

## *'FOLKTALES REVISITED'*

**The Folklore Society's 2008 Conference Friday 4th April to Saturday 5th April  
The Warburg Institute, Woburn Square London WC1H 0AB**

### **Draft Programme**

#### **FRIDAY 4<sup>th</sup> April**

Registration 1:00 – 2:00 tea/coffee available

2:00 Professor Will Ryan will open the AGM Conference

#### **Opening Session 2:00-5:00**

2:00 Helen East, “ ‘Your stories are all so long; mine are only small...’ George Peterson (Shetland storyteller/fiddler)”

2:30 Graham Anderson, “Anthologising Ancient Fairy Tales: Problems and Perspectives”

3:00 Juliette Wood, “Ondine among the Druids”

3:30 David Hunt, “Adoption and Fostering in Caucasus Folktales”

4:00 David Hopkins, "Family structure and Storytelling: The Repertoire of the Briffault Family of Montigny-aux-Amognes”

4:30 Dick Leith “Sociolinguistic Problems in the Textualisation of Orally-narrated English and Scots folktales”

#### **5:00-5:15 Break**

#### **5:30-6:30 Keynote Lecture Professor Jack Zipes**

**"The Prodigious Giuseppe Pitre and his Extraordinary Sicilian Folk Tales"**

6:30 **Wine Reception** at the Warburg Institute

7:30 Dinner - Yialousia Greek Restaurant -

Please let Susan Vass know if you wish to attend. Price to be determined

#### **SATURDAY 5<sup>th</sup> April**

10:00-11:30

The Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April at 10:00

The presidential address will follow this meeting

**Professor Will Ryan, “W.R.S. Ralston and the Russian Folk Tale”**

#### **Morning Session 11:30-1:00**

11:30 John Widdowson, “Folktales in Newfoundland Oral Tradition: Structure, Style and Performance

12:00 Jonathan Roper, “Aarne, Thompson, Uther and Lob: the representation of English material in the tale-type indices of the Folklore Fellows, 1910-2004”

12:30 Maureen James, “From the Dead Moon to Yallery Brown”: revisiting the ‘Legends of the Cars’ as published in Folklore in 1891”

**1-2 Lunch** – Informal lunch served in Warburg – £2.00 per person. Please pay when you register so we can have accurate numbers for catering.

### **Afternoon Session 2:00-4:00**

2:00 James Grayson, "The Rabbit, the Monkey, and the Water Monster: How a Buddhist Tale Spread to East Asia and West Africa"

2:30 Paul Cowdell, "'You saw the ghost, didn't you? There's someone wants to ask you about it': Two occupational ghost narratives"

3:00 Armando Rotondi, "The tradition of Neapolitan 'Presepe' in *I Magi Randagi*: The Nativity Scene narrated by Sergio Citti"

3:30 Marianthi Kaplanoglou and George Katsadoros, "Folktales and the local communities of their transmission in Greece"

### **4:00 Conference closes**

## **Abstracts**

**This year's Conference has attracted a number of interesting topics. Unfortunately not all of the potential delegates were able to travel to London for the actual meeting. We have however decided to present all the abstracts.**

### **Graham Anderson**

#### **"Anthologising Ancient Fairy Tales: Problems and Perspectives"**

This paper discusses the problems its author has encountered in assembling a first collection of translated Fairy Tales from the Graeco-Roman World, and invites advice from participants.

The first problem is one of terminology: the Ancient World did not have a precise term to correspond to our Fairy Tale, though *anilis fabula* comes close. Should we therefore produce definitions of what *we* understand by 'fairy tale' and include examples of everything that comes within our definition? Or should we fall back on the Aarne-Thompson Type-Index, and base our selection on anything that corresponds to its contents? Would folklorists find it more useful to have a larger selection which would present folk tales which are not fairy tales as such, corresponding to the full range represented, for example, in Hansen's *Ariadne's Thread*?

Once we have our criteria for inclusion, how should we arrange ancient fairy tales? Is it more generally useful to classify into thematic categories ('cautionary tales', 'magic misadventure' and the like) rather than follow the standard *AT* sequencing?

Lastly, what level of annotation is desirable for users? Simply a collection like those in the *Penguin Folktale Library*; or the same with light annotation and comparative cross-referencing; or more substantial commentary, which would lengthen the waiting time for the finished product?

### **Bhaskar Roy Barman**

#### **"Folklore of Tripura"**

Anyone interested in Indian culture must study not only its written classics, but also its oral tradition, of which folklore is an important part. Folklore pervades childhood, families and commodities as the symbolic language of the non-literate parts of the people and the culture.

Wherever people live, folklore grows. New jokes, proverbs, rhymes, tales and songs circulate to the oral tradition. Verbal folklore in the sense of oral tradition with specific genres such as, proverbs, lullaby, song etc, nonverbal modes such as dances, games, floor or wall designs, artefacts from toys to outdoor clay horses in villages, and composite performing arts, such as street magic, street theatre etc. – all of these expressive folk forms weave in and out of city, village and small-town life. The aesthetics, ethos and worldview of a person are shaped in childhood and reinforced later by these verbal and nonverbal environments.

The folklore of Tripura has evolved out of worship of tribal gods and goddesses. . Though there is no written record of their antiquity, they bore the stamp of an origin of considerable antiquity and possess arts and rich culture. From the earliest times there has grown up a stock of traditions about animals, gods and rakshasas (demons). The folklore abounds in the loveliest traits of nature and arose out of a close observation of the habits of animals and belief in the supernatural.

### **Paul Cowdell**

#### **“ ‘You saw the ghost, didn’t you? There’s someone wants to ask you about it’: two occupational ghost narratives”**

It has long been recognised that there is a complex relationship between narrative and belief. This is particularly evident when considering ghost narratives, where local legends are recounted, apparently distinct from the narrator’s personal beliefs. In fieldwork, though, I have found a tendency to rationalise personal experiences/beliefs from local

legends. This is particularly the case for nursing ghost narratives, which seem to depend on the age of the haunted building. At one intersection of this legend/belief network stand occupational ghost narratives. This paper will consider two occupational ghost narratives collected recently from the theatre and building trades. Both narratives share similar

features of liminal, specialist, locations, and both emphasise the distinctness of the trade. These two narratives do not feature a purposeful ghost, and the paper will contrast this with an occupational nursing narrative I have also recently collected, as well as

other occupational ghost lore noted in recent years. Instead, these ghosts are narrated chiefly as performed incidents with a high degree of storytelling artistry. This paper will look at the significance of the performances for the trades concerned, as well as examining the narrative skills involved in telling them. It will also consider the contexts in which the stories were told, and the wider narrative repertoire of the tellers.

### **Helen East**

#### **“Your stories are all so long; mine are only small...” George Peterson (Shetland storyteller/fiddler)**

In 1990 I was invited by George to tell as guest at a ceilidh in the Shetlands. His little trowie story took 5 mins, while my Irish fairy tale took 20. His comment above wasn’t only referring to me, but to all the storytellers he had recently met –Duncan Williamson, David Campbell, Paraig McNiel... all ‘traditional’ tellers, trying our best to remain faithful to our sources.

So why were our stories so long? At first I thought it was due to our natural verbosity, relishing the performance and so picking longer stories to tell, whereas George, being quieter, almost shy, favoured brief ones.

Then, a few years later I found myself telling one of George's stories... and now it had become 15-20 minutes too! Was I just unnecessarily extending the telling? I watched other people doing the same –noted tellers, such as Stanley Robertson. “Don't fill in all the gaps” Eileen Colwell once told me. “Let your audience do that.” Were we over –egging the pudding? Giving the listeners information they could well supply from their own imaginations?

For the past 16 years I've been collecting oral narratives for a book about the tellers and tales still being told of the 'fairy peoples' of the Shetlands, Scotland, England, Sweden, Norway (a few) and Iceland. Gradually I have been getting more interested in why they are still being told, and what happens to the stories when they are passed on –retold by others for a wider (non local) audience.

**James Grayson,**

**'The Rabbit, the Monkey, and the Water Monster: How a Buddhist Tale Spread toast Asia and West Africa'**

In this paper I propose to examine a tale from the 'Jataka' (or lives of the Buddha in previous existences) to illustrate how a tale travelled east and west from India and became indigenised in two very different cultures in eastern Asia (Korea) and in western Africa (Angola). Using a methodology I call Dramatic Structural Analysis, I will show the comparative stability of the narrative structure of this tale type throughout its period of diffusion while at the same time showing that there could be considerable variation in the character motifs used to express the narrative. Beginning with the Indian tale, examples will be discussed from China, Korea and Mongolia, and from Tanzania and Angola. The importance of the 'Trickster' will be emphasised throughout.

**David Hopkin,**

**"Family structure and Storytelling: The Repertoire of the Briffault Family of Montigny-aux-Amognes"**

In the 1880s the regionalist poet Achille Millien collected more than a hundred tales from four members of the Briffault family – the siblings Marie (b.18/1/1850-d. 22/11/1883), François (known as France) Briffault (b.5/10/1862-d. c.1930/1931), Pierre (b.9/11/1867-d.14/1/1943) and their cousin, Louis Briffault (b.17/1/1854-d. c.1933), of Montigny-aux-Amognes, a pastoral and forestry community a dozen kilometres east of Nevers. Millien made notes of their performances but also asked the cousins to write down their narratives in school exercise books. Thus we have different versions of the same tale from different members of the same family, and even different versions from the same narrator on different occasions. A handful of texts were published in Millien's lifetime, but many more have subsequently been published from his manuscripts by Paul and Georges Delarue, and yet more remain in the archives départementales de la Nièvre.

This family corpus of tales illustrates some striking characteristics of the tales collected by Millien in the Nivernais – including both types unrecorded in other regions of France and idiosyncratic variants of more commonly known types. This region was also famous for its unusual family structure, the /frèreche/ or /communauté/, in which multiple, laterally related families, occupied the same home, cooked on the same fire. The

Briffault cousins grew up in this type of household. The purpose of this paper is to examine whether ecotypes, as defined by folklorists, can be related to ecotypes as defined by demographic historians to describe a variant household type shaped to fit an environmental niche.

### **David Hunt**

#### **“Adoption and Fostering in Caucasus Folktales”**

Traditionally in the Caucasus there has been a system of adoption and fostering of children. This was associated with personal security gained by the linking of families. Typically, a boy would be fostered between the ages of about six and twelve and then returned to his natural parents, after which the two families would be under mutual obligations of help and blood revenge when required. The family norms were so important and so rigid that even the most evil witches and the most incorrigible villains in the tales observed them. References to this motif were found in more than 100 Caucasus tales and legends, about 6% of those studied.

In many tales the hero needs the help of a witch or cannibal ogress to achieve his quest. Typically the hero creeps up on the ogress and puts his lips to her breast before she has time to swallow him down, thus becoming her foster son against her will. In one tale he digs a tunnel to reach the witch, thus emphasising the birth symbolism. In other tales the hero is abandoned or exposed as a baby and then suckled by an animal such as a deer, bear, wolf, cow or horse. This automatically makes him part of that animal's family, and not only gives him certain personal qualities, but also allows him to call on those animals for help. In other tales the abandoned baby is nourished on icicles, after which he can call on frost or snow to help him; similarly with a baby nourished by river waters. In several tales a woman tricks a prospective rapist into becoming her foster son, with whom sex is taboo.

### **Maureen James,**

#### **“From the Dead Moon to Yallery Brown”: revisiting the ‘Legends of the Carrs’ as published in Folklore in 1891”**

This paper illustrates some of the findings of ongoing doctoral research on the context, content and authenticity of the set of stories alleged to have been collected in the Carrs (fenland) of North Lincolnshire by Mrs. Marie Clothilde Balfour and published in Folklore in 1891. These stories contain a wealth of folkloric references and this research is seeking to find comparisons with other evidence within the county. Empirical background research on the folklore of Lincolnshire, using published sources from the early 1800s to the present day, collected by folklorists, antiquarians, historians and anthropologists, indicates, particularly in regards to the more recent field collections, that the stories contain genuine Lincolnshire ‘ingredients’ that may or may not have been collated to form the stories. Maureen would like to put forward her own ‘theory’ as to the origins of the stories, one that contrasts with previous allegations that the stories were made up by Mrs. Balfour herself.

### **Marianthi Kaplanoglou and George Katsadoros**

#### **“Folktales and the local communities of their transmission in Greece”**

This paper discusses the relation of the folktale as a genre with its local communities of production in Greece. As narrative practices show, oral storytelling still exists as a traditional art in many parts of Greece, both rural and urban while new social conditions influence the way in which folktale traditions are shaped and evolved.

The paper examines, from a historical perspective, the diffusion and transformation of the Greek folktale, namely by comparing: a) The National Catalogue of the Greek tale-types (Catalogue of Georgios A. Megalos) which is based on printed and manuscript collections from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century till the 1970s with b) a corpus of tales collected from field research conducted during the last decade in various regions of Greece, especially in the islands of the Aegean Sea, in certain local communities where the art of traditional storytelling is a living reality. Of all oral genres of folklore, tales (meaning every form of the folktale including religious stories, jokes and anecdotes) are the most varied in Modern Greek society. They are not widely used in schools, television, political or journalist speech, that is in channels where official knowledge is diffused but they circulate mostly among smaller groups of people functioning, in spite of their magic character, as projections from examples of life to the sphere of moral relations. When village women tell internationally known tales, their version is told from their point of view. These adaptations make the tales relevant to contemporary audiences by drawing lessons from the present and relating old plots to current mores and social life. Thus the same story can have multiple contexts and a variety of uses and meanings.

### **Bette U Kiernan**

#### **“The Uses of Fairy Tales in Psychotherapy”**

The contributors to psychoanalysis looked to mythology to understand the psyche. A look into mythic and fairy tales patterns can still yield insights and clinical directions for contemporary psychotherapists. Fairy tales help develop positive cognitive frameworks, have existential messages, and images to transform pain into creativity. This presentation integrates knowledge from psychoanalysis, systems theories, and cognitive psychology to demonstrate the link between fairy tales and spirit. The patterns encoded in myths that transcend suffering will be delineated in order to show the uses within clinical settings.

### **Dick Leith**

#### **“Sociolinguistic Problems in the Textualisation of Orally-narrated English and Scots folktales”**

Orally-narrated folktales become written “texts” in various ways, including dictation, verbatim transcription, and reconstruction from memory, re - working for printed publication. The extent to which the “real” language of oral narration can be preserved in these processes is complicated by 1) the nature of sound/spelling relationships; 2) the complex relationships among a) the conventions of writing systems, b) spoken dialects, and c) vernacular norms of usage; 3) the visual conventions of printed short stories; 4) the economics of publishing; and 5) the existence of more than one printed norm. This paper will examine extracts from a range of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century examples of tales from both England and (Lowland) Scotland, in the conviction that much can be learned by comparing and contrasting the issues in each speech-community.

### **Jonathan Roper**

#### **Aarne, Thompson, Uther and Lob: the representation of English material in the tale-type indices of the Folklore Fellows, 1910-2004**

The Folklore Fellows are an international organisation based in Finland dedicated to disseminating folklore research internationally. One of their key projects has been the publishing of indices which list instances of traditional plots found internationally.

This project was begun a century or so ago by the Finnish scholar Antti Aarne, and was subsequently expanded upon by the American folklorist Stith Thompson, and most recently by the German folk-tale researcher, Hans-Jörg Uther. Altogether, four of these 'tale-type indices' have been published - in 1910 (FFC3), in 1927 (FFC 74), in 1961 (FFC 184), and in 2004 (FFC 284-6). For a variety of reasons, this estimable project have only latterly begun to absorb English folk-tale material, and even now, the representation has, for historical reasons I shall adumbrate in this paper, is instructively and illuminatingly odd.

**Armando Rotondi The tradition of Neapolitan “Presepe” in *I Magi Randagi*:  
The Nativity Scene narrated by Sergio Citti**

The following study wants to analyse the elements of the Neapolitan “presepe” tradition in the film *I Magi Randagi* (1996) by Sergio Citti. Beginning from a first similarity with *La Cantata dei Pastori* by Andrea Perrucci, first published in 1698 and where the author tells the demons' machinations to prevent the birth of Christ, the goal of this research is to show how Sergio Citti revisits in a original way the Nativity Scene, using, as in the Neapolitan tradition, the holy element and the profane one, showing a live “presepe” *ante litteram*. The film is the story of three tightrope walkers, a Frenchman, an Italian, and a German who travel through Italy. They are hired by a village priest to perform as the Three Kings in a traditional live Christmas scene. But they discover that there are no babies in the town and in the scene Jesus is just a porcelain doll. After their performance the three tightrope walkers spend the night in the barn. Before they fall asleep, a beautiful comet appears in the sky. They leave the barn one by one, secretly, in order to follow the star and to find the Messiah who will end all injustice in the world. The contact points with the Neapolitan “presepe” will be based on anthropological and folkloric studies by, as example, Luigi Lombardi Satriani, Giorgio Agamben and Marino Niola.

**John Widdowson,**

**“Folktales in Newfoundland Oral Tradition: Structure, Style and Performance”**

It is often thought that while England has a rich heritage of legends and other traditional narratives, it lacks the range and variety of the Märchen or wonder tale found in abundance in the great nineteenth century collections from cultures in continental Europe and beyond. The survival of such folktales in oral tradition in Newfoundland until at least the late twentieth century provides clear evidence that these narratives were once commonplace in England and were transferred to the New World by the early settlers. Newfoundland was England's first overseas colony, and the often isolated and enclavic outpost communities scattered around the coast and the offshore islands conserved and maintained many of the traditions brought over from “the old country”. These included music, songs, dances, mummers' plays, and stories, performed as everyday entertainment before they inevitably began to decline with the advent of the mass media.

The discovery of a long-established storytelling tradition, including the Märchen, during fieldwork in the province in the 1960s and 1970s allows us to revisit folktales which were once part of the narrative stock in both England and Ireland, from which the majority of settlers originally came. Over 150 recensions were collected, most of them tape-recorded in the field, representing over eighty AT Types. Although the basic plots of the tales are similar to published versions in European collections, their structure is looser, more informal, and less predictable. The tellers display remarkable

creativity in combining, omitting, or adding episodes at will, each telling being unique. The storytelling styles range from expansive and leisurely to rapid-fire delivery and economy of expression. Above all, and in marked contrast to the narratives in earlier collections, the tales offer insights into the genre as a living, malleable, and virtuosic performance, which is difficult, if not impossible, to capture on paper.

### **Juliette Wood**

#### **“Ondine Among the Druids”**

Folk narrative in Wales have too often been overshadowed by the more widely known tales of the *Mabinogion* and, despite a greater interest in collecting and analysis since the publication of John Rhys’s collection just over a century ago, the emphasis has been on their Welshness or even more on their Celticity. Very little has been noted about literary elements within these tales or about the way in which writers have used this material to feed into wider European trends. Here again Rhys may give us a lead in identifying not just the 19<sup>th</sup> century creation of an origin tale for the Physicians of Myddfai, but also the introduction of elements from De La Motte Fouqué’s *Ondine* into this version.

This paper intends to look at the influence of De La Motte Fouqué’s novella in three tale-linked contexts in Welsh narrative: Ab Ithel’s project to create a scientific druidic heritage for Wales, Glasynys’s ‘gothic’ writing, and Marie Trevelyan’s early attempts at feminist fantasy writing.