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**Perspectives on Contemporary Legend  
International Society for Contemporary Legend Research  
32nd International Conference**

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**Conference Abstracts**

**Petr Janeček – Elissa R. Henken – Elizabeth Tucker**  
(Editors)

Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague  
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## FOREWORD

**Welcome to Perspectives on Contemporary Legend**, the thirty-second meeting of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research! The other members of ISCLR's Executive Council and I are delighted that this meeting of legend scholars will take place in the beautiful city of Prague, the home of so much important history and culture. We thank our very kind hosts, Dr. Petr Janeček from the Institute of Ethnology and Dr. Mirjam Fried, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University. Their excellent planning and generosity will make this one of our best meetings ever.

Besides presenting and discussing papers, we will enjoy an opening reception at the Café Louvre on Tuesday and a closing banquet at the Kolkovna Savarin restaurant on Friday evening. Our excursion on Thursday will take us to the late medieval town of Český Krumlov, where we will visit a castle with an unusual Baroque theatre. On two other days there will be ghost tours of Prague, during which we will learn both old and contemporary legends. In addition, we will visit Prague's Ethnographic Museum.

The International Society for Contemporary Legend, founded in 1982, takes interest in all aspects of "contemporary," "urban," or "modern" legend research, whether circulated now or at an earlier time. ISCLR's members historically have come primarily from Europe and North America, but we eagerly welcome scholars from all parts of the world. The society's journal, *Contemporary Legend*, is peer-reviewed, and the society's newsletter, *FOAFTale News*, keeps everyone informed about new developments in legend studies. All members of ISCLR receive the newsletter and the journal.

Our annual conference embodies our major function, bringing together scholars from a wide range of disciplines and this year, some sixteen nations, to share and discuss our research in a spirit of friendship and mutual support and to encourage the next generation of scholars. These annual meetings take place alternately in Europe and North America. Next year's meeting will be at the Menger Hotel in San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A. from May 26 to 30, 2015. We hope you can join us.

Warm thanks again to our kind and thoughtful hosts!

Best wishes,

Elizabeth Tucker, ISCLR President



## ABSTRACTS

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

*Mikhail Alekseevsky*

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

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

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

### **Kalmyk Legends and Traditions (On the Classification)**

*Tamara Goryaevna Basangova*

The Folklore Department, Kalmyk Institute of Humanities of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Elista, Kalmykia, Russia

Legends and traditions holding a special place in the oral poetic art of all nations are the most interesting and significant genres in the folk

prose of Kalmyk people. Legends and traditions have been functioning since the depth of unrecorded time. Being an integral part of the spiritual culture, it contains the facts of its ethnogenesis. Tale prose of Kalmyk people is represented by myths, legends, traditions designated in all Mongolian languages as “domog” which was mentioned as early as in “The Secret History of the Mongols” (120 «domog» 201 «domogci» tale-teller).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Marina Bayduzh*

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

Pedestrian bridge is crossing the main Tyumen's river. This bridge was built in 1987, but it is given a present name only in 2003. It was caused from some rites and habits of young people which began to flourish in the end of XX – beginning of XXI century. There are a graffiti of different types; wedding rituals, such as a fixing love padlocks on a bridge's fences, wedding photography, a rite of «a farewell to her maiden name», etc.; some spontaneous urban rituals with sculptures; narratives about “aura of love” on bridge and contrary legend about the ghost of the girl in white dress and some other teens who died on bridge; and, finally, conceptualization Lover's Bridge as one of the most substantial place for regional identification of city folk.

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

## **Monstrous Tales: Legends as Rhetorical Constructions**

*Peter Burger*

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

ed as true stories by their tellers.

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

This perspective on legend is based on my study of crime legends in news media and on the 'vernacular web' (Howard 2005).

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

*Ian Brodie*

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

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

### **Glurges as Exemplary Stories**

*Véronique Campion-Vincent*

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

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

These Glurges emphasize the values of *Carpe Diem* an immediate enjoyment of the simple pleasures of a life and of fraternity that are apparently in opposition with the mainstream view of individual success at all costs.

### **The Angels of Mons Revisited**

*David Clarke*

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

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

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

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### **Jimmy Savile: From Rumour, To Scandal, To Investigation**

*Joel Conn*

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

Post-scandal, it was reported that rumours of Savile's paedophilia and sexual behaviour were made during his lifetime. A particular rumour, alleging necrophilia committed at a hospital as a form of reward for his charitable work, was described by celebrity gossip website *Popbitch* as having been told to them "by probably 100+ people - including two DJs, six journalists and a member of the House of Lords". One hospital where Savile volunteered has now been reported to have carried out an internal investigation into any access he had to their mortuary.

Further, allegations were made that Savile abused young female pa-

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

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

### **The Legends of the ‘Enchanted Moorish Girls’ in Portugal**

*J. J. Dias Marques*

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

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

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

## Contemporary Comic Book Golem

Gail de Vos

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

This paper builds on that research to focus on the most recent contemporary comic book adoptions of the golem, both in print and online. Three illustrated texts, all published in 2013, are set in various time periods and countries extrapolating and exploring diverse elements of the traditional golem legend. *The Golem* by Chris Kent is a story of jealousy, revenge and magic somewhere in Europe in 1897. Hilary Goldstein's *The Golem* also revolves around the topic of revenge, but this time of a mother (the Golem) and her young son in a futuristic and horrific environment. Steve Niles and Dave Wachter's *Breath of Bones: A Tale of the Golem* is set during World War II when the Golem is recreated to protect the inhabitants of a small Jewish stronghold and an injured British pilot. A plethora of recent webcomics featuring the golem will also be explored in light of the traditional legend.

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

*Spencer L. Green*

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While the debates between faith and science are often framed as existing between competing groups, the desire to reconcile the two also exists in the lives of many Christians. Archeologists have sought for evidence of the flood, for Noah's ark, and other biblical events. Many Latter-day Saints are no different as they seek for more scientific and tangible evidences to validate their faith. The most prevalent and well known of these efforts are centered on evidence that support the truth of the *Book of Mormon*, which details "God's dealings with ancient inhabitants of the Americas." These accounts seek to bridge the world of sacred scripture with secular knowledge which sometimes conflicts with belief. Thus, tales of a white, bearded God both points to Christ's visit to ancient Mesoamericans while explaining why Cortez was able to conquer the Aztec civilization with such a small force. While other versions of this folk archeology exist in other contexts, the attempts to explain the supernatural and sacred in realistic and tangible ways mark these and other examples as legends.

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

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

Radan Haluzík

Centre for Theoretical Study, Charles University and Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague, Czech Republic

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

In war-torn societies full of fear, hatred, and a sense of isolation on one hand, and propaganda and disinformation on the other, such wartime folklore plays an extremely prominent key part in explanation of the history of the conflict and the wartime situation, and in the self-image and political orientation of a large proportion of the public. This folklore either gets around and replaces the official media sources, or provides them with inspiration and material rather than competing with them. It is a crucial aspect of these post-modern, so called *new - identity - wars* (Kaldor 1999) for national identity and self-determination.

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

One is the notion of *Us* - as an ancient great nation with roots (it is said) reaching back to the Ancient Greeks, Hittites, Egyptians, inhabitants of lost Atlantis, and which has given the world great men and great discoveries (the computer, the fork, yoghurt etc.); this land of (alleged) limitless mineral riches, miraculous healing herbs, magical mountains and air is desired by the *World* (our "ethnic enemies", but also the *great powers of the West*, through their malignant intervention), which is trying to seize it in war at any cost. Another similarity is the idea of the pure beauty of our heroism and martyrdom, wreathed in legend and structurally a continua-

tion of the heritage of legendary bandits, partisans or other paramilitary formations of the glorious national past. A third is the idea that “history has awoken”(from the “sleep” of communist modernity – Verdery 1999), that “history is just repeating itself“, and that we as a people must again confront ancient menaces and the challenges of the past.

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

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

## **Deadly Games**

*Elissa R. Henken*

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

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

drown in the bath) or out of annoyance at being interrupted.

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

## **The Relationship between Contemporary Legend and Rumor**

*Sandy Hobbs*

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

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

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## **The Students Legends in Moscow Gorky Literary Institute**

*Elena Iugai*

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

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

Students' jokes, beliefs, sayings and preexam rituals form another class of the students folklore. We will present the Folklore of student life in Gorky Literary Institute as a complex that includes various verbal and visual genres. But the folk narratives are the principal point.

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

*Petr Janeček*

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Expressive cultural practice involving ghostly figure of Bloody Mary, staple part of folklore of children and adolescent in the West, represents unique amalgamation of ritual practices, folk beliefs and demonological narratives. This phenomenon, extensively studied by Western folklorists

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

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

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

*Mira C. Johnson*

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

trail is part of a larger trail that stretches to the ritual mounds of Tara; and that the rock piles on the shoulders of the mountain are cairns linked with pre-Christian burial ceremonies.

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

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

## **Blood in radios, heads in televisions: Identity and ‘civilizing forces’ beyond the Sumbanese rumors**

*Adriana Kábová*

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

The aim of this paper is to indicate blood as a matter identified with power and to reveal the notion of this substance in west Sumbanese magic practice. Besides that, characters of the rumors will be analyzed. While the kidnapping rumors were targeted towards missionaries and Dutch colonizers in the past,

recently they and blood stealing rumors alike point at tourists, Indonesian incomers from other islands and the agents of the state. The role of ‚local outsiders‘ as accomplices of non-Sumbanese blood ordering party will be explored.

### **A Supernatural Attack. On Similar Experiences from Different Times**

*Mare Kalda*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Digital Folklore: Marble Hornets, the Slender Man, and the Emergence of Folk Horror in Online Communities

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In June 2009 a group of forum-goers on the popular culture website, *Something Awful*, created a monster called the Slender Man. Inhumanly tall, pale, black-clad, and with the power to control minds, the Slender Man references many classic, canonical horror monsters while simultaneously expressing an acute anxiety about the contemporary digital context that birthed him. This anxiety is apparent in the collective legends that have risen around the Slender Man since 2009, but it figures particularly strongly in the Web series *Marble Hornets* (Troy Wagner and Joseph DeLage June 2009 - ).

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

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

## Clairvoyants in Estonian Television. Media Influences on Contemporary Narratives

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

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

My paper will examine closely the integrity aspects of such visualised

transmedial belief stories, their associations with folklore, the folkloric communication process and unique traits of narrativity.

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

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

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

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

The research will also focus on the culture and world view reflected in such narratives and on their role in everyday life and in contemporary society. It will analyse which aspects of the narrative culture of current Slovenian younger generation are specific and what are the similarities in the genre of such stories in other countries.

## **Archaeoastronomy – linking legends with research**

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The majority of our knowledge about Estonian folk astronomy is dated back to the 19th century. Since the last quarter of the 20th century, the so

called movement of paleosciences has made waves. In the 1980s Estonia, being a part of this meant identifying with forces opposed to the stagnated soviet official social sciences. An example is the book *Hõbevalge* (Silverly White, 1975) by Lennart Meri, which was a mixture of historical documents and fantasy about Kaali meteorite.

One of the leaders of Baltic archaeoastronomy was Heino Eelsalu (1930-1998). He was a professional astronomer interested in the history of astronomy. Starting from the cultural historical aspects of the history of astronomy, he ended up studying prehistoric astrognosy. One of his techniques involved translating folklore texts and runo songs using astronomic calculations. Many of his research papers (with spekulative narratives and ideas) circulated later as authentic folklore, or true documents for identity-making.

### **Stag Party Gone Wrong: Legends and Ritual Order**

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

When it comes to the content of these stories they are twofold. On one hand they are somewhat jovial half-true reports as they are the integral part of the pranks themselves. But on the other hand they take a dark turn as one can observe and collect stories about tasks and pranks that caused life-altering injury, mental breakdown, or death of the groom. “Stag party legends” in Slovenia are predominantly centered on the latter. A prominent example of these narratives is a fairly recent set of stories presenting cases

of polyurethane foam squirted into the shoes of an unconsciously drunk groom, which caused the blood to stop flowing, resulting in amputation or even death, and always in cancellation of the marriage.

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

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

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

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

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

Through historical and ethnographic research, this paper considers Indi-

ana's Central State Hospital – an abandoned asylum located in Indianapolis, Indiana – as a case study, in which I examine community reactions to mental illness and institutionalization depicted through local supernatural legends. Specific themes to be explored include fears of patient maltreatment, psychiatric treatments, and false institutional confinement.

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### **Revisiting King Christian and the Yellow Star: A Historical Legend as Personal Journey**

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Many Jewish Americans of the post-World War II generation are familiar with the historical legend of King Christian X donning the yellow Star of David as an anti-Nazi protest during the 1940-45 occupation of Denmark. In 1975 I published "The Legend of the King and the Star" (*Indiana Folklore*, 1975), which became the definitive study of that legend, describing its genesis during and after the war. The article also functioned as a debunking of the three commonly believed versions of the legend: that the king threatened to wear the star were it instituted, that the king wore the star in public, and that the king and thousands of his countrymen wore the star to confuse the Nazis as to who was Jewish and who was not. The article further offered a theory of the necessity of the legend in confronting and responding to the horrors of the Holocaust.

The continuing quasi-definitiveness of the original article is indicated by its continued citation on popular urban legend Web sites and in articles and books about Denmark's Nazi occupation.

New historical revelations have substantially changed our knowledge of the historical facts surrounding the legend, its diffusion, and the rescue of Denmark's Jews to the extent that many of the original article's most important points differ substantially from what we now know to be historical truth. Most remarkably, access to the king's own wartime diary by his 2009 biographer, historian Knud J.V. Jespersen, reveals that one of the three versions of the legend has turned out to be incontrovertible fact, after all.

From my childhood to today, this legend has functioned as part of my

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

## **The Apocalypse on Twitter**

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Just like in oral transmission, (product) rumors can circulate in written form on Twitter. These rumors get retweeted, slightly altered, as well as ridiculed. During a short term computational project in 2012 on the use of language, the identity of Twitter users and the circulation of rumors, we monitored Dutch micro messaging for four months. We didn't encounter many trending topics in product rumors in that period. The rumor that people are going to have to pay for every WhatsApp message in the future, was retweeted regularly. Quite a few retweets spread the message that many food products secretly contain pig fat (gelatin), which is bad news for vegetarians and Muslims who like Oreo cookies or Nespresso coffee for instance. Both rumours got about 2000 (re)tweets in four months, which is not spectacular.

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

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

## **Traditional Christian Legend in the Contemporary Urban Folklore**

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

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

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

I deal with in this paper.

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

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

## **Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Slovak Rumours and Conspiracy Theories**

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The academic research of rumours and contemporary legends still belongs to a bit marginalized topics in Slovakia, even though they play a significant role in various spheres of the social life there. The contribution will deal with an ideological aspect of specific subcategory of rumours - *conspiracy theories* - as well as with the legends related to conspiracism as a worldview principle. The common denominator of these narratives is sharing feelings of threat and uncertainty. The paper will show what kind of inner and outer enemies traditionally play important roles in the conspiracism-related narratives circulating in Slovakia, which of them belong to the most persisting ones and what kind of argumentation strategies or visualisations are used by constructing the persuasive stories. The central point of the analysis is a categorial opposition of the image of hero versus antihero (connected with category of honour versus betrayal), which serve as instrument for legitimization or delegitimization of the (real or fictional) group worldviews.

The analysis also tries to find examples of (functional, genetical or other) relations and intersections between conspiracy theories and contemporary legends. As the source will serve popular texts and discussions spread by internet (data were collected mostly between the years 2003-2008), which

will be compared with material from the period of the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

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

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### **Urban Texts and Ritual Practices in Modern Moscow**

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

**Group (i)** includes historical sacred places (the graves of saints, places of worship). For example, there are Sophia’s Tower of Novodevichy Convent (people put notes with wishes into the cracks of the wall), Golosov Ravine with sacred stone called Deviy (“Virgin”) with is associated by modern worshipers with giving fertility to women. Some narratives concern venerating the tombs of elders Koreysha and Sampson Sivers in Nikolo-Arkhangelskoye cemetery.

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

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

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

### **Pohádka: Birth of a Legend Tripping Site**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Lemons With AIDS Filling, or The Fears of the Modern Human**

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The paper presents an attempt to investigate a part of the modern Lithuanian folklore, namely, the so-called urban legends and the scary rumors

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

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

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

### **Qui Prodest: Framing Authorship and Meaning of Russian Heavenly Letters**

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

During over hundred years, many social groups were accused in distributing the letters, yet the general strategy turns out to be surprisingly persistent: the media tend to marginalize the distributors and demonize the suggested authors to prevent the masses from following this practice. This

was predictably done using frames, pre-composed by authorities and media to find, describe and destroy social enemy. In line with contemporary power discourse, distributors of heavenly letters are described either as malevolent forces or their victims; class enemies or religious marginals; mentally ill persons or children. On the other hand, people have composed their own narratives on the nature and purpose of these letters, only partially based on the frequently changing official viewpoint.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Wedding Revenge: Legends and the Culture of Fear

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

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

## Snow White and the Legend of Margaretha von Waldeck

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The Waldecker Land in the state of Hesse, Germany is known for many sagas and legends, especially surrounding witches and dwarfs. One particular legend however told by the people in the city of Bergfreiheit and in the region of the Kellerwald forest, has significantly gained in popularity these past years, attracted national media attention, and the interest of scholar Eckhard Sander. It is the urban legend of beautiful Margaretha von Waldeck, the daughter of the Count of Waldeck, who allegedly was not only one of the fairest maidens in the region and travelled past the *Siebengebirge* (Seven Mountains) but also became the victim of a murderous plot by being poisoned with Arsen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

times.

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

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### **Star Power: The Collision of History and Legend in Children's Literature**

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

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

This paper will scrutinize multiple connections. It will examine the

links between the contemporary legends themselves and the corresponding children's book. It will also explore the similarities between the two stories, a surprising number of character, plot, and narrative elements are common to the two legends and the two books. The potency of stars, for example, is a key element in both narratives. It will also document the praise and criticism the books have earned. By increasing our understanding of the factors that contribute to the popularity of the children's books, we can also further anticipate what narrative motifs when found in a contemporary legend will contribute to the public's persistence in believing it to be true.

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

*Aurore Van de Winkel*

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

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

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

How are the recent rumours and contemporary legends constructed to target French politicians ? How do these rumours and legends describe about French political personalities ? What reactions do these create

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

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