



# Open Voices

**Folklore for All, Folklore of All  
6 -8 May 2022, Online**

## **OPEN VOICES: Folklore for All, Folklore of All**

**The Folklore Society's Annual Conference, online, 6-8 May 2022**

### **Abstracts and Speakers' Biographical Notes**

#### **The Signing Selkie**

##### **Tania Allan**

Signing deaf communities are linguistic, sensory and cultural minorities, distinct from—yet native to—the dominant 'hearing' society that surrounds them. At the porous boundary between culturally deaf and culturally hearing worlds, there exists a longstanding creative tradition in British Sign Language (BSL) of 'borrowing from' the folklore of the dominant culture, and using its narrative tropes, motifs and imagery to explore deaf experiences. One such example is *The Land and the Sea*, an original performance piece by Scottish deaf creative Tania Allan, which presents the well-known selkie bride folktale through a deaf lens. In this presentation, Tania will guide viewers through the imagery used in the piece to support non-signers' appreciation of BSL's visual artistry, before performing *The Land and the Sea* in its entirety. She will then analyse the deaf themes inherent in selkie folklore, and question the accessibility of 'hearing' folklore to deaf people—and vice versa.

*Tania Allan is a creative practitioner based in Midlothian. Born deaf, her first language is British Sign Language. Having attained a zoology degree from the University of Edinburgh and a graduate diploma in BSL tuition from Heriot-Watt University, Tania has subsequently worked in education in a variety of settings, including teaching BSL to adults and children, supporting hearing parents to communicate visually with their deaf infants, and providing educational support and role-modelling to deaf schoolchildren. She has worked on various projects that aim to bridge the gap between different cultures and communities, including a site-specific storytelling project with Forestry and Land Scotland and the local Nepalese community. She is a founding member of the Alba Cats collective for deaf creatives in Scotland, and is currently working on a Deaf Heritage Collective project with Edinburgh Napier University.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **'Beelzebub, you're muted:' Discovering Folklore through 'Lockdown'**

**Margaret Bennett** (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow)

In March 2020 when the first 'lockdown' was announced, the closure of university and college buildings and the enforcement of online classes was a huge adjustment for students and teachers alike. At the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, however, the closure of rehearsal spaces, concert-halls, studios, theatres, film-sets, as well as workshops meant that none of the performance courses could be delivered. As a 'lockdown' solution, an online course in Folklore was offered to students of opera, musical theatre, classical music, traditional music, acting, ballet, costume-making, set-design and film-making. Though disappointed to being locked out of performance spaces, students began to discover that Folklore lay at the heart of their performance art: opera, classical musician, dance, traditional songs and music, film-making as well as costume-design and set construction. This paper gives voice to students as they discuss the benefits of studying Folklore within the performing arts.

*Margaret Bennett is a folklorist, writer, singer and broadcaster. Former lecturer at the School of Scottish Studies (Edinburgh), is Professor at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Honorary Research Fellow at St Andrews University and Honorary Professor of Antiquities and Folklore at the Royal Scottish Academy (Edinburgh).*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Aligning UK Folklore Research with AHRC Priorities on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

**Matthew Cheeseman** (University of Derby)

Over the last year Dr Paul Cowdell (University of Hertfordshire) and myself have been preparing a funding bid for an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Research Network on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in UK folklore. This paper will describe the process of doing so, and will focus on how we aligned the bid towards the AHRC's priorities and research themes, as described in the 2019 delivery plan. It will discuss how folklore research might engage with EDI issues, and suggest the three themes in which these concerns best fit: understanding cultural value, unlocking cultural assets and creativity and the creative economy. To achieve change, the paper suggests we see folklore as an assemblage collecting researchers, artists and writers, entrepreneurs

and communicators, all working across a number of domains: research; museums and art galleries; art; entrepreneurship; trade publishing; media. It is hoped the paper will elucidate funders' priorities when addressing issues of EDI, and suggest means by which UK folklore can organise, present and question itself in order to develop.

***Matthew Cheeseman** is Associate Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Derby. Trained as a folklorist, he also works in fiction and performance, often in collaboration with others. He runs a small press, Spirit Duplicator, is a Council member of The Folklore Society and a trustee of Bloc Projects. @sduplicator; @eine.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Dealing with Universalist and Universalising Ghosts—Ours and Other People's**

### **Paul Cowdell**

Early folklore theorising was conceived around roughly universalised and universalising views of cultural legacy, often based on an overly broad comparativism identifying phenomena by tenuous apparent similarity. A more recent close ethnographic turn has enabled us to overcome the marginalisation of communities implied in this, but often by throwing the critical comparativist baby out with the universalist bathwater. The significance of this nuance becomes clearer when we look at ghostlore, where interpreting interactions and experiences with the dead frequently generates broader generalisations. Emic interpretations can take the form of a reasonable negotiation of the foundations of ghost belief/s, but we also find an etic resurgence of universalist claims, often from disciplines unaware of folklore's engagement with this tendency. This paper, illustrated from fieldwork, will examine the implications around inclusion and exclusion in folklore research, and explore what should be kept – and what, emphatically, should not – of universalist claims.

***Paul Cowdell's** PhD (Herts), looking at contemporary belief in ghosts, followed an MA (Sheffield) in folklore. Among other subjects he has written articles on ghostlore and folklore's disciplinary history. He is currently serving as a Council member of the Folklore Society and on the editorial board of the Folk Music Journal. He has been described variously as 'an expert in morbid eschatology' and 'a cannibalism celebrity'. One of these is accurate, the other is more pleasing.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Fairies as 'Other:' Gender and Sexuality Across Western European Fairy Belief**

### **Morgan Daimler**

The intersection between human society, cultural fears of the 'other', and fairy belief has been reflected and inverted in descriptions of fairies' enactment of gender roles and sexuality. In older sources fairies often reverse expected norms while acting outside of expectations of human morality. In the Victorian era these expectations shifted from overly sexualized beings into creatures who were infantilized and sanitized, made the domain of children. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and

21<sup>st</sup> century fairies continued reflect deeper human fears and hopes around othered gender and sexuality with stories now showing beings that encompass a range of concepts from the romanticized monster to the asexual androgynous guide. Throughout all of these periods humans who were othered for their sexuality were often seen as connected to or related to the fairies. The fairy across history is intrinsically tied to human social mores and expectations but also embraces those that mainstream culture rejects.

*Morgan Daimler* writes about Irish myth, fairies, and related subjects across various media. They have presented papers on the intersection of fairies and fiction for Ohio State University's 'Fairies and the Fantastic' conference and Hertfordshire University's 'Ill Met By Moonlight' conference. Morgan is also the author of a variety of books including *Fairies: A Guide to the Celtic Fair Folk* and *A New Dictionary of Fairies*.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Folklore for Women, Women for Folklore: Documenting Women-centric Haryanvi Sanjhi Traditions**

### **Muskan Dhandhi and Suman Sigroha**

During September and October, also referred to as the month of Saaman as per the Hindu calendar, Sanjhi is celebrated spectacularly across the villages in Haryana and the neighbouring states in Northern India. As a start to the festival maidens cover up village walls with cow dung, clay, etc. to create their own interpretations of goddess Sanjhi. They light an earthen lamp near the image every evening, sing songs, and perform various festivities. Its depiction as a visual art has been subjected to multiple interpretations (some imagine her as a form of Goddess Durga, some as Goddess Parvati, among others).

The paper aims to investigate Haryanvi women's positionality in Sanjhi in Haryana. By doing so, it postulates that this is Haryanvi women's attempt to dismantle patriarchal structures, 'sing' resistance amidst misogyny and recreate their own identities by performing and honoring Sanjhi. To do so, it will analyse several visual representations of Sanjhi, explore the making of Sanjhi as a visual art and consequently project Haryanvi women as artists.

*Muskan Dhandhi* is currently pursuing her PhD in English Literature at School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, India. Her research interests are: Translation Studies, Folklore, Cultural Studies and Literary Theory. She has presented research papers at several national and international platforms such as The American Folklore Society, The Folklore Society, London, The Royal Anthropological Institute, London, University of Lisbon, etc. She has also worked as a Research Associate in a research project pertaining to Oral History funded under IMPRESS-ICSSR (Indian Council for Social Science and Research).

Email: [dhandhimuskan95@gmail.com](mailto:dhandhimuskan95@gmail.com)

*Suman Sigroha*, Ph.D., is a researcher and teacher at Indian Institute of Technology Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, India. With her training in the fields of literary studies and psychology, she engages with texts through psycho-social concepts like stereotyping, implicit bias, memory and representation. Her recent research focuses on contemporary literature from troubled regions of India, South Asia and America, rich with unsettling questions

about nationalism, belonging, and identity. She has recently contributed to and co-edited *Translational Research and Applied Psychology in India* (SAGE, 2019). Email: [suman.sigroha@gmail.com](mailto:suman.sigroha@gmail.com)

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Yuletide Belief and Disability Activism: Academic Writing with a Supernatural Being.**

**Eva Þórdís Ebenezersdóttir**

In a research context, the disability rights movements slogan “Nothing about us without us” dictates that disability research is for, and preferably, with disabled people, not on them. Within disability studies this call has been answered with advocacy worldview in research design (Cresswell, 2009) and, among other, Inclusive research method (e.g Atkinson and Walmsley, 2010). A method where academically trained people and disabled people, excluded from academic training because of impairment, collaborate on research for disabled people. Papers written in inclusive research are co-authored by all collaborators, academically trained and not. Taking a step further with regards to the slogan, what happens when the disabled non-academic collaborator is also a supernatural being? In this paper I will demonstrate how a disabled folklorist and a disabled Jólásveinn (a supernatural Yuletide being) carried out ‘collaborative’ transformative research about embodied experience of difference and disability in Icelandic society and Yuletide tradition.

*Eva Þórdís Ebenezersdóttir: I am a Ph.D. candidate in folkloristics at the University of Iceland, my advisor is Dr.*



*Ólafur Rastrick. I hold an MA in folkloristics from the University of Iceland. My research field connects folkloristics and disability studies, I have published articles on disability in changeling stories and on disability and humor. Throughout my studies and academic career, I have striven to combine folkloristics and disability studies. Within folklore research I have focused on legends, folk believe and humor. Using the perspectives and understanding of disability within disability studies to shed a new light on folklore material that surrounds disabled people and understanding of*

*disability and impairment.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Queer Decolonial Polishness? Polish Countryside, Folklore, and Queer Desire in Katarzyna Perlak's work**

**Dr Aleksandra Gajowy**

In her video work *Once I Had a Lover* (2016), Katarzyna Perlak performs a queering of patriarchal heteronormativity, restaging traditional folk songs in a lesbian context and with performers of colour. Grappling with colonising historical uses of Polish folklore, Perlak offers new possibilities for queer decolonial Polishness beyond national identity. Her work challenges the centrality of Western queer thought and disrupts Polish scholars' tendency to collapse LGBT narratives and queerness into one category. Perlak's work also serves as a way of reckoning with self-orientalisation in Poles' self-fashioning as the European and sexual other.

Attending to histories of the (mis-)uses of Polish folklore and internal colonisation of Polish countryside, in this paper I propose a reparative queer decolonial approach to Polishness or to *becoming Polish* outside of the stifling Polish national identity. Such a reading dismantles the hegemonic narratives of nationalist 'sexual scholarly thought' in Poland which perpetuate self-orientalisation of Polish sexualities, particularly queer.

*Aleksandra Gajowy* (she/her) is Assistant Professor in Modern and Contemporary Art at University College Dublin. She holds an AHRC-funded PhD in Art History from Newcastle University. Her doctoral research focused on queerness in Polish art since the 1970s till the present. She is currently working on narratives of race, ethnicity, and Jewishness in Polish visual cultures since the nineteenth century. Aleksandra's writing appeared in journals such as *Third Text*, *Oxford Art Journal*, and *Art Margins*. She has forthcoming essays in volumes *Queer Print in Europe* (ed. Glyn Davis and Laura Guy; Bloomsbury, 2022), and *Handbook on Sexuality in Central and Eastern Europe* (ed. Hadley Rankin, Agnieszka Kościańska, Katarina Liskova, Anita Kurimay; Routledge, forthcoming).

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Forgotten But Not Gone: Restoring English Gypsies in Cultural Representation**

### **Jeremy Harte**

Gypsies are England's oldest minority: marginalised but never invisible. That's a challenge for folklife displays in museums, because although non-Gypsies have been representing the Romany for centuries, their work is very different from the way that people in the community portray themselves. The outside view treats Gypsies as anonymous stock figures in a landscape, through paintings and literature: Gypsy memory is close-up, personal, and relies on traditions like storytelling and song which do not translate easily into the museum or written environments. Gypsy archives are oral and disconnected. Non-Gypsy archives are abundant but hostile. So what approaches are open to a scholar working for the community? I'll be looking at the kind of evidence likely to appear in local collections—postcards, village reminiscences, crafts—to see how it can be redeemed for an ethnography of respect, pulled out of anonymity into memory with the support of the community. A Gypsy presence in heritage is a welcome validation for a community more often talked about than talking.

(Note: In British English, 'Gypsy' is the auto-ethnonym for English Romani/ *Adrey Anglaterra*, 'Gypsy' *si nogo nav gaujikones ka 'Romanichal' Romanes*)

*Jeremy Harte* is a researcher into folklore and archaeology, with a particular interest in landscape legends and tales of encounters with the inhabitants of other worlds. He sits on the Council of the Folklore Society and has since then organised the Society's *Legendary Weekends* since 2006. He is curator of *Bourne Hall Museum* in Surrey and organiser of Surrey's annual *Romany Day weekend*. He curates the *Surrey Gypsy Archive*, a collection of literature, newspapers, images and oral records dealing with the county's Romany past, and his book *Travellers through Time* is forthcoming. You can find him on *Epsom Downs* in *Derby week*, wandering through the stalls with a camera and a puzzled expression, or standing by his scruffy 1920s openlot.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Visionary Folklore and Everyday Culture in Appalachia

### Emily Hilliard

Emily Hilliard, Program Officer for Folk and Traditional arts at Mid Atlantic Arts (U.S.) and former West Virginia State Folklorist and Founding Director of the West Virginia Folklife Program, will draw from her collaborative ethnography-based public folklore work documenting longstanding and emergent traditions across diverse cultural communities in Appalachia. She will consider the particular importance—in a region often coded as white and anachronistic—of presenting folklore to the public as an aspect of modern, daily life among many different communities, rather than a nostalgic glance backwards at a homogeneous monoculture. In doing so, she will propose the concept of “visionary folklore” as a future-focused and collaborative approach to cultural work and a tool of advocacy and solidarity to engage in equitable storytelling across positionalities. This concept will be outlined in her forthcoming book, *Making Our Future: Visionary Folklore and Everyday Culture in Appalachia* (UNC Press, Fall 2022).

*Emily Hilliard is the Program Officer of Folk and Traditional Arts at Mid Atlantic Arts and the former West Virginia State Folklorist and Founding Director of the West Virginia Folklife Program. Her writing and media work have been published by NPR, Oxford American, Southern Cultures, and The Bitter Southerner, among others. She serves as the Film Reviews Editor for the Journal of American Folklore and is a 2021-2022 American Folklife Center Archie Green Fellow for a project documenting the occupational culture of rural mail carriers in Central Appalachia. Her book, Making Our Future: Visionary Folklore and Everyday Culture in Appalachia, will be published by UNC Press in Fall 2022. Find more at [emilyehilliard.com](http://emilyehilliard.com).*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Cultural Identity of Bolivian Immigrants in New York City

### Mia Hovi (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Cross-border cultures have become more common due to globalization. In this paper, I present my research where I focus on the cultural identities of the Bolivian immigrants living in New York City. The main expected outcome of this study is identifying how Bolivians in New York City see their cultural identity and how they describe their identity in between two cultures. I research Bolivian identity through Bolivian celebrations in New York City among first- and second- generation immigrants. I research what kind of cultural elements in the informants' lives have remained, transformed or disappeared and why has this happened. My research is ethnographic and my focus is on the visual ethnographic discourse. The purpose of this paper is to reflect and arouse discussion about Bolivian identities in New York City.

*Mia Hovi is a PhD student in the Institute of History and Cultural Heritage at the University of Helsinki Finland. Her research interests focus on the cultural identities of Bolivians living in New York City. Her work focuses on deep understanding about Bolivian culture whether in Bolivia or in the United States. [mia.hovi@helsinki.fi](mailto:mia.hovi@helsinki.fi)*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Death Versus Cultural Appropriation: Should Outsiders Tell Other Cultures' Traditional Tales to Keep Them Alive?**

**Rosalind Kerven** (Independent scholar and author)

Myths, legends and folk tales are part of every people's intangible cultural heritage, providing insights into both historical and current beliefs, ethics, rituals, humour etc. Supposing the culture that originally conceived these stories no longer values, tells or even remembers them. Should they be allowed to fade away? Or may outsiders seek out transcripts and retell them, to keep the stories alive?

Most such transcripts are tainted with cultural marks of the transcribers and translators, and may significantly differ from older oral versions – which themselves developed through being retold over many generations. So, are they even 'authentic' –whatever that means? Does that matter? Should modern retellings update the transcriptions, for example by tweaking offensive racial or sexual stereotypes to fit current sensitivities? Is anything lost in that process—or is it part of a story's organic evolution? Drawing on examples from around the world, this paper will explore problems faced by oral and literary retellers presenting traditional tales to modern global audiences.

*Rosalind Kerven is an independent scholar and prolific author. With an academic background in social anthropology, she has been collecting and retelling myths, legends and folk tales from around the world for over four decades, and most of her 70+ books published in 22 countries are in that genre. Her work includes collections from her home British culture such as English Fairy Tales and Legends, and Arthurian Legends; alongside books of stories from western Europe—Medieval Legends of Love and Lust and Viking Myths and Sagas—and much further afield—Native American Myths, Chinese and Indian, as well as global themed anthologies. They have been highly praised in The TLS, The Independent and the FLS' own journal, Folklore. In researching such titles, she goes back to the oldest surviving written sources, where possible collected in the field. Inevitably, such research throws up challenging questions which she will explore in this paper. Her website is [www.workingwithmythsandfairytale.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.workingwithmythsandfairytale.blogspot.co.uk)*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Cartooning and Folklife: A Case Study**

**Andy Kolovos**

In 2021 the Vermont Folklife Center (VFC), a US non-profit folklife organization, published two non-fiction comics anthologies--*The Most Costly Journey* (<https://vtfolklife.org/elviajemascaro>) and *Turner Family Stories* (<https://vtfolklife.org/turner-family-stories>)--drawn from our programmatic activities and our archive. *The Most Costly Journey* emerged from a partnership with a free clinic that provides health care services to Latin American migrant workers in Vermont's dairy industry. *Turner Family Stories* adapted archival audio recordings created in the 1980s with Daisy Turner, the 100-year-old daughter of the formerly enslaved Alec and Sally Turner who left the southern United States and settled in Vermont in the 1870s, after the conclusion of the United States Civil War. This presentation will explore both these efforts as they relate to ethnographic



and archival practice in folklore studies, as well as to larger ideas of graphic ethnography, ethnographic cartooning, collaborative ethnography and public and applied folklife work.

**Andy Kolovos** holds a PhD in Folklore and Ethnomusicology and a Masters degree in Library Science, both from Indiana University. He is the Associate Director and Archivist of the Vermont Folklife Center and the co-founder and co-convener of the Comics and Culture section of the American Folklore Society. A lifelong comics fan, his current work explores the potential of cartooning as a medium for ethnographic representation. Andy Kolovos Ph.D., MLS (he/him/his), <http://www.vtfolklife.org>

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Folklore by Sign of Hand**

### **Ella Leith**

The collection and analysis of Scottish folklore and oral traditions has historically focused on those passed on 'by word of mouth'. Due to deeply-rooted audist and disabling attitudes held towards deaf people, the traditional arts of Scotland's deaf communities – autochthonous linguistic and cultural minorities in their own right – have been overlooked and devalued. This presentation looks at folklore passed on 'by sign of hand' in British Sign Language (BSL) and highlights its distinctive features. In particular, it focuses on signed storytelling traditions, which are cinematic in style and scope and have a radical contribution to make to the field of folklore – not least in highlighting phonocentric and audist assumptions embedded in the study of oral traditions. It also examines the ethical and political implications of being a hearing researcher of folklore which reflects deaf experiences, and the structural power imbalances that colour its collection, analysis and dissemination.

*Dr Ella Leith is an ethnologist and folklorist. She studied in Edinburgh, completing her PhD in 2015. Her thesis, 'Moving beyond words in Scotland's corp-oral traditions', examined the rich heritage of British Sign Language storytelling and performance traditions in Scotland's deaf communities. She went on to work with the Scottish Qualifications Authority to develop BSL as a curriculum subject in Scottish schools, and with various heritage and oral history projects in her then role as secretary of Deaf History Scotland. She now lives in Malta, where she works as an educational consultant, independent researcher and writer.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Folklore on Wikipedia: Increasing Access, Diversifying Knowledge**

### **Ross MacFarlane and Alice White**

This talk will set out how Wikipedia can help both widen access to and develop awareness of Folkloric practice and beliefs. It will examine how debates around citation and referencing on Wikipedia feed into discussions around intangible cultural heritage. In Alan Dundes's much quoted article 'Who Are The Folk?' (1977), Dundes answers his own question with the conclusion 'Everyone!' Exactly the same answer applies to the question 'who is a Wikipedia editor?' In the

same article, Dundes argued that 'technology ... is becoming a vital factor in the transmission of folklore and it is providing an exciting source of inspiration for the generation of new folklore.' As such, this talk will show how both increasing and diversifying the number of people who edit Wikipedia, will benefit both Wikipedia itself and Folklore in particular. Dundes also posited 'there is folklore of and about the computer,' to conclude we will show the development of Wikipedia editors' very own lore.

**Ross MacFarlane** is a Research Development Specialist at Wellcome Collection. He is a Council Member of the Folklore Society, a frequent book reviewer in *Folklore* and has edited pages relating to folklore and the Folklore Society on Wikipedia.

**Dr Alice White** is a Digital Editor at Wellcome Collection, where she commissions and writes content for the Wellcome Collection website, and works with researchers, librarians, tech folks & anyone else who's interested to help make knowledge more widely available on Wikimedia (including Wikipedia, Wikidata and Wikimedia Commons).

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Re-thinking Politics of Folklore and Historiography: A Perspective from Kachchh, Gujarat**

**Kesha Marvada**

Folklore and historiography in Kachchh, Gujarat have, on account of their colonial past, been governed by the 'univocity of statist discourse.' Which has played a significant role in the way folklore, history and historiography of Kachchh is imagined even today. Using Ranjit Guha's essay 'The Small Voice of History' as an entry point, this paper attempts to trace the structural power of statist discourse in the folkloric and historiographic activities in Kachchh since the colonial encounter. Further, locating 'the small voice' from within the folklore of Kachchh, my paper will focus on the way caste has played a part in constituting the history of Kachchh. It will attempt to revisit folk narratives of subalterns—here performance-texts of lower caste communities of Kachchh—to see the possibilities of re-writing of the history of Kachchh from a caste perspective in a way that can address both colonialist and nationalist frameworks. In conclusion, it will look at the possibilities of re-writing of the history of Kachchh through an examination of Kachchhi folklore. Keywords: Folklore, Historiography, Statist discourse, 'The small voice,' Kachchh

**Kesha Marvada**, (B.A., M.A. in English, qualified GSET December 2018 and NTA-NET-JRF in December 2019) a JRF and PhD research scholar at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara. My primary interest areas of research are Culture Studies and Folk literature. I have also been working simultaneously on Dalit literature/Studies as well as on Kachchhi literature.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **'I Weave Roirum and Phongyai for my In-Laws:' Narratives Beyond Weaving**

**Ng Mawonthing**

Phalee/Phadang, spoken in Phalee village in the Ukhrul district of Manipur, India, is an undocumented language and falls under the Tangkhul Naga language sub-group of the Tibeto-

Burman family. This paper is an attempt to reconstruct the story of the indigenous Phalee backstrap loom and the associated traditions that have been handed down from mothers to daughters. It also proposes to analyse Phalee proverbs and folk songs that refer to weaving to see how the women weavers preserve identity, memories and roles in society.

*Ng Mawonthing is a PhD student in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at The Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, India. Her dissertation examines the cultural expressions through Tangkhul proverbs and the translation of Tangkhul proverbs.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Reclaiming Cultural Identity Through Folklore and Intangible Heritage**

**George Monger**

Intangible Cultural heritage is often in danger from a community's lack of interest in the culture of their ancestors and immediate relatives because of indifference, enforced separation or the distractions from the outside world through modern communication. Additionally, for some communities outside authorities have suppressed the culture to make the community conform to a perceived norm of manners, behaviour and Education.

Traditions may also evolve in a form of 'Continuity and Change' exemplified in the revival of the Inuit throat-singing tradition which many younger performers have re-purposed for modern day performance but which they consider an important part of their cultural identity.

This paper will explore the reclamation of cultural heritage by a younger generation, and sometimes re-purposing that heritage for a contemporary age, as a means of reclaiming their cultural identity.

*George Monger Bsc. MA FMA FIIC ACR; Heritage Consultant/Independent folklorist/author. Ex-member of the Folklore Society Committee. Author of Marriage Customs of the World 2 vols. (2013) Revised and enlarged edition. ABC-Clio, Santa Barbara, California. and currently writing a book for ABC-Clio on Endangered Traditions world-wide, based on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Safeguarding.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Since All Are Never One: Margins, Borders and Folklore: keynote talk**

**Sadhana Naithani** (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

Postcolonial theory and discourse analysis has enabled folklorists to review colonial paradigms of folklore research and has offered theoretical perspectives that focus on the dynamism of folklore traditions. Historical challenges are voiced and integrated not only by folklore scholars, but also by folk performers. The two case studies presented in this paper foreground the complex relationship of Indian folk performers with religion, modernity and history. The first case is that of Muslim Jogis of Alwar, Rajasthan, who perform Hindu epic and religious texts. By their own account, their tradition is seven hundred years old. The second case is that of the performance genre of Dastangoi,

literally Storytelling, which was considered almost extinct until a few years ago. It has been revived by the efforts of a scholar, but is it the same as its tradition.

This is a comparative analysis of the two cases that show how certain folklore traditions harmonize cultural and religious diversity and how individual performers conserve, modernize and even retrieve collective identity that has been challenged by historical circumstances.

*Prof. Dr Sadhana Naithani is Professor of German Studies and Co-ordinator of the Folklore Unit in the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She is a Fellow of the American Folklore Society, and is currently President of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. Website: [www.jnu.ac.in](http://www.jnu.ac.in)*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore: Franz Boas and John Alden Mason in Porto Rico**

**Rafael Ocasio** (Agnes Scott College)

Post-Spanish American War (1898), the United States commenced an intense exploration of Puerto Rican folklore. Anthropologists Franz Boas and John Alden Mason gathered hundreds of folk stories as part of Scientific Survey of Porto Rico" (1914). This presentation highlights my books, *Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore: Franz Boas and John Alden Mason in Porto Rico* (2020), which traces Boas's trip to Puerto Rico (1915), and *Folk Tales from the Hills of Puerto Rico* (Rutgers 2021), a bilingual anthology that gathers representative stories collected during Boas's trip.

The published folktales favor rural cultural practices of the Puerto Rican peasant, known as the jíbaro. The choice to highlight rural oral folklore determined the geographical scope of the project (agrarian culture) while uncovering native characters reflective of a Puerto Rican identity. Finally, I examine the importance of oral folktales for Puerto Rican writers today as strategies for cultural survival.

*Rafael Ocasio is Charles A. Dana Professor of Spanish at Agnes Scott College, Decatur-Atlanta, Georgia. He is the author of two books on dissident writer Reinaldo Arenas: Cuba's Political and Sexual Outlaw (University Press of Florida, 2003) and The Making of a Gay Activist (University Press of Florida, 2007). His other books include Latin American Culture and Literature (Greenwood Press, 2004), and Afro-Cuban Costumbrismo: From Plantations to the Slums (University Press of Florida, 2012).*

*His most recent books, The Bristol, Rhode Island and Matanzas, Cuba Slavery Connection: The Diary of George Howe (Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), examines archival documentation of administrators as participants of an active commercial trade between Cuba and Rhode Island throughout the early part of the nineteenth century. Race and Nation in Puerto Rican Folklore: Franz Boas and John Alden Mason in Porto Rico (Rutgers University Press, 2020), explores the founding father of American anthropology's historic trip to Puerto Rico in 1915, which led to the compilation of a large oral folklore collection. Folk Stories from the Hills of Puerto Rico / Cuentos folklóricos de las montañas de Puerto Rico (Rutgers University Press, 2021) is an edited, critical anthology of some of the oral folk stories documented in the Puerto Rican countryside. Recently published by the University Press of Florida is his book on the late Cuban dissident: The Dissidence of Reinaldo Arenas: Queering Literature, Politics, and the Activist*

Curriculum, co-written with Sandro Barros and Angela Willis. He teaches upper-level courses on Latin American literatures and film, as well as Spanish-language courses.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **The Folklore of Denial: Language and Family Rituals in a Graphic Memoir about Postwar Germany**

**Michaela Pohl** (Vassar College)

The paper is based on ethnographic and activist oral history work done over several decades with the author's adoptive parents, elderly Germans. The art work and graphic memoir deals with Holocaust denial and the family's closeted admiration for the past and open nostalgia for the privileged future they expected after 1945. In this presentation the focus is on the recognition of repetitive verbal strategies of avoidance and rituals of denial, and on some issues of translation. Graphic work structured and inspired by a folklore approach helps not only explain but evoke the conditions in which certain narratives charged with nationalistic, manipulative, or traumatic ideas were created as well as resisted. Visual metaphors allow for a multi-layered approach to family folklore that lays bare emotions and trauma but also resolve.

*Michaela Pohl is an Associate Professor of History at Vassar College. She earned her PhD in History with a Folklore Minor from Indiana University in 1999 and has conducted extensive archival and oral history research in countries of the former Soviet Union, with a focus on Russia and Kazakhstan. The current project is a memoir titled The Accusation: A German Childhood that gives voice to the child of rigid and narcissistic adoptive parents in 1970s Germany.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Writing Folklore, Drawing Folkloristics, Being a Folklorist**

**Sandra Mizumoto Posey**

'What the Heck is Folklore Anyway?' or 'Can You Get a Real Degree in That?' is just a small, 6 page sub-section of the presenter's graphic novel-in-process, a work of autobiographical fiction or creative memoir titled *Post-Apocademia: a Graphic Journey Through Higher Ed*. Nonetheless, when a folklorist writes (and illustrates) a memoir, folklore is bound to weave itself through the manuscript more pervasively than these six pages would suggest, refusing to be bound by the limits of an isolated section even if not the primary focus of the work as a whole. For this 'paper,' I will provide a reading/visual presentation of the 6 page section itself followed by a description of the many ways folklore (and folkloristics) are ever-present in the narrative as phenomena, subject matter, worldview, theme, and structure.

*Sandra Mizumoto Posey is currently Associate Professor of Gender, Women's and Sexualities Studies at Metropolitan State University of Denver (Colorado). She earned her Ph.D. in Folklore from UCLA in 1999. Currently on leave, she is at work on her manuscript Post-Apocademia: A Graphic Journey Through Higher Ed.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Who owns Iona? Competing and Co-ordinating Interpretations**

**Rosemary Power**

The small Hebridean island of Iona has been a centre for pilgrimage for some 1500 years; and may have had a crofting and fishing community for as long. The medieval monastic buildings are managed by Historic Environment Scotland; and most of the rest of the island by the National Trust. There are four residential Christian centres and other communal accommodation. An island-run heritage centre focuses on farming tradition. Each provides its own interpretations, while current archaeological work and a survey of place names provide still others. The resident population has increased, and an active community council provides its own stamp. Some recent publications seek to determine patterns of tourist, pilgrim or local practice and opinion. Who owns the island's threnodies may be an overcrowded area: this paper seeks to describe these and identify areas of conflicting practice, belief and tradition, local belief in community collaboration, and the issues surrounding academic approaches.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Coastal Folklore of Kerala: The Voice of Sustainability from the Marine Margins**

**Rajalekshmi G.R.**

The sea has always remained a mystery with its unpredictable nature and the variety of flora and fauna it encompasses. In a way, the sea becomes the margins of the oceans, as the shore becomes the margins of the land, and the people inhabiting the shore, which is in contact with the most mysterious and ecologically vulnerable ecosystem, are subject to marginalization as well. The folklore of the fisherfolk communities offers tales of sustainability, which is part of their traditional ecological knowledge that sheds light on the memory of the fisherfolk community where the marine ecosystem was in a full-fledged form with bumper catches and peaceful weather. Shoreline destruction, overfishing, bottom trawling, bleaching of the coral reefs, temperature rise, acidification etc. are wiping out the coastal and marine spaces, submerging their unique identities as well. This paper tries to analyze the folklore of a marginalized coastal community of Kerala, that forms a testimony of sustainable environmental management. Keywords: Coastal folklore, Kerala, Sustainable environment management.

*I am **Rajalekshmi G.R.**, PhD Research Scholar at Mar Ivanios College (Autonomous) Research Centre, Nalanchira, Thiruvananthapuram, Affiliated to University of Kerala, India. My research focuses on the lives and identities of the fisherfolk communities of Kerala, a state located in the south-west coast of India, through collecting and analyzing the coastal folklore.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Indian Folklore and Folklife Response(s) in the Times of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

**Ruchi Rana**

With the exponential outbreak of coronavirus globally, lives on every part of the world are brutally affected due to the major collapse of healthcare systems and disintegration of social structures on a

scale that seemed unprecedented. In midst of such uncertainties, there hasn't been anything unaffected by the waves of change in the social world, including the domain of folklore. The paper attempts to deal with folk responses to circumstances developed under the covid-19 pandemic in Indian context; and explore how corona flux influenced folk traditions to adapt new possibilities of expressions by bringing many changes in its wake. It highlights how folklore became a record keeper to myriad pandemic narratives. The threat of the virus curtailed not just human freedom but kept many traditions deprived of spaces, opportunities, and performativity. The paper thus inspects a paradigm shift from folk performativity as a lived experience to a digital entity.

**Ruchi Rana** is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi, India. Her academic work revolves around investigating and studying folklore, culture, society, and people of the hill state of Uttarakhand, India. For which she has conducted fieldwork in remote mountain villages of the Indian Himalayan region of Garhwal and Kumaon since 2016. For her M.Phil dissertation, she has worked on the topic of Music and Dance Traditions in the Ritual of Garhwali Jagar: Religion, Ritual, Folklore, and Performance. While her ongoing Ph.D. research focuses on the topic of Migration and Folklife in Uttarakhand: A Study of Memory, Narratives, and Expression.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Resurgence of Pavakathakali Puppet Theatre through Inclusion**

### **Dr. Atul Sinha and Rahul Koonathara**

At many instances almost extinct folk art forms have been revived, by efforts of individuals, groups and with the help of government departments, who are responsible for sustaining folk art forms. One such instance is the revival of Pavakathakali puppet theatre, this art form was revived with support from Sangeet Natak Akademi (national level academy for performing arts set up by the Government of India) and Department of Culture. Six participants were trained with the help of scholarship provided by the government and now the troupe is a mix of traditional puppeteers and trained puppeteers. This puppet tradition can be classified as a mix of glove and sting puppet. In this paper we will be discussing how allowing puppeteers from other community helped to revive and resurrect this 18<sup>th</sup>-century folk performing art.

**Dr. Atul Sinha** is an animator, painter, puppeteer & a sand artist. He did his Ph.D from Jamia University, his first Masters from New Zealand in Computer Graphic Designing and second Masters from India in Drawing and Painting. Since 2007 he has been working as an Sr. Assistant Prof. at AJK Mass Communication Research Centre, Jamia University where he was instrumental in starting the animation course which is now offered as a 2 years Master's program. His first short animation 'The haunted house' was included in an interactive CD-ROM Inside 5, winner of Tuzant entertainment/ news media award 2004 (NZ). He has also worked for various Govt. and private agencies including: CEC (UGC), Children Film Society of India, PSBT, Max Life New York, Ratana Archives - NZ, Youth Hostel Association, Rupa & Co, Teamwork Arts, Katkatha Puppet Arts Trust, Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust, Burdwan the Puppeteers, to name a few. During 2017 he did a live sand art performance for World Health Organization, Delhi on depression and on the story of Rani Padmavati at Putul Khela- National Puppet Festival 2017, Burdwan, West Bengal. In November 2017 his puppets and puppet stop-motion animation were curated at Leela exhibition at IGNC. His short animation "Vanvas" is on display at the Indian Music Experience Museum, Bengaluru.

*In 2016 he directed a paper puppet theatre performance "The Little Red Hen". Atul has collaborated with Anurupa Roy during 2016 for her directorial 'The Mahabharata' and during 2018 for 'The Maharaja of Mastipur' as an animator. During 2019 he collaborated with Partha Pratim Paul for his directorial 'Me and My Friend' as an animator. He was a collaborator for a special project 'Shadow Play' curated by Anurupa Roy, for which he did an art installation piece and animation projections for the Serendipity Arts Festival Goa 2019.*

***Rahul Koonathara** is currently a PhD research scholar under Dr. Atul Sinha at AJK mass communication research Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia University New Delhi. Rahul was also born into a rich traditional family the younger son of Padma Shri recipient 2021 Ramachandra Pulavar who is the leading artist of shadow puppetry in Kerala. With that traditional background to add on he has also done a diploma in acting course from National School of Drama Bangalore and a Postgraduate degree in Folklore studies from University of Calicut.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **A Carnavalesque Resistance of Modernity: Examining the Folk Art of Alamikkali in Peninsular India**

**V. Sourav**

*Alamikkali, a now defunct folk art form, was practiced in the region of South Canara in Peninsular India until 1970s. This folk art form, also a religious festival, is practiced in remembrance of the Karbala war and martyrdom of Imam Hussain. Rituals and ceremonies associated with it are practiced by the *Turkana* Muslims endemic to the region along with the Hindu *Thiyya* community. Thus, it is an active indicator of religious harmony in the region that is being severely fractured by rising communal forces. This form of folk art is a signifier of a once-dominant feudal-agrarian economy that was forced into complex contestations with the emergence of colonial modernity. Thus, *Alamikkali* also evolved a trait of carnivalesque resistance via ritualistic symbolisms involved in its practices that primarily involve grotesque sing-songs that ridicule and deride material vestiges of modernity along the likes of cinema and fashion. Colonial officials and offices are also subject to their symbolised resistances. Thus, this paper would examine how the folk-art form of *Alamikkali* engaged dialectically with colonial modernity while trying to root itself within all apparatuses of a feudal society that includes a cross-religious partisanship.*

***V. Sourav:** I am an MPhil research scholar at the Dept. of History, University of Calicut. Having completed my Postgraduation in History from University of Hyderabad, I am currently working on the folk-art form of Alamikkali and its ethnohistory as part of my ongoing research. I also completed the government-funded (Kerala State) ASPIRE Project from University of Hyderabad recently. Hailing from the region in which the Alamikkali is endemic, I take great pride in helping shine light on such extant forms of artistic brilliance and resistive modalities that helped evolve communities and fight communalism in this post-secular age.*

\*\*\*\*\*



## **'If your "folk" only includes white men then you're part of the problem': the 'Folk Is a Feminist Issue' Manifesta**

**Lucy Wright**

In September 2021 I launched the 'Folk Is a Feminist Issue' manifesta and the artistic research project that accompanies it ([www.folkisfeminist.com](http://www.folkisfeminist.com)). Its aim—through research, art making and outreach—is to advocate for a more inclusive and far-reaching definition of folk that celebrates and empowers everybody. It is well-known that the recognised canon of the English folk arts has a diversity problem, that the old folk collectors were biased in their efforts and some of their writings contain sentiments unacceptable in a civilised society. However, what is less often discussed is the very real risk of rehearsing the same inequities in the present day if we are unable to move beyond a conception of folk as something inherently *of the past*, concerned with the 'preservation' of old cultural materials, as opposed to a generative, living process, whose reach extends beyond music and even the arts.

The big problem with straight preservation is that it's uncritical—we end up preserving whatever bigotries and exclusions were commonplace at the time. While identifying past incidences of racism, sexism and homophobia (etc.) is an important aspect of coming to terms with where we have come from as a field, in order to properly address these, we need to look beyond our history to address present inequities in folk and the society in which it is practiced. This does not mean 'allowing' marginalised groups to take part in traditions that have always been dominated by white men; instead, it means recognising and celebrating the parallel—equal—traditions, practices and structures belonging to women, LGBTQ+ communities and black and brown folks.

In this paper I will introduce the 'Folk Is a Feminist Issue' project and my ongoing work to seek out the 'lesser known lesser-knowns' in folk performance and heritage—many of which are practised by women and other marginalised folks. I'll also describe speculative efforts to re-imagine the English folk canon to better reflect the diversity of contemporary Britain, for example, through 'Plough Witches,' a commission for Meadow Arts which re-thinks the mummers' play with an all-female and non-binary cast.



*Lucy Wright* is an artist and researcher based in Leeds, West Yorkshire. Following a stint as the lead singer in BBC Folk Award-nominated act, *Pilgrims' Way*, she turned her attention to exploring the 'hidden' folk arts of the UK and beyond, from carnival troupes and kazoo marching bands in the North of England to morris dancers in Japan and the US. Identifying that many of the most overlooked traditions were practiced by women and girls, she has made it her mission to advocate for lesser-known customs and to re-imagine the existing folk canon to better reflect the gender and racial diversity of contemporary society. She believes that folk—as the things we make, do and think for ourselves—matters now more than ever.

Lucy has a PhD from Manchester School of Art, is Visiting Research Fellow in Folklore at University of Hertfordshire and has worked for the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, the Social Art Library and UNESCO, to name just a few! To find out more: [www.artistic-researcher.co.uk](http://www.artistic-researcher.co.uk)

\*\*\*\*\*

## **The Haunting of Hex Hollow: Historical Discourse, Collective Memory, and Media Coverage of the York, Pennsylvania, Witch Trials, 1920-2020**

**Hart Zhang**

This paper explores the intersections between folkloristics and mass media studies. By revisiting the 1928 Hex Murder in York, Pennsylvania (USA), the author examines the media representation of 'powwowing,' a traditional medical practice (Brauche or Braucherei in Pennsylvania Dutch) and finds that the historical media representation inaccurately depicts powwowing as 'witchcraft' and hence promotes the pathologization of this community-based belief and identity in social remembrance. Researching the press reports on the 1928 York witch trials, this paper utilizes historical discourse analysis to examine the media representation developed by newspaper media across time and to study the role of journalism as a key contribution to historical memory. This study finds that media representations of this case used nomination and predication strategies to depict powwowing as 'witchcraft' and omitted justifications of powwowing as a belief and practice among the Pennsylvania Dutch.

*Minglei Zhang* [Hart Bullock] is a doctoral student and instructor of Environmental Communication and Gender Studies in the Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Maine. His research examines the media's involvement in shaping cultural processes and practices across historical and contemporary contexts, focusing on cultural diversity and exclusion, the public sphere, and memory.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Effective Categorization: 'Fear' of 'Medical Personnel' at the Centre of the Covid-19 Vortex**

**Zhou Dan**

Much of the existing research on covid-19 medical personnel focus on nurses and is summarized in negative terms such as 'fear.' It is true that negative emotions exist, but such invalid generalizations can easily lead us to overlook the complexity of human emotions and the changes that occur over

time. Invalid categorization may even lead to biased perceptions of our covid-19 era by future generations. The subjects of this paper are twelve local doctors in Wuhan. Through oral history interviews, I reflected on the existing literature and the research methodology itself, effectively categorized 'fear' and 'medical personnel,' conducted a detailed analysis of the causes and effects. The researcher should start with the most basic questions, leaving aside preconceived biases and reflecting on issues that seem to be taken for granted. This reflection should not be limited to covid-19 studies, but should become an academic norm.

*Zhou Dan* is a Ph. D. candidate in folklore, School of Sociology, Kwansai Gakuin University, Japan.