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Participatory, community and spontaneous archives and digitally born cultural heritage

'The internet is weird'

Folklore Fellows' Summer School 2015

Folklore research at the University of Rostock

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Cover photo: The Folklore Fellows' Summer School staff organized a book lottery for the participants. Emilia Laitinen is looking for the right book for Trevor J. Blank. Photo by Tuomas Hovi.

PEKKA HAKAMIES

The essence of folklore and its new life on the web

What is folklore, really? From an essentialist perspective, is there such a thing that is, in its nature, folkore, which researchers can find and analyse, and all of whose features can be explained? Folklore can be recognised by listing the typical characteristics of traditional definitions. The oft-repeated list encompasses orality, anonymity, spontaneity, formulaicity and collectiveness. Nowadays folklore is characterised more often by using expressions like vernacular, non-institutional communication and a way of keeping in contact with others.

In anthropology over the last few decades there has been an epistemological shift towards anti-essentialism: something is not something by nature; rather, all categorisations are situationally and perspectivally dependent. Hence folklore as such does not exist, but researchers designate certain phenomena folklore. On this basis, there are grounds for asking on what basis folklore is recognised and where a view of folklore springs from. Apparently the answer is research history, earlier concepts of what folklore is and what typifies it. And so we may arrive back after a winding route at the point we set off from: at the earlier essentialist concept of folklore.

Such problems were dealt with intermittently at the Folklore Fellows' Summer School in 2015 by the organisers, and all researchers interested in the internet as an object of research were in turn led to investigate them. The starting point is a view of what folklore is or what characterises it, and what it is over all that folklorists have succeeded in investigating. Everything that is found on the internet is examined and an attempt is made to formulate suitable objectives. The keynote lectures presented by the tutors will appear in Folklore Fellows' Communications as an article collection, possibly as soon as next year, and two shorter versions have already been published in this Network issue. Many participants' papers also offered interesting examples of the many digital phenomena that can be examined from a folkloristic perspective and how the investigation can be carried out.

Some of the papers dealt with very traditional folklore as well, which has merely shifted its mode of communication to the internet, such as horror stories, or political jokes, which emerge especially around the time of elections and which hence have an immediate political significance. The appearance of texts on the internet weakens some of the older folklore characteristics such as variation, but it also brings new opportunities for expression through visualisation. Some sorts of event and discussions are no longer local, but can be followed and participated in online through the internet.

The second clear group in the participants' papers was various material archives, which have been digitised and ordered in such a way that, in the best scenario, they can be used from afar via the internet. This of course involves significant legal and ethical questions, which must be resolved before the materials can be made available for general use. This thematic group also includes various cultural heritage schemes, in which the traditional culture of some district or group is presented on the internet.

The third thematic group was formed by the various manifestations of virtual reality: digital games, which are ever more realistic and holistic, and may acquire great significance for keen participants, who live their lives in part in a separate gameworld. Games reiterate old questions and at the same time create new ones, when fans compare their experiences in discussion fora.

The fourth thematic entity was vernacular personal narration on the internet: anyone can present their narrative on internet fora, in place of small face-to-face groups: on Facebook or other sorts of discussion fora. This offers the opportunity to share one's own experiences of life's various turns or reminiscences of family or relatives. Oral history has gained quite a new channel in the form of the internet, open to all enthusiasts. Unfortunately social media can be used too for disinformation and the dissemination of hatred – just as old-fashioned oral tradition could too.

The traditional terminology relating to folkloristics theory has found a surprisingly, and one might say reassuringly, widespread use in the texts of both instructors and participants. For example, use is still made of traditional genre categories in internet folkloristics. Of course, the topic and viewpoint have dictated the use of suitable theoretical literature. ■

ANNE HEIMO and KIRSI HÄNNINEN

Participatory, community and spontaneous archives and digitally born cultural heritage

> In the globally interconnected world of many individuals today it is important that folklorists make critical moves to engage a politics of interpretation in ways that responsibly represent vernacular voices. (Howard 2013: 76)

Folklorist Robert Howard (2012: 42–5; 2013: 76, 82) stresses the importance for folklorists in particular to examine the construction and use of power relations in participatory media.[1] Folkloristics offers theoretical and methodological tools to understand and analyse vernacular history-making processes and practices, where the institutional and vernacular often occur side by side (Howard 2012, 2013) and the local and the global merge and interact (McNeill 2012).

Regardless of our education, profession or motivation we all take part in the never-ending social process of history-making. Historical knowledge may be presented by anyone and, in fact, the bulk of it is presented by so called 'ordinary' people in everyday situations for a range of reasons – curiosity, leisure, obligation or thirst for knowledge. This continuous interpreting consists of the interplay of public, popular and scholarly histories and emphasizes the active role of non-historians and vernacular history in this process (Samuel 1994, Rosenzweig and Thelen 1998, Ashton and Hamilton 2010, Kalela 2013, Kean and Martin 2013, King amd Rivett 2015). In the digital age this is now all the more evident. Never before have non-historians had the same opportunities to produce and share historical interpretations in public side by side with academic historians, public historians and other heritage professionals to the degree they do today.

However, even though more and more academic historians, archivists and other heritage professionals acknowledge that historical knowledge is learned, produced and shared in various ways, the history-making practices and activities of ordinary people have not yet attracted much interest among scholars (Barnwell 2013, 2015; Heimo 2014a, 2014b). Furthermore, in most cases the initiative for collaboration continues to come from institutions, and experts and contributors continue to be treated more as objects of study rather than active historical agents, who do history for themselves, by themselves, and in their own terms (Heimo 2014c).

Collaboration and participation with wider audiences is now common practice in galleries, libraries, archives, museums and other projects involved in the production and sharing of historical interpretations. People may contribute to these in a multitude of ways, for instance by transcribing or translating texts, adding their personal photos, videos or documents to public collections or by sharing their stories (see, e.g., Theimer 2011, O'Carroll 2013, Foster 2014, Huvila 2015, King and Rivett 2015). However, although people now have more possibilities than ever to become their own publishers, authors and archivists through the supervision, creation, management and curation of their own collections through activities similar to those of archival and heritage professionals, the impact of this significant shift has not yet been given all the attention it deserves. Although some archival scholars have understood that the consequences of this shift mean much more than just using digital tools in archiving practices (see, e.g., Cook 2013, Flinn 2010, Huvila 2015, Theimer 2012), we argue that a large majority of archival and heritage professionals have not. The same applies in large part to tradition archives too, although folklore materials have been digitised and catalogued in archives, on databases and on internet sites from the 1990s on. On the whole, more attention has been given to the *digital turn* than the *participatory turn* in folkloristics.

In this article we first examine the impact of the *participatory turn*, and its effects on society at large. What

1 This article is based on the authors' keynote paper, 'Participatory Archives and Digitally Born Cultural Heritage', presented at the Folklore Fellows' Summer School 'Doing Folkloristics in the Digital Age', 11–18 June 2015 at The Archipelago Research Institute, University of Turku, Seili, Parainen. We are grateful for Cliona O'Carroll, University College Cork, for her comments and suggestions for our article.

implications does it have in general, but in particular how does it affect our perceptions of archives? The participatory turn has also transformed the archivist's role from gatekeeper, protector and expert into the collaborator (Cook 2013). This we will do by presenting examples from our own studies. In the latter part of the article we will introduce the idea of *new heritage* and how it differs from conventional conceptions of cultural heritage.

The participatory turn and shifting archival paradigms

Web 2.0 is often thought of as a particular technology which makes interaction on the internet (social media) possible, when it actually refers more to the way people use the internet than technology (O'Reilly 2005). This new mindset includes, for instance, a motivation to participate and share, to trust other users and the right to create new products by remixing former ones, which are all features of *participatory culture*. Participation is a characteristic aspect of contemporary digital practices, but as archival studies scholar Isto Huvila (2015) notes there is no consensus about its meaning and underpinnings. According to the media scholar Henry Jenkins's widely used definition, participatory culture highlights community involvement and invites everyone to contribute, but does not require it. Participatory culture is not only about production and consumption; it is also about affiliation, expression, collaboration, distribution and the disclaiming of former divisions between professionals and amateurs. (Jenkins *et al.* 2006)

Although participatory culture is not only a feature of today nor does it exist only on the internet, the term is now commonly used when referring to cultural practices on the internet. These practices may also occur offline, but are still dependent on new technology, for example, geocaching, flashmobs or, as in this article, non-institutional archival practices, which are all distributed globally through digital networks even though they are produced personally and locally. (McNeill 2012)

When engaging in discussion about participatory, community and spontaneous archives the first step is to define what an archive is. The following definition gives us tools to understand both the practice and the product of archives. Archives are 'materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control; permanent records'. Archives can also refer to the agencies that collect and maintain the records and the publication of the collections. (Pearce-Moses 2005)

'Value', 'a person' and 'the agency' are keywords, since both archivists and scholars have argued for different, even opposite meanings to those borne by these terms. The archival studies scholar Terry Cook (2013) has argued that archival paradigms have gone through four phases**.** Distinction is not meant to be particularly strict as there is naturally overlap between the paradigms.

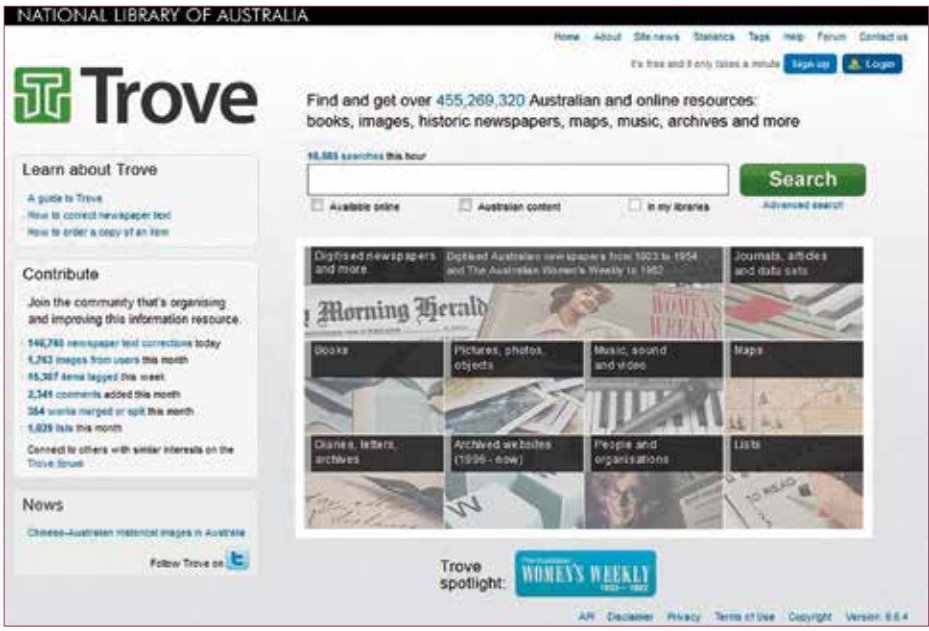
The first archival paradigm, from the French Revolution up to the 1930s, considered juridical evidence as the continuing value and the archivist as the guardian of the evidence and the keeper of 'truth'. The second, modern paradigm ran from the 1930s to the 1970s and transformed the archive from a natural deposit into a conscious creation compiled by the archivist. During the time of this paradigm personal archives were also taken into account. The third, postmodern archival paradigm emerged in the 1970s and is continuing today. Both archives and archivists have come to reflect society more directly; there is no 'truth'. Archivists are searching for their own identity as mediators, helping society to form its identity, and protecting evidence in the face of rapidly changing society and media. (Cook 2013: 106–16)

Cook argues that what is happening right now is a turn towards a community and participatory archival perspective, a turn away from ownership of archives to shared stewardship and collaboration, and 'a democratizing of archives suitable for the social ethos, communication patterns, and community requirements of the digital age' (Cook 2013: 116).

In her blog, ArchivesNext, the archival scholar Kate Theimer (2013) defines participatory archives as 'an organization, site or collection in which people other than the archives professionals contribute knowledge or resources resulting in increased appreciation and understanding about archival materials and archives, usually in an online environment'. Participation exists in numerous forms, for example:

- Crowd-sourcing work (e.g. transcribing or translating texts);
- Contributing expert or personal knowledge (e.g. recognizing people in photos);
- Adding items to collections (e.g. digitized personal documents);
- Creating new collections outside the 'archives' (e.g. Facebook nostalgia groups);
- Remixing archival materials in new contexts (hackathons);
- Involving the public in taking part in the archival activities;
- Involving archivists in taking part in community activities.

However, Theimer sees a difference between participation and engagement:[2] commenting on a photo for its qualities (e.g. 'Great photo!') or how the photo reminds you of your childhood is not participation but engagement, because it does not result in strengthening your interest in archives and archival materials. The comment has to include at least a memory to be counted as participation. Sharing this memory with others means you find it worthwhile to contribute to the collection. She is also cautious about naming collections in which copies of archival materials have been detached from their original context and then re-mixed into new creations as archives. (Theimer 2014)



Trove, The National Library of Australia, has succeeded exceptionally well in getting people to participate in its activities (screenshot 30.10.2015).

Examples of community and spontaneous archives

Individuals as well as many different kinds of communities with a shared interest may create records to bind their community together, foster their group identity or to carry out their business. These are commonly referred to as *community archives* (Flinn 2010). These kinds of archives can be entirely independent or produced in collaboration with heritage professionals to some degree, but are essentially based on what the community considers valuable and worth sharing with others. On occasion these archives may be referred to as *vernacular webs*[3] or they may not be considered as archives at all, but instead collections of digital historical representations or online exhibitions (Theimer 2014). One thing common to these kinds of archives is that they possess strong *vernacular authority.* Vernacular authority 'emerges when an individual makes appeals that rely on trust specifically because they are not institutional'. These appeals are backed up, for instance, by tradition and not by a formally instituted social formation like a church, a media company or an academic publication. (Howard 2013: 81–2)

Kirsi Hänninen

Independent community archives in the digital age

Independent community archives seek to collect, preserve and make accessible materials that document the histories of particular groups and localities and which are usually not available elsewhere. The scope of what might be defined as a community archive is broad, covering a wide range of different activities and interpretations (Community Archives and Heritage Group 2008).

Another definition by the Community Archives and Heritage Groups seeks to acknowledge and embrace this variety:

> Community archives and heritage initiatives come in many different forms (large or small, semi-professional or entirely voluntary, long-established or very recent, in partnership with heritage professionals or entirely independent) and seek to document the history of all manner of local, occupational, ethnic, faith and other diverse communities. (Community Archives and Heritage Group 2008)

As Andrew Flinn points out, this definition includes all manner of community identifications, be they locality, ethnicity, faith, sexuality, occupation, shared interest or a combination of two or more of these. In addition 'It also allows for many different organizational forms, including length of time established, a physical or virtual presence, degrees of independence or connection with mainstream organizations, and varying levels of resources, funding and long-term sustainability' (Flinn 2010: 41).

As I am interested in online construction and representation of vernacular authority in an alternative world view, especially regarding supernatural experiences (Hänninen 2012), I decided to use the online archive of the Finnish UFO Research Association FUFORA as an example of independent digital community archives. *Digital, online, and website archives* refer to websites created by individuals, organ-

2 Theimer does not see engagement as something inferior to participation, but different.

3 'When individuals frequent specific online locations that are linked by a shared value or interest' (Howard 2013: 82).

izations or institutions who presumably have little or no grounding in archival theory yet desire to make historical material accessible in digital form (Monks-Leeson 2011: 38).

The Finnish UFO Research Association is a registered association involving people interested in UFO sightings, contacts and abductions. Most members of the association are laymen and vernacular experts of the phenomenon, not academic professional researchers. The association maintains an online archive consisting of reports of UFO sightings which are reported by using a form available on the website.

First, a person who wishes to report his/her UFO sighting fills in the form and submits it, including attachments if available (photos, drawings). Then a designated board member of the association publishes it on the association's website, and includes a report of possible research done by a member of the association, and then comments on the report himself. Then, the report is open for commenting and discussion.

In these archives, participation involves people in different positions. Filling in and sending the form requires the informant has knowledge and/or experience of what can be interpreted as a UFO sighting. Then, not in every case but in many, a local UFO researcher investigates the incident, and writes a report concerning the incident and submits it. This requires investment of time, interest and money from his side. After this, a board member of the association publishes the report and comments it as a person having vernacular authority based on training and perhaps own experience on the phenomenon. Finally, anyone interested in the reports of UFO sightings is able to comment on the report. Participation in their case means looking for explanations for the sighting (misinterpreted physical object, uncertain mental state of the observer, weather conditions and so on), comparing it to other reports and examples, and recounting one's own experiences.

FUFORA also has archives of reports on UFO contacts and abductions but these are available only to members of the association who have gone through research training organized by the association. These documents are also online but thus with restricted access.

My second example of online community archives also deals with UFOs. The Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) is an American-based organization that collects, classifies and publishes reports of UFO sightings, contacts and abductions. It was established in 1969 and declares its mission as the scientific study of UFOs for the benefit of humanity. MUFON reports having over 3000 members worldwide, and they collect UFO experience reports worldwide as well.

As in my first example, a person who wishes to report his/her UFO sighting fills in a report form and submits it, including attachments if available.

MUFON presents a diverse example for research on alternative world view and digital community archives (screenshot 5.11.2015).

Required information includes what happened where and when, with details of the event and a free-form description of the experience. The report is then sent on to the organization's state or national director according to where the sighting took place. The state director assigns the case to a volunteer field investigator, who reviews it and interviews the witness if needed. Finland's national director is a member of FUFORA but the archives of FUFORA and MUFON are two separate systems. MUFON's UFO sighting database includes reports worldwide, and the organization's website states that they have over 70,000 UFO cases accessible in the database. Anyone is free to access it and search for sighting reports based on the location, time, shape, and colour of the object, and its distance from the witness. Comments and discussion related to sightings, reports and UFOs in general take place on MUFON's discussion forum and MUFON's Facebook page.

Anne Heimo

Everyday practices of memorialization and spontaneous archives

The internet is full of both large institutional and small-scale private sites of memory and commemoration, which are used increasingly to share family memories, to showcase lost heritage sites or to commemorate historic events retrospectively for both local and transnational clientelles. Because of the internet, archival documents and materials are nowadays accessible in digital form for new users wherever they live (Creet 2011). This has resulted in a growing interest in what Catherine Nash (2008) refers to as *diasporic genealogy*, searching for one's ancestral roots in 'the old home country' or among family members who have migrated to other parts of the world. Participatory culture and grassroots activities are characteristics of these practices. Although more and more heritage institutions and various projects around the world offer the chance to collaborate and interact in sharing their memories online, people do not necessarily grasp at opportunities offered to them. Instead of taking part in organisationally or institutionally organized acts of memorialization people will often choose to act outside these (e.g. Affleck and Kvan 2008).

These kinds of private and non-institutional sites of memorialization[4] I call *spontaneous archives* in the same way as the folklorist Jack Santino (2006) uses the term *spontaneous shrines* to emphasize the unofficial nature of these non-institutional memorial sites. Spontaneous also refers to the fact that in some cases these sites are created on the spur of the moment, and may therefore disappear or be removed, but they can also in some cases turn into permanent memorials (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2011: 15). Spontaneous shrines are commonly used in reference to the real world, but they can also exist online and may, like their counterparts in the real world, transform in time from initial impressions and testimony into *online archives* (Arthur 2009) or *online memorials* (Henrich 2015). Like community archives and vernacular webs, these sites draw like-minded people together to share information and memories. Spontaneous archives, like spontaneous shrines, are the result of an emotional need to share private and public memories within a group to which the members feel connected regardless of whether they know each other, and through such sharing participants form imagined communities.

Spontaneous archives come in numerous forms – blogs, YouTube videos, Flickr, Facebook etc. In recent years I have studied these mainly from the perspective of diasporic genealogy and family history (Heimo 2014b). 'Finnish Genealogy' and 'Old Recipes from Our Finnish Ancestors' are both closed Facebook groups with thousands of members. Both groups are dedicated to the sharing of family history and memories in order to find out more about relatives and roots. The members of the Finnish Genealogy group share personal documents, like family photos, letters and documents, and help each other in translating texts, searching for information in parish registers or answering various enquires. The group Old Recipes from Our Finnish Ancestors was created for the sole purpose of sharing of old and new family recipes in order to 'connect and learn more about our Scandinavian and Finnish heritage, and to share recipes, memories and stories related to our roots, drawing us all closer through similar interest in our Scandinavian and Nordic heritage'. As a result of these activities both groups have archives consisting of hundreds and hundreds of photos as well as some videos and text files.

Another form of spontaneous archives which I have been interested in is YouTube videos, which people have created in order to commemorate family and local history in very much the same manner as they do on other social media or network sites (see e.g. Heimo 2014c). These are typically remix videos, which consist of a montage of photos, archival documents, postcards, newspaper clippings etc., chosen and compiled by the creator with a well-known song by a well-known artist playing in the background. These videos also provide good examples of how the vernacular, institutional and commercial mix today.

4 *Participatory memorialization* refers to unofficial and private forms of memorialization commonly referred to as temporary, improvised, counter, ephemeral, vernacular, grassroots or spontaneous memorials, which spring up at sites of untimely and unexpected death or in some cases retrospectively commemorate past events (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2011: 5, Ashton *et al.* 2012: 7).

Facebook groups Finnish Genealogy and Our Finnish Ancestors have both attracted thousands of people with Finnish roots to share information and memories concerning their mutual heritage (screenshots 30.10.2015).

Bruce Springsteen's ballad 'Youngstown' from the album *The Ghost of Tom Joad* (1995) tells the story of the rise and decline of Youngstown, Ohio, which was once a prosperous steel town, but is now one of the most deprived towns in the United States. Most of the nearly 20,000 hits[5] of Springsteen's song are either official music videos published by his record company or unofficial ones published by his fans. Nevertheless among the twenty most-watched videos are four remix videos in which people tell their family story.

In 1941 Woody Guthrie released his album *Struggle*. He had composed one of the songs, '1913 Massacre', to commemorate the Italian Hall tragedy in Calumet, north-west Michigan. During the Copper Country Strike of 1913–14 seventy-three people were crushed to death in a stampede when someone falsely shouted 'fire' at a crowded Christmas party arranged for the strikers' children. Most of the victims were children of Finnish migrants. Although the disaster was investigated no-one was found guilty. This resulted in suspicions that anti-union allies had caused the tragedy and even bolted the doors to keep people inside. This is also Woody Guthrie's version of the events. Among the twenty most-popular versions of the song on YouTube[6] there are four remix videos with Guthrie's song being played by Guthrie himself or by someone else in the background.

In both of these cases people have commented on the videos and mentioned how the video relates to their family history. Often the commentators mention that they or their families are from these places, or as in the case of Youngstown sometimes from an industrial town with a similar history. These family narratives and post-memories are considered trustworthy and worth sharing with others, because they encompass both strong emotional power and vernacular authority.

New understandings of heritage

Our examination of community and spontaneous archives show how people today participate, spontaneously and continuously, in activities of collection, preservation and interpretation of digitized heritage content and new digitally mediated forms of heritage practice. This means we as folklorists also need to address what we mean by heritage today. As our examples show, heritage no longer consists of only museum artefacts, memorials or historic sites, but 'It is about making sense of our memories and developing a sense of identity through shared and repeated interactions with the tangible remains and lived traces of a common past' (Giaccardi 2012: 1–2). It may oppose, support or simply remain outside the terms of what Laurajane Smith (2006) calls *authorized heritage discourse* (AHD).

The rise of new technology and the fact that more and more people are engaging in history-making also mean the creation of non-institutional *new heritage* (see, e.g., Giarccardi 2012, Kalay *et al.* 2008). A significant feature of new heritage is that in contrast to former notions of cultural heritage as a product, as something stable that must be protected from changing, with such protection remaining in the hands of experts, new heritage acknowledges change to the point that it should be seen as a process which is dynamic, ever-evolving and ephemeral, often curated and managed by the same people who create it or participate in the process. (Smith 2006, Silberman and Purser 2012, see also Kaplan 2013.) Some parts of what we have today presented as examples of new heritage will certainly disappear in the future and be gone for ever. Is this necessarily a problem? Does everything have to be archived?

We also need to re-examine the boundaries of official and unofficial heritage and not only recognize new forms of collaboration between audiences and institutions, but also ask who has the right to decide

5 Google search 'Bruce Springsteen Youngstown', 19,900 hits (30.10.2015).
6 Google search 'Woody Guthrie 1913 massacre', 3,320 hits (30.10.2015).

Bruce Springsteen's song 'Youngstown' and Woody Guthrie's son '1913 Massacre' have been used in the creation of remix videos published on YouTube by people from these areas to tell about their family history (screenshots 30.10.2015).

what is cultural heritage and what is not. Does it have to be an archive, museum or other expert who makes the decision and has control over it? Should we as folklorists instead be paying more attention to those people who are involved in establishing and maintaining independent community archives and spontaneous archives instead of defining heritage and what can be considered as heritage? ■

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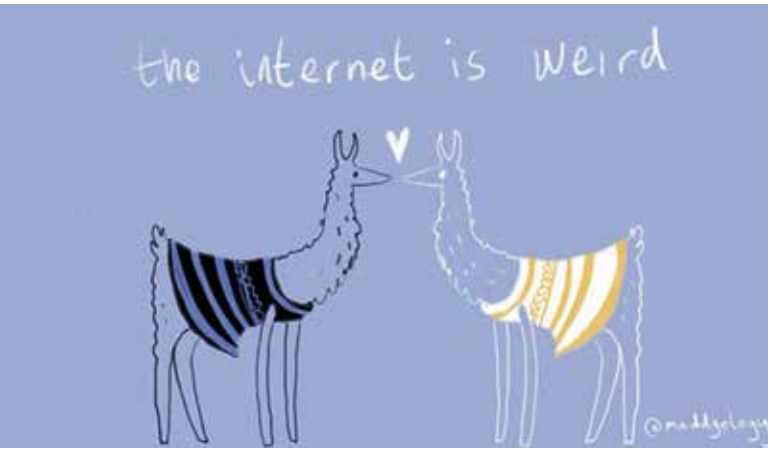
LYNNE S. McNEILL

'The internet is weird'
Folkloristics in the digital age



Maddy Vian

The above image, of two infatuated llamas wearing striped dresses, is a coded folkloric reference to a particular day in 2015: Thursday, February 26th. That day, #TheDress, an image of a dress that appears blue and black to some viewers and white and gold to others, had gone viral online. The following morning, Friday the 27th, I walked into my contemporary legend class at Utah State University to find my students in an uproar.

The majority of the students were convinced that their classmates had been instructed to prank them about The Dress – that a secret message had circulated telling people to pretend they saw a different colour. The slow realization that this was an unintentional manifestation of a common perception phenomenon[1] did little to assuage my students' concerns; it is apparently distressing to discover that different people truly do perceive the world differently. It became clear, however, as the day went on and students shared the posts they were receiving through social media, that we were observing folklore in the making.

For the next several weeks we started class by sharing memes about The Dress phenomenon. Some were about the sudden vast spread of the phenomenon, criticizing people for being so interested in something so trivial; some were about the play on colours specifically, using the newfound connection between black/blue and white/gold to make humorous or poignant memes.

Eventually, a few weeks after the initial appearance of The Dress, one of my students brought up a good point: we all definitely felt like we were part of folklore in the making, but not one of the students in the class had been actively involved in making any memes themselves. In fact, none of them had ever created any kind of meme at all. And while some had indeed perpetuated the memes by sharing them on their Facebook pages or on Twitter, many hadn't even done that. They'd simply seen them and enjoyed knowing that they were in on the joke or the reference being made. Quite rightly, they wondered if they were actually engaging in the folk process?

This provided a serendipitous opportunity to introduce an old, decidedly non-digital folkloristic concept: that of active and passive bearers. As Carl von Sydow has famously explained, 'It is the active bearers who keep tradition alive and transmit it, whereas the passive bearers have indeed heard of what a certain tradition contains, and may perhaps, when questioned, recollect a part of it, but do nothing themselves to spread it or keep it alive' (von Sydow 1948: 12–13).

My students questioned if perhaps the internet is ushering in a new age of the passive bearer, in that audiences have grown exponentially with the reach of communications technology but only a small percentage are the ones actively creating and re-creating content. This is an interesting idea, but I prefer to look at it slightly differently. It is beneficial to focus not on the contrast between active and passive, but on the contrast between bearers and hearers. We're not so much experiencing the age of the passive bearer as we are experiencing the rise of the active listener: the audience member who does serious cultural work, without ever necessarily taking up the mantle of performer.

The original image of #TheDress.

1 The phenomenon is summarized well by *Wired* magazine: <http://www.wired.com/2015/02/science-one-agrees-color-dress/>.

While the field of folkloristics has shown interest in the idea of an active audience within the context of performance studies, it is essential to remember that being an active recipient of folklore isn't necessarily about impacting the performance through feedback. It's sometimes simply (or perhaps not-so-simply) about doing the conceptual work of an informed, competent member of a folk group.

Folklorist Barre Toelken discusses this idea in his most recent study of Native American folk traditions, *The Anguish of Snails*, and searched for a word that will encompass the idea. As he says, 'What we need is a good model for understanding what happens when a talented storyteller, singer, or basketmaker [or meme designer] performs a story, song, or basket [or meme] for people who recognize the cultural codes in the genre' (Toelken 2003: 191). Toelken settled on the Chipewyan Athabascan verb stem '-sas/-zas', which is 'used to describe a dog gnawing on a bone until it is clean, a woman picking berries, and someone listening to – and understanding – what another person is saying' (p. 192). While these may seem like disparate activities, Toelken explains their similarities:

> Because bushes produce varying amounts of berries, the job of finding and properly harvesting them is the responsibility of a hardworking berry picker; in the subarctic, berries are not always abundant, and the picker needs to know where they are, as well as how and when to get them without losing or crushing any. Along with the berries, of course, there is the accumulation of leaves, twigs, and spoiled berries; in other words, the process also involves knowing which materials are not nutritious and need to be sorted out and discarded as superfluous. … With an oral performance, the job of 'getting it' and obtaining the cultural nutrition is the responsibility of the listener, who has learned by experience to recognize and sort out the important references, metaphors, nuances, and cultural assumptions, while carefully discarding the anecdotal leaves, stems, and other nonnutritive elements. (Toelken 2003: 192)

Toelken is not describing communicative feedback, nor is he talking about audience members turning around and re-creating the performance themselves. He's instead making the important point that there's skilled work in simply being able to parse the message behind a traditional presentation. He chose the English word 'gleaning' as the best summary of this idea.

So, what do the llamas in the opening image have to do with it? That image wasn't the only online folk art to depict this same thing.

As it turns out, on the same day that The Dress went viral, two llamas, one black and one white, escaped their enclosure in Arizona and ran through the streets, much to the delight of news reporters and viewers everywhere. Perhaps it was the fact that the llamas came in contrasting colours, or perhaps it was just that it was the same day, but the two ideas became tightly linked in most people's minds.

An informed, attentive audience member on that day would be able to glean that meaning from these memes; if they were not able to, they could easily do the investigative work to be able to understand. And *this*, this totally non-performative, purely receptive skill set of gleaning is, I think, increasingly at the center of much Internet folklore.

But something else happened on February 26th as well. In the US, the Federal Communications

continued on p. 16

Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen

Open Science and Open Cultural Heritage

Over a year Finnish Literature Society has worked with open science and open access, November 2014 we had a seminar on academic publishing and in May 2015 seminar "Book in open access: why and whose money". November 2015 in SKS takes place the third international seminar "The Humanities in the Digital Age: Access, Equality and Education". In the seminar SKS also published the *SKS's Open Science and Open Cultural Heritage program*.

In the early days of the SKS, understandable literature and knowledge in native language meant an access to cultural and scientific knowledge. Now the new access to knowledge based culture is achieved by online and e-publishing. We have been producing digital services for a couple of decades. In this field, the National Biography of Finland and its online publication accessible either with license or through major libraries for free was a pioneering project in this country launched a decade ago. The database of the Old Finnish Folk Poetry (SKVR) and the critical editions of Finnish literature are both open access publications completely free and for unlimited online use.

As part of the bigger scheme of open access policies and digital humanities, the SKS is working on the next step to the open science program. During the last twenty years, the open access movement has strongly changed the field of scholarly publishing. Its main goal has been to promote the online distribution of scientific knowledge produced with public funds.

The academic book publishers have become active in open access publishing and distribution only recently. It should be emphasized that there is a difference between e-books sold or licensed and read from various devices and the open online publications. The SKS has produced e-books for several years by now. Now we are heading to a large scale free open access book publishing with publications to be loaded or read from the internet. The electric and printed formats will exist side by side. Print on demand technique as well has been available with feasible costs and reasonable quality for a while.

The benefits for distribution and availability of the online publishing are evident. A scholarly novelty is accessible immediately after the publishing for everyone having an access to the internet where ever in the world. In principle, it is accessible after five, ten, fifteen or more years. In the future books published online will include links to the sources whether texts, sound or moving images. For example, a work referring to the SKVR database would lead directly to the sources themselves and the reader would be able to check them and use for his or her own purposes. It is hard to find arguments why the internet should not be used in the publishing and distribution of scientific knowledge.

It seems that technical problems are mostly solved. More difficult problem seems to be who will pay for the open access publishing. The earnings of the academic book publishers are in most cases rather meagre and in many cases like ours the academic publishing in itself has never been a profitable business. With the exception of some huge publishers or the most famous university presses the majority of the publishers are supported either by their hosting institutions, public funds and private foundations supporting science and arts. This is what the SKS has done throughout its existence since the nineteenth century.

The SKS is committed to overcome the hindrances and to solve the problems. With the generous grant of Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation we will move forward to the next stage in the SKS's Open Science and Open Cultural Heritage Program which is committed to provide open access to humanistic knowledge. In addition the SKS is working in cooperation with Finnish research libraries to create a library consortium for wide open access publishing.

Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen. Photo: Gary Wornell

Letters and Songs

The aim of the *Letters and Songs: Registers of Beliefs and Expressions in the Early Modern North* project is to investigate cultural change in the post-Reformation Baltic Sea region. The project's detailed analysis of sociocultural networks and historical changes in registers of expression challenges the prevailing understanding of the relationships between institutions of power and faith vis-á-vis local communities and belief systems.

These insights are enabled by the collaborative use of methods across the fields of cultural, social and economic history, folklore studies, ethnomusicology and literary studies, and by the use of diverse early modern source materials, such as collections of correspondence, early books and other prints, manuscripts, hymns, and sermons in Finnish, Swedish, Estonian, German, and Latin. The focus of the project is on the areas of modern Finland and Estonia.

Conventionally, the early modern Baltic Sea region has been analyzed from the standpoint of national histories and separate disciplines, each with its own source types and research questions. This project intends to cross the boundaries of modern nations and scholarly traditions by concentrating on materials at the intersection of different social networks, registers of expression, belief systems, and minor traditions. It aims to analyze the cultural nexus of elite and folk, ecclesiastical and secular, and oral and literary cultures.

Letters and Songs project got funding from the Academy of Finland (2015–2019), and the researchers are Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen (project leader), Eeva Liisa Bastman, Linda Kaljundi, Kati Kallio, Ulla Koskinen, Anu Lahtinen and Ilkka Leskelä.

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Registers of Communication

In any society, communicative activities are organized into models of conduct that differentiate specific social practices from each other and enable people to communicate with each other in ways distinctive to those practices. The articles in this volume investigate a series of locale-specific models of communicative conduct, or registers of communication, through which persons organize their participation in varied social practices, including practices of politics, religion, schooling, migration, trade, media, verbal art, and ceremonial ritual. Drawing on research traditions on both sides of the Atlantic, the authors of these articles bring together insights from a variety of scholarly disciplines, including linguistics, anthropology, folklore, literary studies, and philology.

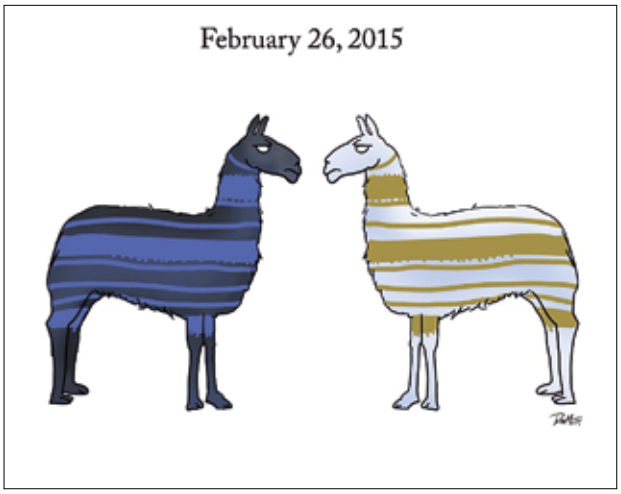
Asif Agha, Frog, Registers of Communication. SF Linguistica 18. SKS 2015.

Spreading the Written Word

The arrival of the Reformation was the decisive impetus for literary development in Finland. The principle of Lutheranism was that the people had to get to hear and read the word of God in their own mother tongue. If there previously was no literary language, it had to be created. The first Finnish books were produced by Mikael Agricola. He was born an ordinary son of a farmer, but his dedication to his studies opened up the road to leading roles in the Finnish Church. He was able to bring a total of nine works in Finnish to print, which became the foundation of literary Finnish. This book describes the historical background of Mikael Agricola, his life, his personal networks, the Finnish works published by Agricola, research on Agricola and Agricolas role in contemporary Finnish culture.

Kaisa Häkkinen, Leonard Pearl, Spreading the Written Word: Mikael Agricola and the Birth of Literary Finnish. SF Linguistica 19. SKS 2015.

continued from p. 13



Commission approved a policy ensuring internet neutrality, a hotly debated topic in recent years and an extremely important issue. Between the dress and the llamas, however, it went almost unnoticed. This can explain a lot of the criticisms of the 'triviality' of The Dress uproar; it's not just that llamas and dresses seem unimportant, it's that far more important things were happening at the same time and receiving less vernacular coverage.

Somehow, despite the important historical events taking place that day, it is the more unimportant, humorous memes that proliferated the most and that showed staying power through the following weeks.[2] Why is this? Many memes were created that day that address quite serious political and social commentary; why would the apparently silly or meaningless or random memes persist?

More than seeing the content – which is often ephemeral – as being key, I think we need to be looking at the active engagement with the traditional process, both as creators *and* as active listeners or viewers. I am not suggesting that the content of internet folklore isn't important, but it is important to note that much of the significance of online folklore is in the successful gleaning of information from a meme – being 'in the know' about traditional content online, able to distinguish the berries from the twigs – more than creating or passing on deeply representative content.

This could be understood as an element of what John McDowell has called 'traditional competency'. As he explains,

> When traditional items function primarily to guide innovative folkloric production, then we should speak of a traditional competence rather than of a traditional set of items. What persists through time and space, in these instances, is the capacity to formulate appropriate folkloric items, as much as the traditional items themselves. (McDowell 1999: 60)

I would add that it is not just the capacity to *formulate* but to *comprehend* as well; the key role of the active audience in folkloristics is required to fully appreciate a comprehensive performative model that doesn't glorify only the eventual performers or creators. This is very similar to a point I have made in Rob Howard and Trevor Blank's *Tradition in the 21st Century* (2013). Looking at the three key tools of folkloristics as presented by Diane Goldstein – tradition, genre, and transmission – I was hard pressed to account for the *point* or the value of humorous internet content that is passed rapidly through massive chains of participants. Goldstein uses both the words 'need' and 'way' to describe a tradition (it's a *need* we have to pass things on and it's the *way* we pass those things on), and I think here is where we find the weight of a lot of digital folklore: while often the content of digital folklore may seem disproportionately minor in comparison to the efforts being made to transmit it, we should look to the processes of communal re-creation and communal comprehension to discover the social and cultural needs that are being met by any given example of online folklore. Many traditional items are simply an index to the abstract process of artfully comprehending or gleaning the message behind a given piece of Internet folklore. Connecting ourselves to one another, simply having the shared knowledge to be competent at unpacking obscure Internet references, is the meaningful part of much digital folklore.

The idea that content takes a back seat to process in online folklore has some serious implications for the field of folkloristics. I have had many students in recent years, especially those who were expecting to study

2 I serve on the board of the Digital Folklore Project <http://www.digitalfolkloreproject.com>, which tracks and archives digital folkloric trends. The project highlights that The Dress is still, as of this writing in November 2015, a more popular meme subject than the net neutrality policy.

more ancient mythology and fewer LOLcats when they signed up for a folklore course, who have asked how we can be holding up internet memes as 'the same thing' as what they consider to be the classic, important folklore of the past – Grimms' fairy tales, heroic legends, epic poetry – and they make the assumption that contemporary folklore is 'worse' than the folklore of older generations. On the one hand, it's easy to see their point. Extended artful narratives carry a weight and resonance that a quick and funny meme simply can't match. But I think this is more a matter of a culture's preservational choice than of the creation of folklore. The 'quick and funny' folklore of the past often doesn't stand the test of time in the same way that the more substantive folklore does. And certainly in the past, silly, ephemeral folklore simply wasn't collected intentionally as it is now.

If internet folklore is indeed often (though not always) more about the chain of transmission than about the content of the thing transmitted, then outside of its initial context, it may not seem as obviously meaningful. It is imperative that folklorists be able to articulate the value of even unimportant-seeming content, lest non-folklorists have the same reaction as some students, and doubt the value of the study of folklore on the internet.

This leads to an interesting question for the future of digital folkloristics; will we someday have books of collected internet memes, as we now have books of collected world fairy tales, that schoolchildren will read to better understand their own culture and history? Perhaps. It will be interesting to see what gets preserved in such books: will the value of the llamas in The Dress – a phenomenon almost entirely about the audience's ability to connect the dots and share in the immediacy of a series of events – even be considered? Or will memes that are more explicitly political, referential, or 'serious' be the ones that last? It is quite possible that much of the impact of folklore, on the ground and in the moment, has *always* been about competency within the chain of transmission, but that element has been lost over time, while the more solid and symbolic content of other, slower-moving forms has remained. Being aware of this as we move forward will help guide our future research, archival work, and analysis. ■

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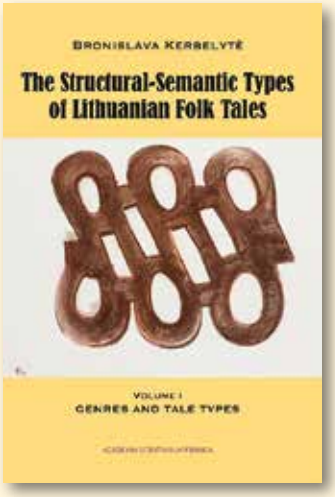

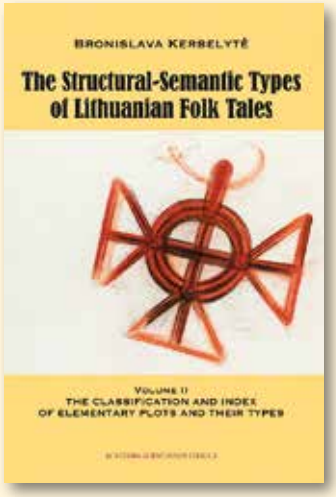

The Structural-Semantic Types of Lithuanian Folk Tales, vol. I–II

by Bronislava Kerbelytė

The classification system of the types of folk tales published by Antti Aarne in 1910 was a much needed and courageous project. The author of this book has classified more than 40,000 variants of Lithuanian folk tales according to the international catalogue by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson (AT). The author has determined *elementary plots* (EP) as structural elements of folk narratives. She has created the structural-semantic method for analysis and description of texts on several levels. Structural-semantic types of folk tales as well as concrete plots of Lithuanian tales are described in the book. The classification of elementary plots and their types contains much information about folk tales and about people. The classes of EP reflect people's perpetual goals. The EP types reflect the ways of achieving goals, people's rules of behaviour.

Bronislava Kerbelytė is Professor of Folkloristics, a prominent Lithuanian researcher and author of more than 20 books and 200 articles on Lithuanian narrative folklore published in Lithuanian, Russian, German, and English. From 1963 to 1999 she worked at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore in Vilnius and from 1996 to 2010 at the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. Her areas of interest include the classification, systematization and structural-semantic analysis of folk narratives.

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ANASTASIYA ASTAPOVA

Folklore Fellows' Summer School 2015
Doing Folkloristics in the Digital Age

In spite of enormous research done on internet folklore in various disciplines nowadays, the formal recognition of the new, digital context of study still goes hand in hand with prejudice. 'It is easier than doing real fieldwork', 'Who needs this ephemeral material?', 'Who are all these virtual informants?' – these are just a few of the thoughts I myself had when coming to the Folklore Fellows' Summer School on 'Doing Folkloristics in the Digital Age'. Undoubtedly, there are many more biases against research into internet folklore, for various reasons. That is why recognising the need to update folklorists' participation in internet research and to adopt it as an object of systematic investigation (Hakamies 2014: 3) was a brave and challenging step for the organisers of the Summer School. Yet, judging from previous topics of the FFSS, this event has always been avant-garde. Consider the 1997 school title 'Tradition, Locality and Multicultural Processes' or the 2010 topic 'After Folkloristics?' This tendency to always be à la mode deserves even higher praise when the monumentality of Finnish folklore studies is taken into account – it is, perhaps, one of the most fruitful resources for folklore research. One would rather expect conservatism from this rich tradition and the innovativeness of the Folklore Fellows' Summer Schools needs even more commendation. The school has of late been held every three to five years, which calls for a focus on the most important questions arising in the field of folkloristics.

Photos by Tuomas Hovi

Participants of the FFSS listening to a presentation.

The 2015 school brought together scholars from at least thirteen countries, and lasted for seven days, with two morning keynote presentations and three to four participants' papers to follow every day. The participants' papers had been distributed in advance, to provoke more understanding and lively discussion of each other's topics. Since there were no parallel sessions, the keynote speakers and students could indeed concentrate on learning of each other's research better. Along with the keynote and participants' papers, the discussion was complemented by the questions and comments of the invited experts and organising committee: Pekka Hakamies, Lauri Harvilahti, Anne Heimo, Tuomas Hovi, Kaarina Koski, Emilia Laitinen.

Although there were several topics offered to the participants of the school, two particular directions in the research received most of the attention. The speakers mainly concentrated on 1) digital folklore – whether of particular communities or of special genres, and 2) the transformation of folklore archives and databases in the digital age. Perhaps, the most recurrent reference which went through the whole conference was the idea of today's innovation as tomorrow's tradition, as Lynne McNeill highlighted to us. This argument indeed overcame many biases and urged us on towards the productive analysis of internet folklore. In her own lecture, Lynne McNeill showed that digital folklore may serve as a testing ground for the familiar core concepts and theories that the field of folklore research has developed since its inception. After all, in the study of internet folklore we encounter the same objects, models, patterns and problems: performance, active and passive bearers, research ethics, genres, and so forth. It is, however, significant that this new context of folklore may be helpful in finding new answers to old questions. The major question McNeill herself raised was whether certain trends are present both online and offline, since their absence, presence, and/or difference in function in the two realms may allow the researcher to see them from a completely new angle.

Indeed, as many talks given at the conference showed, encountering old genres in new settings cannot be simply dismissed. Heidi Haapoja presented a paper on *Kalevala runo* singing – an act of great symbolic value for the Finnish people, now performed mostly online. Arbnora Dushi demonstrated how Facebook becomes the tool for evoking and reconstructing memory and shaping personal stories through photos, tags and comments. The old questions of the global and the local were evoked by Petr Janecek, who presented the case of Czech supernatural folklore. Currently influenced by the diffusion of the urban beliefs from all over the world through the internet, Czech supernatural folklore still preserves its locally bound features. Karin Sandell exposed the peculiarities and effects of the traditional genre of hate speech now appearing online. Zhijuan Zhang described *duanzi* – a form of traditional folk art given a new look and much richer context today as a result of the development of the internet. Antti Lindfors provided an analysis of stand-up comedy performances in digital environments, taking into account the interrelation of technological infrastructures and forms of poetic expression. Katalin Vargha explored the peculiarities of online Hungarian political humour on the 2014 political elections: in spite of using traditional patterns, it was not particularly popular in the offline communication. My own paper showed how the rumours about surveillance widespread in the Soviet Union have been transformed in today's Belarus, not only because of the country's political situation, but also because of new means of communication potentially useful for surveillance. As all these papers and discussions demonstrated, many deeply traditional phenomena are often extinct offline, and, consequently, are not researchable without the internet at all. The conclusion drawn by Anneli Baran in her own keynote speech about memes and political humour is also applicable to the diversity of cases mentioned above. As Baran claimed, no totalizing theory can effectively cover the whole variety of internet creativity.

As is usual in folklore scholarship, many discussions clustered around imagined online communities – grouping together either according to their interests or according to their ethnicity. The keynote lecture by Robert Glenn Howard set the tone for this research by looking at the tension between individual action and communal control in online communities, fundamental to generating folklore (he concentrated on gun forums, in particular). In a similar vein, several scholars turned to the analysis of gaming communities, using different methods. For instance, in another keynote lecture, Jaakko Suominen described compiling questionnaires to conduct retrospective research into the cultural history of the Mario video game. Conversely, Jukka Vahlo suggested looking at video gaming as a dynamic folkloristic activity, studying it through participant observation and the video recordings of the games. In his research into the role-multiplayer online game Eve online, Robert Guyker approached the body of lore produced there from a comparative and contextual point of view, taking into account other forms of digital media, traditional game-models and cultural artefacts. Other online communities studied were, for instance, an Estonian internet family discussion forum and personal experience stories of pregnancy and childbirth published there, as well as the rules for these stories' composition imposed by the authorities of the forum (Maili Pilt). London Brickley explored the movement of transhumanism (which aims to enhance human intellectual, physical and psychological capacities through new technologies), observing how scientific inventions modify the boundaries of the 'folk'.

Presentations and discussion: Anastasiya Astapova (left), Jaakko Suominen and Robert Glenn Howard, and Lynne S. McNeill.

Some communities being studied came together on ethnic grounds and in search of a common ethnic heritage. The paper of Emanuel Valentin was the best example of discussion of this. Concentrating on the Italian Dolomites, he insisted on the need to define the heritage of this locality (emerging as a result of the ascription to UNESCO World Natural Heritage List) as suggested by its population – the minority of Ladins. Trying to understand this emic perspective through the internet makes his strategy similar to the one employed by the Buryat people as described by another participant, Agnieszka Matkowska. She observed how today's internet and social media supplied the Buryats with the opportunity for new connections, performing and sharing their identity, and transmitting folklore, with special emphasis on legends and genealogies. Among my personal favourites was the paper by Nicholas Le Bigre on commonalities in immigrant-experience narratives and the new shapes they acquire as a result of communication with home, improved by video technologies. He showed how different immigration becomes in the digital age, transforming the way individuals connect and share their lives with friends and family abroad.

Finally, the ethics of internet research were observed in the keynote lecture by Sari Östman. The lecture argued that digital research ethics intertwine with source criticism and a researcher's reflective positioning: it should be highly case-bound and contextually reflective. Östman insisted on the power of the informants to decide upon how far their creativity can be studied and argued that the informants' limitations and norms of behaviour become an essential source of knowledge about behavioural guidelines directing the communities. Even though the lecture received much positive feedback and discussion, the topic, unfortunately, was hardly touched upon in the remaining papers. Among the rare exceptions were the discussion of scholarly participation in creating heritage by Emanuel Valentin, as well as the usual comments about anonymity, allowing for the protection of informants. Research ethics, however, were thoroughly discussed in the second major thematic section of the school, dealing with the compiling and digitisation of archives and databases.

This second most important theme was the archiving experiences of scholars from different countries. For instance, Lauri Harvilahti described how the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society are organised, utilising the continuously accumulated expertise of collecting, archiving and digitising materials from oral tradition. The archivists are currently implementing new ways and services to make their collections

Stephen VanGeem and Tuomas Hovi

Folklore Fellows' Summer School participants (including an example of digital folklore).

accessible for users, as well as a new system for unifying archival description and cataloguing, set by the nationwide project of the National Digital Library. Monumental collection was also carried out by Chinese scientific and research institutes and universities, which worked extensively work in digitising resources of oral traditions for more than thirty years. In his account of this endeavour, Bi Chuanlong openly discussed problems they encounter; for instance, the size of this grandiose project implies ignoring specific topics and the lack of customisation. As Kaisa Kulasalu showed, the amount of folklore gathered in Estonian archives is also both its strength and weakness. These rich materials of sensitive content bring various ideologies – those of users, performers, archivists, lawyers – into conflict, setting limitations to what could be made openly available. According to Kelly Fitzgerald, board member of the National Folklore Collection (housed in University College, Dublin, Ireland), this institution also encounters similar problems. Generated by a team of collectors, working to systematically record and document folklore throughout Ireland, this archive still faces the need for systematisation, digitisation, and provision of access for users.

Smaller and local projects generated as many discussions as these national archives. For instance, the German project to archive Richard Wossidlo's private folklore collection brought together European ethnologists and computer scientists in an attempt to follow the collector's original card-file system. Christoph Schmitt described uncovering the tensions between the idea of preserving Wossidlo's own classification and the need for its accessibility to users, which dictated different rules. Emese Ilyefalvi introduced an upcoming online database for Hungarian incantations. This is supposed to solve many problems encountered by the incantation index compilers, allowing for sorting the material by any criteria to promote multiple searches. A novel approach to the concept of archives was offered by Anne Heimo and Kirsi Hänninen, who suggested recognising new forms of collaboration between audiences and archiving institutions shaped by the internet. The audience can now generate, manage and curate so-called participatory archives; this engagement is of particular interest for folklorists.

As scholars admitted, web archives and databases have engendered a new field for folklorists as a result of the transition towards participatory forms of storing and collecting materials. Among other challenges, there is a problem of storing and classifying digitally originated materials. The participants acknowledged the urgent need for international rules for archiving as well as the need to exchange experience regarding the issues of copyright and metadata, and compiling comprehensive user guidelines. Like folklore itself, the topic of archives and databases reflected global tensions and problems, in spite of local peculiarities. The summer school undoubtedly presented an excellent opportunity to gather and disseminate expertise, and not merely on the topic of archives.

I found the Folklore Fellows' Summer School highly productive for my thinking about digital folklore. What calmed my initial concerns about internet research was that the majority of papers, concentrating on internet folklore research, were at the same time informed by real-life fieldwork. This combination of online and offline analysis seems to be the most productive since, as many papers showed, studying many phenomena is now not possible without taking into account the internet. Moreover, internet folklore research cannot avoid being guided by the long tradition of offline studies. Online and offline folklore research shares common motifs, genres and themes which call for simultaneous study, showing how similar the two contexts may be. After all, as we were constantly reminded, 'traditional folklore' is always around since the conference was held on Seili island. Its shady past as a leper hospital and a lunatic asylum (with a graveyard as one of the major attractions of the island) was influential enough for the locals and visitors to recount the stories of its ghosts and for us to constantly ask about them.

Moreover, the amount of digital and real-life folklore produced and transmitted by folklorists over these seven days calls out for recognition. One of the arguments I singled out in the keynote lecture of Trevor J. Blank was that folklorists are also deeply embedded in the process of internet creativity. The event was filled with memes, demotivators, and other forms of digital creativity, used not just as illustrative examples, but also as performative aims.

The amazing productiveness of the participants was reflected not only in the diversity of digital folklore studied and generated, but also in the more traditional forms of offline creativity – in particular singing sessions, which took place at the end of every conference day. This links us to the good old 'Who are the folk? Among others we are!' (Dundes 1980: 19), again reminding us how classical research appears to be applicable to digital folklore, and how closely internet creativity is today related to real life. ■

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CHRISTOPH SCHMITT

Folklore research at the University of Rostock

The Wossidlo Archive, its development and present situation

Kaarle Krohn inspects Wossidlo's ethnographic work station

In the summer of 1907 Kaarle Krohn was on his way to the idyllic town of Waren, which lies on Lake Müritz in Mecklenburg. He intended to visit Richard Wossidlo (1859–1939), who had worked here since 1886 as a secondary-school teacher, but whom he primarily admired for his passion as self-educated folklorist. I would like to reconstruct this visit in order to introduce Wossidlo's work.

On his way to north-eastern Germany Krohn had stopped in Copenhagen to meet Evald Tang Kristensen, the famous collector and editor of Danish folklore. Kristensen was also a teacher by profession, but unlike Wossidlo had long been released from schooling to fully devote himself to the recording and editing of the folklore of Jutland. He carefully preserved all his field recordings in bound diaries. Sketchy notations or preliminary stages of transcription attempts were not usually thrown in the waste-paper basket. This enables us to reconstruct Kristensen's fieldwork, as Palle O. Christiansen (2013) recently did. The same applies to Richard Wossidlo's fieldwork style, which still needs to be researched in depth and in the context of other folklorists of his time.

Krohn knew the pleasures and pains of fieldwork, but he played the academic role, which is to say he researched data collected, taught and promoted the brand-new discipline of folklore. At this time he was Extraordinarius for Finnish and comparative folkloristics at the University of Helsinki. His trip was to help to establish the first international network of folklorists, which in particular intended to gain access to the research material from different countries. A century later the internet has made this idea more topical than ever before.

What was awaiting Krohn in Mecklenburg? In October 1905 the Verband der Vereine für Volkskunde had held its first congress in Hamburg, where Wossidlo had presented a paper on his practical experience with the recording of traditional folklore (see Wossidlo 1906). At this time the distance of the university scholars from a fieldworker 'going native' like Wossidlo was still striking. However, the scientific community regarded him as a professional, scholarly collector and thus distinguished his work from the mainstream of amateur collectors. In October 1906 Wossidlo had been awarded an honorary doctoral degree by the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Rostock. Wolfgang Golther, the famous researcher of Germanic myths and co-founder of Wagnerian philology, had been one of the initiators of this honour. Kohn visited Golther in Rostock on 25 June 1907. The following day he took the train to Waren, and then continued his way to Berlin. What was Krohn's impression when Wossidlo showed him his field documents about folklore and folklife? We may presume that the private scholar, proudly but at the same time humbly, tried to demonstrate the rich variety and diversity of his collection. Wossidlo was likely opening some boxes, which contained a high number of variants, or some big bundles of letters, written by some of his more industrious helpers. It may be reasonably assumed that he also explained to Krohn his highly developed filing system.

Richard Wossidlo's fieldwork style

One might say that within the German discipline of Volkskunde (German ethnology including folklore studies) Wossidlo practised a kind of new fieldwork style. According to the older ethnographic concepts, professional scientists did not carry out any fieldwork on their own. Empirical data were mostly collected by amateur helpers, whereas professional scientists restricted themselves to analysis and interpretation of such data. Wossidlo overcame this unfavourable division of labour between professionals and amateurs. On the one hand he collected with the help of correspondents, who did fieldwork according to his instructions. On the other hand, he worked himself as a fieldworker – not just for a few years, but for the greater part of his life. Unlike Kristensen, Wossidlo noted his field recordings on pieces of paper in the format of postcards. Basic

recording data, like the name of the informant as well as time and place of narrating, were nearly always written down, and some social data about the informants can be found in his very short field diaries.

Wossidlo did not record the whole story or observation, but restricted himself to noting special features of motifs, actors and areas of action. Not infrequently he also noted comments made by his informants about their information. He also focused on linguistic aspects by noting dialectal words and phrases. Such viewing angles helped him to classify his fieldnotes and to construct a fine hierarchical order. Labelled bundles sum up recordings with similar content elements and are stored in little boxes made from cedar wood. In contrast, Wossidlo's fieldwork helpers wrote down their ethnographic data in more detail in the form of letters. He made excerpts from this correspondence on little pieces of paper, which were also stored in his cardfile boxes according to his category system. He also excerpted published sources from German monographs, series or newspapers for comparative research. Wossidlo's estate covers a broad range of topics and genres: folk tales like legends, fairy tales, jokes and anecdotes or riddles; folk songs; various customs and rituals; children's folklore; notes about folk belief and folk medicine; recordings about maritime and rural working life, native craftsmen and the handling of their tools; notes about ethnobotany and ethnozoology; phrases about the human body, senses and feelings; documents of figurative language; fieldnames, and so forth.

In order to affirm the new research cooperation Wossidlo became a corresponding member of the Finnish Literature Society. In November 1907, the new association of the Folklore Fellows, which had been founded with the help of Axel Olrik and Johannes Bolte, edited its first news. Krohn wrote that not only big organizations, but also single men were able to make great progress in collecting folklore. He cited Wossidlo, who had built up a network of seven hundred helpers. Krohn also referred to the collection of Jakob Hurt, who had died at the beginning of 1907, leaving behind more than 100,000 manuscript pages.[1]

Probably Krohn considered Wossidlo a somewhat curious person. When he asked him to send a photographic portrait for an article about him, that was to be published shortly afterwards (Pentti 1908), the answer was that he had refused to sit in front of a photographer since he was 22 years old. This makes it difficult to produce an illustrated biography of the Mecklenburgian folklorist.

Wossidlo acquired from his brother in Hamburg, who was a successful coffee producer, four hundred

Richard Wossidlo, writing down his notes on little slips of paper. Photo: Karl Eschenburg, 1934. University of Rostock, Karl Eschenburg Archive.

new boxes made from cedar wood in order to reorganize all his documents.[2] Taken together with other sources we may conclude that he started to intensify his own fieldwork and to perfect his handwritten card file system, with the drawback of reducing his publication work, which for a long period had been considered as exemplary. Therefore it remains difficult to do justice to Wossidlo's output.

During the First World War Wossidlo did fieldwork only occasionally. Instead he concentrated on excerpting literary sources. In 1919, on the occasion of the 500th jubilee of Rostock University, Wossidlo was offered a professorship in Low German and Volkskunde, which he rejected. Instead Hermann Teuchert (1880–1972) was appointed to the newly founded professorship, which was reassigned to the linguistic discipline of Low German; the title 'Volkskunde' disappeared. To this day no ordinary or extraordinary professorship for Volkskunde/European ethnology has been established at the University of Rostock, but we should not blame the enthusiastic folklorist for that deficit. The sixty-year-old Wossidlo simply wished to remain in Waren, where he had lived since 1910 in a great villa as a bachelor

1 Kaarle Krohn, *Erste Mitteilung des Folkloristischen Forscherbundes "FF"*, 23.11.1907, p. 1.

2 Letter from Wossidlo to Krohn, 24.11.1907 (Literary Archives, Finnish Literature Society, 130:32:3).

Wossidlo's ethnographic and folkloristic notes in the Volkskunde Institute, the author reading a fieldnote (2013). University of Rostock.

together with his ethnographic collections. Krohn, who himself in 1919 received an honorary doctorate from Rostock's alma mater, expressed his regrets, because he considered him as capable and worthy of this task,[3] whereas Wossidlo was not at all sure about this.

In the following period Wossidlo laid the groundwork for the comprehensive Mecklenburgian Dictionary (Wossidlo and Teuchert 1942–92). For this purpose he examined his own and his helpers' fieldnotes and literary excerpts closely in order to create nearly half a million notes containing Low German words and phrases, which he put in alphabetical order. The importance of this transfer from the ethnographic/folkloristic to the linguistic realm cannot be overstated and provides many new starting points for interdisciplinary research projects.

When Wossidlo died on 4 May 1939, his collection contained about twice as much correspondence as Krohn had seen in 1907. His handwritten card file system, that deeply links corpora between each other and inside their own structure, consists nowadays of nearly two million documents. Many famous folklorists, such as Walter Anderson and Archer Taylor, have inspected Wossidlo's workstation in Waren. Many of them were supported by him, for he sent to them research material in order to help answering specific research questions. In vain most of his scholarly friends had advised him to edit the results of his fieldwork in time. After World War I besides a number of articles and popular booklets he could only finish two tomes of his planned eight-volume edition of Mecklenburgian legends and did not find the time to work up his literary notes, as he had done in earlier times. In his legend books he presented fragments in Low German from a morphological perspective. They resemble a single regional motif index, that at this time could not refer to a standardized system. Furthermore, Wossidlo was much involved in his museum project. His collection of material folk culture had, during the Nazi era, been exhibited in the Nazi era in the castle of Schwerin, the capital town of today's Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, where the government is seated. In many of his letters Wossidlo stated that others would reap the benefits of his work.

3 Letter from Krohn to Wossidlo, 14.12.1919 (Wossidlo Archive, KII-0423-8).

Founding the Wossidlo Archive in Rostock as a department of the German Academy of Sciences in East Berlin

The case shows – perhaps a little starkly – how the German academic discipline Volkskunde rests on the shoulders of assistant amateurs. They united themselves in diverse cultural associations, in northern Germany commonly in the shape of Low German *Vereine*. In the Soviet Occupation Zone and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) these organisations were banned, and most of the former teachers dismissed. Seen in this way folkloristic activities must have been undermined for some time. Folklore studies had no chance to be developed inside East German universities. In the GDR Volkskunde was only taught in its capital city Berlin at the Humboldt University. Ethnographic and folkloristic research sharpened their profile within the organisational structure of the German Academy of Sciences in East Berlin. To its Institute for German Volkskunde belonged two departments, in Dresden and Rostock. The latter was opened in 1954 under the title Wossidlo Forschungsstelle (Wossidlo Research Institute) on the initiative of Paul Beckmann (1888–1962), a teacher and close helper of Wossidlo. Beckmann still managed the Wossidlo Foundation, founded in 1929, and had edited Wossidlo's fieldnotes on maritime folklore and seafarers' working lives during the Second World War (Wossidlo 1940, 1943). He succeeded in bringing Wossidlo's archival material, which had survived the war in Schwerin, to Rostock, whereas Adolf Spamer's collections had in contrast been destroyed almost entirely. However, the key role was played by the Finno-Ugrian scholar Wolfgang Steinitz, the head of the Institute for German Volkskunde.

In the first decade the staff were busy setting up Wossidlo's collection and producing typewritten copies. During these times a co-operation between East and West German Volkskunde was still possible. Gottfried Henßen, head of the Central Archive of German Folk Tales in Marburg, edited Wossidlo's fairy tales and jokes and anecdotes in 1957 for the publishing house of the East Berlin Academy.[4] Since 1936, from which date Henßen had headed the Central Archive in Berlin, which had been controlled by the Nazi organization, the Ahnenerbe, he visited Wossidlo several times in Waren, made copies from his or his helpers' recordings and did his own fieldwork. During the denazification period things were quiet as regards Wossidlo, who up to the end of his life had been admired by the local people as a preserver of Mecklenburg's 'own' cultural heritage. Neither Nazi nor antifascist, he was regarded as a bourgeois, who could have been somehow involved in the Nazi regime, though he had died before the outbreak of World War II. Correspondence with his friends shows that he understood from early on what was going on with the Nazis. Nonetheless he made some compromises to continue his research projects.

In the young GDR Wossidlo's image was built up anew. Now he was advertised as an exceptional bourgeois, who had recorded day labourers' culture. Their cultural expressions were regarded as socially critical or 'democratic', in accordance with Wolfgang Steinitz's new paradigm of folklore research, which focused on functional aspects from the traditional bearers' point of view. It was Gisela Schneidewind from the Berlin Institute who created a groundbreaking edition about sacrilege legends that expressed the opposition between master and servant.[5] It is remarkable how Schneidewind successfully unravelled Wossidlo's fragmentary Low German fieldnotes and made them eloquent – and not merely by translating them into High German. This example hopefully shows – even though it has been produced under ideological influence – how Wossidlo's own fieldnotes can be brought to life again.

It is interesting to note that Wossidlo's own recordings of legends were quite differently evaluated. While Will-Erich Peuckert, who to my knowledge never saw the Wossidlo Archive, considered them as quite worthless, Lutz Röhrich regarded them with greater respect. While building his archive of German legends, Wossidlo's legends about death and dead people served him as model for its classification.

Siegfried Neumann, who joined the Wossidlo Research Institute in 1957, mostly edited the more comprehensive stories of Wossidlo's helpers. Hence his books were more entertaining, they sold well and were printed in several editions. He also did his own fieldwork and described some story-tellers (see Schmitt 1997). Folklore research, however, was only one focus among the institute's ethnographic priorities, and the institute also catered for the area of Western Pomerania. Karl Baumgarten, head of the institute from 1959, researched Low German hall houses (farmhouses), which started to fall victim to the collectivization of agriculture. He also helped to construct several open air museums. Ulrich Bentzien, a Germanist and historian from the University of Greifswald, became the head in 1975. He had written his Habilitation thesis (1969) on the historical development of different plough types but was also familiar with folklore genres such as riddles. Heike Müns wrote her doctoral thesis (1983) on customs and

4 *Mecklenburger erzählen. Märchen, Schwänke und Schnurren aus der Sammlung Richard Wossidlos herausgegeben und durch eigene Aufzeichnungen vermehrt von Gottfried Henßen* (1957).

5 *Herr und Knecht. Antifeudale Sagen aus Mecklenburg. Aus der Sammlung Richard Wossidlos herausgegeben von Gisela Schneidewind* (1960).

A recent publication in the FF Communications

New Focus on Retrospective Methods

Resuming methodological discussions: case studies from Northern Europe

Edited by Eldar Heide & Karen Bek-Pedersen

The articles featured in this volume concern folkloristics, philology, comparative linguistics, cultural geography, iconography, Old Norse studies and the history of religion in Scandinavia, but in particular they concern the questions of whether, how and to what extent late-recorded material can be used to shed light on historically much earlier periods. It is a blunt fact that our sources for the study of pre-Christian times in Northern Europe are few, fragmentary and immensely limited. However, it is possible to obtain new and relevant information if we broaden our spectrum of sources to include not only contemporary or near-contemporary material, but also material from subsequent, even much later, periods. Showcasing that and how this may be done is the aim of the present volume. Seeking to reopen discussions that have been silent for some time, these articles, each in their way, target a range of methodological issues that are in need of being updated for the twenty-first century.

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rituals, primarily by analysing Wossidlo's fieldnotes, and also researched folk songs. Wolfgang Rudolph and Reinhard Peesch focused on maritime culture. In 1987 Ulrich Bentzien, who had shortly before been appointed to a professorship by the academy, died from a heart attack. This was felt like a bolt from the blue, and Siegfried Neumann took his place.

The development after the German reunification

The Academy of Sciences of the GDR in Berlin was liquidated in 1990. This meant that the Wossidlo Research Institute lost its mother organization. Though some bridging projects were created the institute was hanging by a thread. Seeing no future, some talented members of the staff left the institute. Should it become a research institute under the direction of the new state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania or should it be established within the alma mater of Rostock? When I started my work at the Wossidlo Archive in 1996, this question was still unanswered. In the first three years I was employed as a project team member of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* in Göttingen, half of my salary being paid by the cultural ministry. I wrote a number of articles for the *Enzyklopädie*. At this time our little staff started to offer (in many cases regional-oriented) European ethnological lectures, which to this day are imported from other degree programmes of the Faculty of Humanities. I focused my lectures on topics and the contents of folklore studies, which were and are mostly imported by Germanic studies.[6] Siegfried Neumann retired in 1999 and soon received an honorary professorship. It was possible to overturn decisions to dissolve the institute at this time. However, the staff was reduced and in this situation I became head of the Institute for Volkskunde (Wossidlo Archive).

In view of the rich research tradition by which unique folklore collections, linguistic (dialectal) corpora and ethnographic inventaries as well as a significant library have been created it is regrettable that the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania so far has not created any academic chair for European ethnology/Volkskunde – or let us call it 'folklore studies'. With the University of Turku and its chair for cultural heritage studies in Pori an Erasmus cooperation agreement has been established since 2004. From 2010 to 2014 the collections of Richard Wossidlo were transferred to the digital archive WossiDiA, which is now freely accessible on the internet.[7] This project, funded by the German Research Foundation, has opened up interdisciplinary teamwork in the sense of eHumanities including an enhanced cooperation with the university library and has given the institute a decisive push. One of our future tasks will be to present selected parts of the Wossidlo archive multi-lingually and

6 See <http://www.volkskunde.uni-rostock.de/en/teachings>.
7 <http://www.wossidia.de>; see Meyer *et al.* (2014).

to intensify the cooperation with folklore archives from other countries. New retrieval techniques will help us to find lost contextual information, so that the older folklorists will probably seem to us more than 'simple' motif hunters. Problems like these have recently been discussed at the Folklore Fellows' Summer School in Seili and in October at the CASS Forum 2015 in Peking, hosted by the Institute of Ethnic Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society.

There are many problems and tasks on a regional and international level which challenge (updated!) folklore research and studies – not only within the narrow bounds of universities, but also when feedback must be given from the scientific community to the public, because tradition is transformed into modern contexts. This will always be – to a greater or lesser extent and more or less visibly – an on-going process. ■

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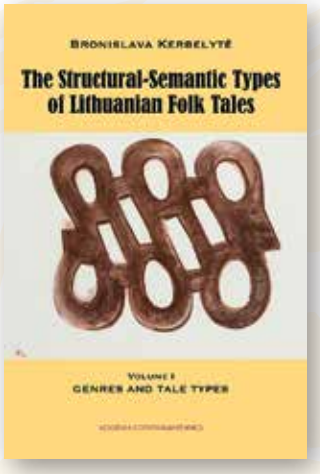

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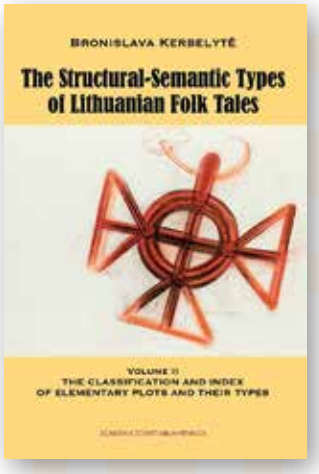

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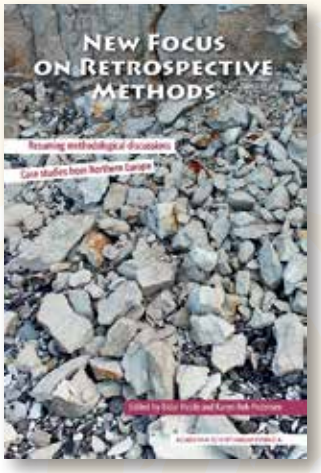

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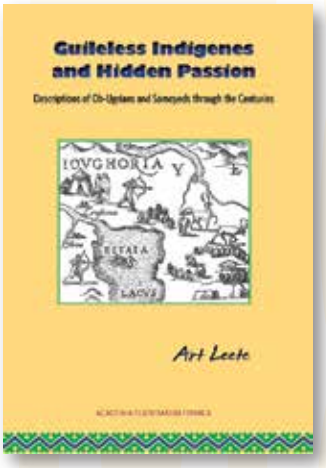

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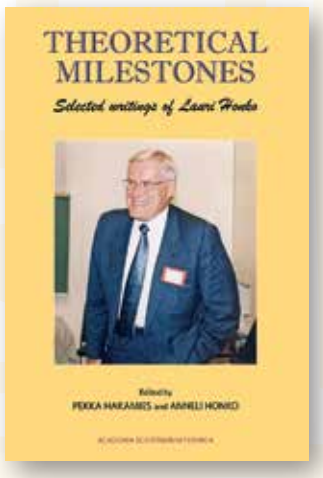

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