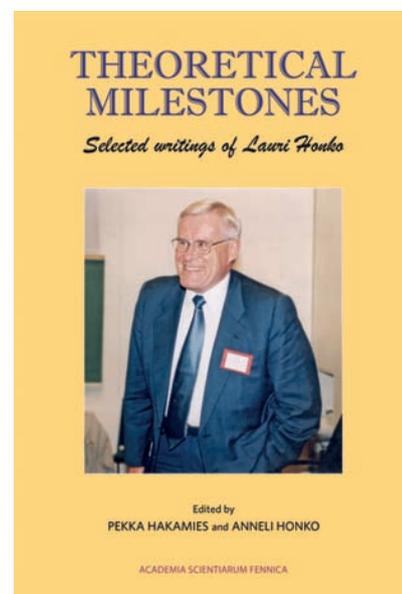
The collection of his writings, *Theoretical Milestones*, leads via Honko's life and career to his central output. The editors of the volume are the professor of folkloristics and

Honko's successor in his chair at the University of Turku, Pekka Hakamies, and Honko's widow Anneli Honko. She was not only his spouse, but also a colleague, a field-trip companion and associate who followed the last decades of Honko's academic career keenly and closely. She is also one of the few researchers with an intimate knowledge of Lauri Honko's last great work, on the Indian Siri epic and its textualisation, and the extensive Tulu-language materials associated with it.

The multifaceted biographical introduction provides a background to Honko's academic profile and its development, and the important milestones of his worthy career. The idea of a collection of articles was proposed by Honko himself around 2000. All the articles were chosen by him, and are published in their original form.

Thoroughness and innovation also characterise Honko's editorial approach. It was his intention to publish, apart from the central texts, also updates on the ideas in relation to modern discussion. Although the adaptation of the articles to modern discussion remained unfulfilled, the relationship of many texts to contemporary discussions is apparent in the other Honko book, written by Matti Kamppinen and Pekka Hakamies, *The Theory of Culture of Folklorist Lauri Honko (1932–2002)*. In part the topics of the collected writings parallel what Kamppinen and Hakamies deal with in their own book. Moreover, they form an excellent collection for what is discussed in *The Theory of Culture*. A good addition in the collection is the articles on laments and Finno-Ugric mythology – texts which Kamppinen and Hakamies have omitted from their own book.

*The Theory of Culture* is an analytical and applied journey into Honko's frameworks of ideas in folkloristics and comparative religion. It is also a synthesis of the central theoretical perspectives of two fields of study that historically have gone hand in hand. Honko pursued a weighty career in both fields, although finally he took on the role of professor in comparative religion. Comparative religionist and student of Honko, lecturer Matti Kamppinen is also the



book's main specialist writer. The other writer, Pekka Hakamies, has drawn up chapters 6 and 9 on the central theoretical themes of folkloristics. The notion of the importance of Honko's theories on culture, belief and tradition arose in Kamppinen's earlier book, *Methodological Issues in Religious Studies* (2012), where one chapter dealt with Honko's contribution on theory within comparative religion. At the publisher's request, Kamppinen began the present work with the aim of composing a whole book on the basis of Honko's theories. Kamppinen and Hakamies declare the book's main purpose as being to present an overview of Honko's theoretical perspectives and to evaluate their scientific legitimacy. In this task they succeed admirably.

### Creating functionalist science

Unlike many scholars, Honko seldom confined himself to the merely abstract, but always strove to prove his theoretical claims concretely. Theories for Honko were tools which needed testing. In his article 'Empty texts, full meanings: on transformal meaning in folklore' (1986, in Finnish 1984), he dealt with the meaning and context of the folklore text. The folklore text, he argued, always contains a formal meaning and a situation-based transformal meaning, which changes and moulds itself in relation to the folklore-bearer's and the audience's demands. Honko's concept is based on Albert B. Lord's 1960 notion of the traditional text's repetitive, crystallised meaning, the basis for its significance to adapt and gain new interpretations time and again in traditional performance. Honko's answer to the relationship between meaning and context is this: a folklore text in itself is empty of meaning; only the presentation of the text in context opens its meanings (Honko 1984: 103).

Behind the article lies the influence of the significance of live field work from the perspective of understanding folklore, a matter emphasised by Honko, and also his view on the rigidity of archive materials and the emptiness of indicators. In his view, only by combining archive materials (the text) with field work (the performance) is it possible to gain an overall picture of folklore. Yet in contemporary folkloristics there are many researchers who work solely within archives. The archive is envisioned as a sort of living field, to which the research goes on a field trip and which is brought to life through the right sort of contextualised questions.

'Empty texts, full meanings' is a typical article of Honko's, in which he presents theory and an analytical framework, after which the theory is applied and tested with empirical materials. A wide-ranging interdisciplinary timelessness and interest too in the present is latent in Honko's applied approach. If the theory did not work upon reading the materials, it was rejected, as Matti Kamppinen notes. Honko's approach was reminiscent of the natural sciences' method of applying knowledge (p. 11). In this sense Honko remained a researcher of the old school, for which field work was the basis of research and on the basis of which cultural systems had to be tested.

### Epic researcher

When Honko began his career in the 1950s in the Finnish Literature Society's sound archive, folkloristics in Finland was dominated by three men, Martti Haavio, Jouko Hautala and Matti Kuusi. All three were specialists in the core area of Finnish folkloristics, epic poetry. If he had a mind to progress in his career, Honko felt it was safest to concentrate on anything other than epic (Laaksonen 2002: 479). Honko hence became a specialist in laments, superstitions and narration. He only developed into an epic researcher later, having established his own research career. In Finland, Honko's significance as an epic researcher has been associated in particular with the new wave of *Kalevala* research. The *Kalevala*, which for long had been considered an object of literary research, was as it were revived by Honko. By rejecting the conventional approach, Honko problematised the *Kalevala* as an epic and Elias Lönnrot as its author. Honko challenged researchers to investigate the *Kalevala* within the framework of the core focus of folkloristics, orally mediated tradition. On this view, the *Kalevala* is a tradition-oriented epic, which may be examined as a repeatedly realised performance (the five *Kalevala* versions). Lönnrot could be investigated in the manner of an oral epic singer, since although the *Kalevala* was a written epic, Lönnrot's way of appropriating, choosing and rejecting materials produced by others was similar to that of a singer of oral tradition (Honko 1999: xvii).

Research merely on the *Kalevala* did not satisfy Honko's ambition. Although it was possible to approach the *Kalevala* in terms of epic performance, Honko needed to get himself into the field, amidst living epic song. The opportunity for this was found in southern India, in Karnataka, where Honko and his research group met the farmer Gopala Naika, the singer of the Siri epic. Honko had at last found a living 'Lönnrot', who graphically represented to him the birth of a long epic in all its detail, and to whom it was possible for a keen researcher to pose questions time and again.

The creation of new concepts was part of Honko's method of research. In his research into the textualisation of the Siri epic Honko initiated the concepts of the mental text and the multiform, which he also adapted in his articles on the *Kalevala*. Both concepts remained, however, underdeveloped in an analytical sense, and received a good deal of critical comment, perhaps rather ineptly, as the concepts' indistinctness was seized upon while their essence was forgotten. Without Honko's innovative, if contentious, ideas and developments, *Kalevala* research would not now be experiencing its renaissance. *Kalevala* research also fathered the institute that bears the name of the epic, which Honko founded in connection with the University of Turku in 1999. His purpose was to make the *Kalevala* Institute into a unit for comparative epic research, which would produce up-to-date research and offer the international research community the opportunity to make use of the institute's materials and space. It is therefore regrettable that the institute is not so much as mentioned in either of the books under consideration. Although the institute's aspirations have faded since Honko's passing, it

THE THEORY OF CULTURE  
OF FOLKLORIST LAURI HONKO,  
1932-2002



is still in existence and is a beacon of Honko's skills both as a researcher and an organiser.

### An integrated understanding of folklore

Kamppinen and Hakamies characterise Honko's cultural theory on the basis of three central concepts: functionalism, system analysis and a processual view of the world. Honko was motivated by an integrated understanding of folklore. The textualisation of the *Siri* epic is an excellent ex-

ample of the researcher's deep desire to explain not just the epic, but also the folklore and its life, the folklore process. In his work *Textualising the Siri Epic* (1998), Honko utilised all his central theories with the intention of giving a conceptual and theoretical explanation of what happens to folklore when it is gathered for the first time, and when it finally becomes part of the tradition of the community.

Kamppinen's and Hakamies's book *The Theory of Culture* could have been bigger. Reading it left me with a sense of haste. There is a desire to say much about everything, but part of the chapters remains as a torso or merely as a list of Honko's ideas. The impression of haste emerges too from the book's appearance. The index is scant and with a little effort it could have been divided into a name and theme catalogue. The book also contains a good many tables within the text, which were for Honko an alien way to present matters. Some chapters of the book, rewarding in themselves, contain passages which raise questions about their suitability within the whole structure. The book would, for example, work well without the chapter 'Tradition and the theory of memes', or the diversion about Karelianism in the last sections.

By comparison, the FFC volume *Theoretical Milestones* is more ambitious, even in its outward appearance. It also looks like a book of Honko's: thorough, professional and neat in appearance. Yet the reader is bound to ask whether here too things have been rushed. Why is there no complete bibliography of Honko at the end of the book, which would have been the icing on the cake for the selected texts? There should also have been a list of thematic terms at the end.

Nonetheless, a good overview of Honko's central theoretical concepts emerges from both books. Despite some of its faults, *The Theory of Culture* could have offered a deeper overview of Honko's theoretical conceptions. Kamppinen's and Hakamies's analytical journey into Honko's theories and their importance in the field of cultural research as well as *Theoretical Milestones* are significant scholarly works, which could readily find a place on the university

curriculum. Reading the books leaves the reader looking forward to the next project, which Kamppinen and Hakamies mention: an intellectual biography of Lauri Honko.

### The dynamism and future of cultural research

Lauri Honko put Finnish folkloristics on the map. In his international approach he was ahead of his time; this was something he created and maintained by publishing his work in many foreign languages and through an active editorial role in the institutes he directed (The Nordic Institute of Folklore, the Kalevala Institute), as well as at UNESCO, where he directed the cultural tradition project in the 1990s. Finland signed UNESCO's general agreement on the conservation of intangible culture in May 2013.

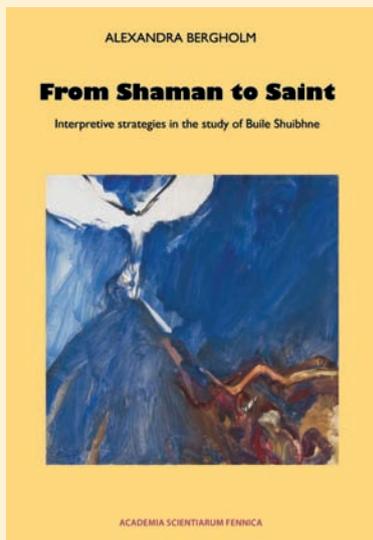
Although Honko was a controversial, forceful personality, he was also an enthusiastic and encouraging colleague and teacher, who challenged others to question their convictions and to trust in their own work, as the comparative religionist Armin W. Geertz notes in his introduction to *The Theory of Culture*. In his relations with his students too Honko was enthusiastic in his approach. Students were for him one of the many areas in which to offer guidance and to develop his own ideas. Honko's relationship with his students receives a fitting outcome in Kamppinen's and Hakamies's book. Kamppinen was first Honko's student, then a colleague who has carried on and applied Honko's ideas for example to tradition ecology. A positivity and faith in the future of folkloristics and comparative religion radiates from Kamppinen's and Hakamies's book – a point over which there is increasing worry, but which Honko himself never doubted.

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## A new publication in the FF Communications



### From Shaman to Saint

#### Interpretive strategies in the study of Buile Shuibhne

by Alexandra Bergholm

**A** shaman, a saint, a remorseful penitent, or a mad novice? Since the publication of J. G. O’Keeffe’s edition of the medieval Irish text *Buile Shuibhne* in 1913, the enigmatic presentation of its main protagonist Suibhne Geilt has become a subject of a plurality of scholarly analyse, which have sought to understand the true nature of his madness. This study charts the ways in which *Buile Shuibhne* has been interpreted in twentieth-century scholarship, by paying particular attention to the religious allegorical readings of the text. The examination of four prevalent interpretative frameworks – historical, pre-Christian, Christian, and anthropological – relates theoretical conceptions of literary theory, comparative religion and historiography to the study of medieval narrative material, by considering the nature of different methodological presuppositions that have guided the scholars’ understanding of the tale’s meaning. The integration of issues relating to text, context, and interpretation raises the issue of communally shared reading strategies in the explication of interpretive variety, thereby highlighting the importance of asking not only *what* a text means, but also *how* it means.

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## A Journey of Interpretive Discovery

Alexandra Bergholm, *From Shaman to Saint: Interpretive Strategies in the Study of ‘Buile Shuibhne’*, FF Communications 302, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2012. 212 pp.

A book on shamans, saints and a legendary Irish wild man seemed to tick all the boxes for an exciting read. Yet the topic of this study is not so straightforward: as the author states at the outset, ‘This is a study of interpreting interpretations’. This may not sound quite so thrilling, but over all, the reader is taken on an exciting journey through interpretations of the legend, with vistas being opened up onto important issues of just how we are to read puzzling archaic texts.

The focus is the Middle Irish tale of the madness of King Suibhne, and the essential point in the history of interpretation is that this madness is generally regarded as a figurative representation, an extended metaphor, that gains significance from something outside the narrative itself; most interpretations have sought an underlying religious background. Bergholm divides the interpretations of the tale into four overall categories: the historical (seeking out the supposed history of the text, for example); the pre-Christian approach (for example seeing elements of shamanism, or Dumézilian Indo-European tripartism); the Christian approach (noting the many Christian and biblical elements in the tale); the anthropological approach (with emphasis placed on van Gennepian rites of passage and liminality). It is, in fact, astonishing what an array of comparative-religious and other approaches enter the survey of interpretations of this one text, covering many of the perspectives of this field of study in general. Limitations are evident, but these are a consequence of the studies that happen to have been published and are hence available for review; for example, Dumézil’s tripartism is by no means the only way of approaching Indo-European tradition (e.g. the Celticist Calvert Watkins, of *How to Kill a Dragon* fame, who offers a very different, poetic-tradition-based perspective, remains unmentioned), any more than Eliade is the last word on shamanism.

As the book is essentially a survey of interpretations, Bergholm does not seek to offer an overarching interpretation of *Buile Shuibhne* herself, but she offers critical comments on the various interpretations; her critique is mainly concentrated in the concluding section, with the comments scattered throughout the earlier chapters perhaps feeling somewhat ad hoc – though she has a wonderful knack of offering succinct critiques, often through judicious quotations, e.g. of Harvey (shamanism is a Humpty Dumpty term, made to mean whatever the writer wants) or Page (on Dumézil’s deficiencies). The book does not, in my view, suffice as a detailed investigation of the *Buile Shuibhne*: the reader will need to consult the various studies summarised, though these summaries are well made in themselves. The bibliography of works discussed and mentioned itself forms a useful research tool, as it encompasses

many prominent studies not just in Irish studies, but more widely in comparative religion.

Bergholm is concerned to bring arguably fresh theoretical perspectives to bear on the sort of approach she adopts. For example, she is keen to stress how the desire to recover a fixed text by a particular author has misled interpretative approaches and the very concept of what we mean by a 'text', and she emphasises how much a typical modern critical edition is itself a mediated product fulfilling modern ideological needs. While the points are well made, Bergholm in fact shows herself to be very much part of the current academic mainstream in these respects, and to me the theoretical aspects of the book came over as somewhat laboured. I cannot speak directly for Celtic Studies, but certainly elsewhere in scholarly circles concerned with medieval literature, the issues of authorial intent, fixity/mutability of the text and so forth that are discussed here are quite well established. Nor did I feel that the assessment of the critical heritage which takes up the main part of the book was really determined by or even affected by the theoretical issues raised; this is not to criticise the approach taken, but to hint that the need felt for quite so much emphasis to be placed on it is itself a reflection of a current ideological need.

The book is generally well written, and easy on the reader. Nonetheless, recurrent flaws in the English do occur, which mar the presentation somewhat. The language check by a suitably qualified speaker is vitally important for an international publications series like FF Communications.

CLIVE TOLLEY  
Chester

## The Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales in English

G. A. Megas, Anna Angelopoulos, Aigli Brouskou, Marianthi Kaplanoglou and Emmanouela Katrinaki, **Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales**, FF Communications 303, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2012. 350 pp.

The recent publication of the *Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales* is excellent news for international folktale studies. As with all catalogues that follow the Aarne and Thompson (AT, AaTh) / Uther (ATU) classification system (*The Types of International Folktales*, Uther 2004), such a work requires the combined efforts of a team of researchers working over many years. The origins of the *Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales* date back over a hundred years to 1910, when Georgios A. Megas (1889–1976) was commissioned by Nikolaos Politis to catalogue Greek folktales using the system developed by the Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne in his *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (1910). The initial impetus to catalogue the Greek folktales coincided, therefore, with early efforts to create the international typological catalogues that have proved so invaluable to comparative research for more than a century.

The work on Greek folktales carried out by Megas is significant in that he located and catalogued both tales that had already been published and others that had remained hidden in public and private archives. However, despite Megas's extensive work, by 1978 only one volume of the catalogue (relating to animal tales) had been published.<sup>1</sup> Megas's contribution to the study and cataloguing of Greek folktales was considerable and provided much material for the North American folklorist Stith Thompson, who gained first-hand knowledge of Megas's work in Athens in 1957 whilst preparing the second revision of the Aarne and Thompson international catalogue (*The Types of the Folktale*, 1961). This explains why Greek tales are so well represented in that edition of the international typological index.

Megas's death in 1976 meant that the full catalogue of Greek folktales remained unpublished, and the project remained on hold until the 1990s, when a team of researchers led by Michael G. Meraklis decided to continue where Megas had left off. The team of specialists was initially made up of Anna Angelopoulos and Aigli Brouskou, who were later joined by Marianthi Kaplanoglou and Emmanouela Katrinaki. Under the direction of Anna Angelopoulos, the team continued the work started by Megas and revised, studied and often re-catalogued the tales using the information stored in Megas's archives. They also catalogued new tales that had been published since Megas's death.

The result of their labours was brought together in the four-volume catalogue of magic folktales, published in Greek between 1994 and 2007.<sup>2</sup>

The *Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales* is an epitome in English of the catalogue of magic folktales published in Greek and is, therefore, not a complete translation since it does not contain, for example, the texts of the folktales that represent each of the types in the Greek version. However, the English edition has the advantage of presenting all of the cataloguing data in a much more manageable manner and above all makes a significant contribution to the international dissemination of Greek folklore.

The book has a preface that outlines key characteristics of the catalogue. In doing so, the catalogue: *a.* gives a brief historical description of the cataloguing work carried out in Greece; *b.* explains the temporal and geographical scope of the corpus under study, that is, folktales from the oral tradition collected over more than a century in Greece and other areas that have come under Greek cultural influence (Asia Minor, Pontus, Cappadocia, Cyprus and Southern Italy); *c.* describes how the 'Tales of Magic' were classified using Megas's work, with contributions from the interna-

- 1 *To elliniko paramythi. Analytikos katalogos typon kai paralogon kata to systema Aarne-Thompson (FFC 184). Teuchos proton. Mythoi zoo* [The Greek Folktale: Detailed Catalogue of Types and Versions According to the AaTh System, vol. 1, Animal tales], Athens, Akadimia Athinon.
- 2 Vol. 2 (1994): Angelopoulos & Brouskou AT/ATU 700–49; vol. 3 (1999): Angelopoulos & Brouskou AT/ATU 300–99 (part 1) and AT/ATU 400–99 (part 2); vol. 4 (2004): Angelopoulos *et al.* AT/ATU 500–59; and vol. 5 (2007): Angelopoulos *et al.* AT/ATU 560–699.

## Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales



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tional ATU catalogue, and data provided by new folktale studies; and *d.* details the method used to write the catalogue and to describe the contents of each type.

After the preface, which is accompanied by maps of the area under study, the catalogue itself is presented. This is organised in accordance with the ‘Tales of Magic’ sections of the international ATU index. The catalogue gives the title for each type, which often coincides with that given in the international ATU

catalogue, although in most cases the title appears in a form that is more in keeping with the Greek tradition.

The description of each type details its particular sequences and motifs. In this way a complete picture is built up of the characteristics that feature in the various versions of each folktale. The criterion used is similar to that employed in other catalogues such as *Le conte populaire français* (Delarue 1957; Delarue & Tenèze 1964–2000) and the *Catalogue of Portuguese Folktales* (Cardigos 2006). However, whereas the catalogue in Greek gives a qualitative description of each of the versions included for each type (as is the case in the French and Portuguese catalogues), the English version provides only quantitative information only about the unpublished versions (grouped according to their geographical location) and the published versions (cited along with a complete bibliographical reference). In this regard, the English version of the catalogue and the previously published Greek language version may be viewed as complementary, and readers therefore benefit from the fact that the authors also provide web addresses that allow them to consult the Greek volumes (p. 19).

One of the characteristics that gives added value to the *Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales* is the ‘Commentary’ section. Here, each of the individual types, or group of types when these are related to each other, is accompanied by a study. This enables the catalogue to fulfil two roles: on one hand it provides the cataloguing data essential for comparative folklore studies and, on the other, it offers the researcher a whole series of small monographs which shed light on the many decisions taken during the cataloguing process. Although some of these monographs are quite extensive (for example the one on type 425 is 21 pages long), readers should regard them more as helpful summaries rather than exhaustive studies given that, among other things, certain bibliographical references are missing.

At the end of the book there is a ‘Bibliography’ and a ‘List of tale titles and numbers’. According to this list, the

catalogue contains 143 types. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that some of the types in the catalogue include additional information on various subtypes, as is the case with number 425, which, on the basis of Megas’s study of more than 500 Greek versions, lists the further following subtypes: 425A, 425B, 425C, 425D, 425E, 425F, 425G, 425K, 425L, 425P, 425R, 425Ra, 425X. For this and for many other types, the classification used by Megas has been retained, which means, therefore, that the modifications to the latest revision of the international catalogue (Uther 2004) have not been adopted, although these have been included in parentheses next to the number and title of the type. In some cases, the numbers assigned to the types are the same as those that were used in the AT catalogue but which were eliminated or moved in the latest revision of the international catalogue (Uther 2004). In other cases, the numbers correspond to proposed new types (20 in total) which, according to the criterion established by the catalogue’s editors (p. 18), can be identified by an asterisk positioned to the left of their numbers.

The catalogue’s authors justify their inclusion of numbers not found in the ATU by pointing out that a large number of versions correspond to a specific type or subtype (e.g. 118 versions for 425G [ATU 425A]) and that they better reflect the Greek tradition: ‘All these narratives have kept their own characteristics; their plots are rich, autonomous, and thus impossible to integrate into the proposed new tale types. We believe that by keeping them we allow a better understanding as well as a thorough analysis of the Greek oral tradition’ (p. 110, note 136). In this regard, the only questionable inclusion may be that of the new type \*654 given that the catalogue only offers one version of it and fails to provide data regarding its presence in other cultural areas.

There is an obvious benefit resulting from the authors’ decision to maintain types established in previous catalogues alongside those included in the latest version of the international catalogue (Uther 2004) or to present

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new types because it allows the inclusion of groups of folktales that have a clear vitality in a specific geographic area. This criterion has also been adopted in the *Catalogue of Portuguese Folktales* (Cardigos 2006), which includes AT numbers that have been eliminated from the ATU and numbers that have never featured in the ATU but that have been used in other catalogues such as the *Catálogo tipológico del cuento folclórico español* (Camarena & Chevalier 1995–2003) and the *Index of Mexican Folktales* (Robe 1973), among others.

A glance at these new types reveals that the vast majority are represented by a large number of versions. Furthermore, the commentaries accompanying each type point to the existence of similar versions collected in other areas. This is the case with \*480 *The Two Old Women and the Twelve Months*, which the ATU includes in the miscellaneous type 480D\* *Tales of Kind and Unkind Girls* along with types 480B, \*480D, 480E from the Greek catalogue (Angelopoulos & Brouskou 1999). Type \*480 is represented by 81 Greek versions; however, versions from other traditions, e.g. the Spanish (Camarena & Chevalier 480C) and the Catalan traditions (Oriol & Pujol 480), also fit this description.

The criteria for creating a new type are often difficult to establish, as the authors recognise in their commentary on type \*316A: 'It thus appears that we have a new type, known to date in Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria at the least. Its classification is a complex problem, precisely because it includes episodes known from other types' (p. 62). To address this problem, the authors offer a possible way of establishing the criteria on which the creation of a new type could be based: 'In any case, a general principle would be a combination of criteria involving both form and content' (p. 64).

The *Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales* also highlights the difficulties inherent in cataloguing tales which, on the basis of their content should be included in certain section of the catalogue, but which because of their style (magical, humorous, realistic, etc.) might also be catalogued under a different section. To overcome these difficulties, the authors have decided to propose new types. They have thus created types \*884C and \*884D, which they include after type 514. Although there may be practical advantages to relating these types with those of 884C and 884D from the group 'Realistic Tales', in my opinion, the use of these numbers to define types belonging to the group 'Tales of Magic' could lead to confusion. It might have been better to number them in a way that makes it clear that they belong to the group 'Tales of Magic'.

However, such minor issues as may be found in the catalogue are understandable given the magnitude of the undertaking and do not detract from that fact that this is a very valuable book. The *Catalogue of Greek Magic Folktales* is a highly significant contribution to the knowledge and international dissemination of the magic folktales of Greece. It only remains to hope that the authors continue their good work and add it to the remaining sections of the international index in the hope that their research will result in the publication of new volumes that further add to our knowledge of the rich legacy of the Greek folktale tradition, a tradition that retains its vibrancy to this day.

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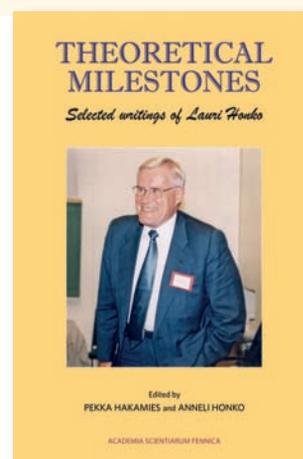
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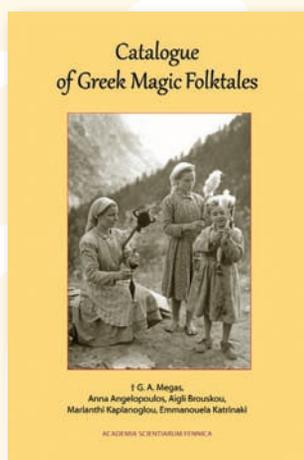


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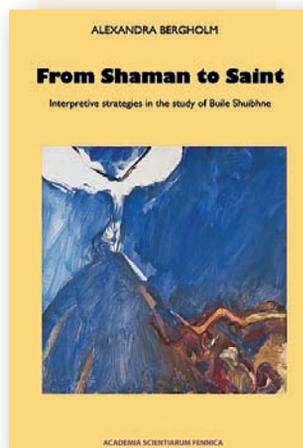
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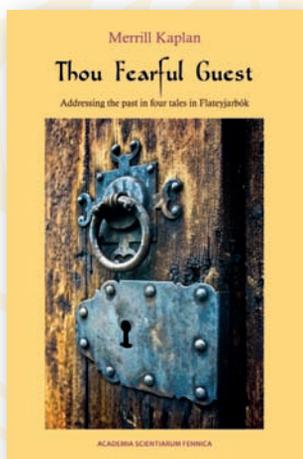
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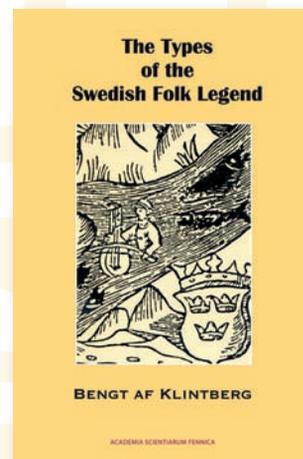
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