Folklorists Are Fallible

Tartu, 9th-10th June 2017
PROGRAMME

June 9th

9:30  Keynote:  (Folklore Department: room 212 in 16 Ülikooli Street)

Carl Lindahl – Folklorists are Fallible: Stumbling into Glory with Richard Dorson and J.D. Suggs

11:00  Panel a  (Tampere House, 4 Jaani Street)

Paul Cowdell – ‘Folklore Gone Wrong’ Revisited: When folklorists may be right but still miss the point

Vito Carrassi – Was Yeats a Folklorist? Looking for the Right Approach to (Irish) Folklore

Daniel Rygovsky – "The Silence of Ledebour": Anthropological Optics on an Altai Old Believers’ Village

12:30  LUNCH (at own expense)

14:00  Panel b  (Tampere House, 4 Jaani Street)

Barbara Hillers – Lessons from the Field and from the Classroom: The Irish Schools Collection 1937-38

Anna Szakál – Error, distortion or overenthusiastic storytelling? The legendary of "Vadrózsák” (Wild Roses).

Tetiana Volkovicher – The Meaning of Folk Inscriptions on Embroidered Towels: “Gaffes” of Embroideresses or Misconceptions of Researchers?

COFFEE

16:00  Panel c  (Tampere House, 4 Jaani Street)

Amy Skillman – Changing Horses Midstream without Getting Wet: A Folklorist’s Story

Dace Bula – From Field Errors to Confession Tales: Fieldwork Experience in Latvian Ethnographic Writing

Discussant: Lucy Wright

19:00  Evening performance (Ring Auditorium, Philosophicum, 2 Jakobi Street)

‘Confessions of a Former Monkey Mind Doctor’ by Daniel Povinelli and Brandon Barker

featuring Scott Gremillion and Katryn Schmidt

sponsored by: http://im-possiblethink.com/confessions/
June 10th

10:00  Keynote  (Folklore Department: room 212 in 16 Ülikooli Street)
Karina Lukin – When the Field Strikes Back. Unwinding the Past and Contemporary Silences in Folklore Studies

11:30 Panel d:  (Tampere House, 4 Jaani Street)
Brandon Barker – Is Magic Real ... for Non-Human Animals?
Daniel Povinelli – Animal Folklore – Just Read the Science?
Camilla Asplund – Problems in Researching Disasters

13:00  LUNCH (at own expense)

14:30  Panel e:  (Tampere House, 4 Jaani Street)
Kristel Kivari – A Conflict between Flying Objects and Narrative Traditions
Maria Momzikova – How the Taimyr Pidgin Govorka became the Russian Language: Some Materials from the First Soviet Polar Census 1926-1927
Laima Anglickiene and Giedre Barkauskaite – Folkloristic Material and Student Fakery

COFFEE

16:30  Panel f:  (Tampere House, 4 Jaani Street)
Kati Kallio – Misunderstanding perspectives and characters of “feminine” genres
Lina Leparskiene – Collective Supernatural Experience as Result of Inappropriate Behaviour in the Field
Natalia Dushakova – There is no Devil near a Church. Or, an Interview in the Wrong Place
Discussion

19:00  Conference dinner (Ülikooli Kohvik, 20 Ülikooli Street)
All the conference locations are close to one another.
The keynotes are in the same building as the Folklore Department at 16 Ülikooli St, room 212.
The sessions are in the Tampere House (‘Tampere Maja’) at 4 Jaani St (really the same street at Ülikooli St!)
The Friday evening performance is in the ‘ring auditorium’ of the Philosophicum, at 2 Jakobi St.
And the conference dinner on Saturday night is in the University Café (‘Ülikooli Kohvik’), 20 Ülikooli St.

There are various eating places in the town centre, as marked on this map. Some of our favourites include (but are not limited to!) the following:
Chez André – Fusion, Küütri St.
Dolce Vita – Italian, Gildi St.
Hot Pot – Asian food, Küütri St.
Polpo – Estonian-style, Küütri St.
Werner – European café and restaurant, opposite the department in Ülikooli St.

NB! If you have a conference-related problem, phone +372 56799125, and we’ll try to help out.
How much of our lives as folklorists goes into recording someone else’s stories? Quite often, something more—or other—than we would dare imagine. How much of their lives ever emerges in our professional work? Quite often, something less than we would ever wish to admit. Only very rarely is a recorded narrative any better than the relationship that obtains between the narrator and the collector at the time of recording. Richard M. Dorson was legendarily inept as a fieldworker and viewed as a racist by his African American contemporaries, yet his recordings of the great African American J.D. Suggs reveal a remarkably warm relationship. In working with Suggs Dorson betrayed many of his stated principles, but he succeeded spectacularly in precisely those ways that would have led him to judge himself a failure. This talk will not only highlight folklorists' flaws—a task that is all too easy to accomplish—but also remind us both that flaws are inevitable and that we do possess the tools to help us lessen them.
‘Folklore Gone Wrong’ Revisited: When folklorists may be right but still miss the point

In a tetchy 1961 article Violet Alford condemned the degenerative adaptation of traditional customs and their misrepresentation by the media. Building on her earlier reflections on ‘Why Do We Study Folklore?’ she was also appealing for greater recognition of folklore and for more effective interventions by folklorists. This paper will look at three aspects of her argument: its content, its context, and its implications for folklorists today.

Much of Alford’s argument was accurate enough, yet it still raises problems. Her criticisms reflect a contemporary international consideration of ‘fakelore’. Richard Dorson’s coinage was part of his efforts to establish folklore as a rigorous and professional discipline. This, with his turn to the discipline’s history, met an enthusiastic response from British folklorists facing a period of stagnation and decline for the discipline at home. That decline is associated with the ascendancy of Margaret Murray and Gerald Gardner within the Folklore Society, yet Alford’s arguments rest on some under-examined theoretical assumptions which have much in common with their thinking.

As happened with Dorson’s own work on fakelore, the positive aspects of Alford’s critique need to be tempered by a sharper study of the origins of the material being examined and, more especially, by a consideration of how it has subsequently developed as folkloric practice. This is even more the case now, when folklore is once again in a fragile state in Britain. Without such a reappraisal, this paper will argue, Alford’s well-intentioned and not inaccurate reclamation of folklore could serve to isolate the discipline from potential future recruits who, ironically, often start from the same outmoded thinking as Alford.
W.B. Yeats was one of the greatest and most influential writers of Ireland, but he had also a key role as regarding Irish folklore. What is more, most of his poems, narratives and dramas are significant and original instances of the encounter between folklore and literature. However, the young Yeats was directly concerned with the collecting and publishing of folklore. Initially he worked as a mere editor (Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry, Irish Fairy Tales), drawing his material from a number of authors who had collected the oral Irish tradition along the nineteenth century; yet his editing was substantial and critical, and meant to fashion personal idea and image of his country's folklore, at odds both with that of his sources and of the 'folklorists'.

With his later anthology, The Celtic Twilight, Yeats became a first-hand collector, acting in fact as a folklorist. A singular kind of folklorist, to be sure, addressing his material according to views and goals quite distant from the objective and detached approach of ethnographic research. His was the approach of a writer seeking within folklore something useful and fruitful from a literary and cultural point of view. Hence, are we able to regard Yeats as a folklorist, despite his “imaginative and creative use of folklore, transcending the dead paradigms of the scholars” (Ó Cadhain)? How should we evaluate his methodology vis-a-vis scholarly orthodoxy? Was his approach completely unsuitable? Or, perhaps, was it a more fitting one, given the actual nature and function of folklore, in that he treated his material as a dynamic, living issue, rather than a static, outdated item – and treated its bearers as poets and dreamers more than pure informants? These are the questions I shall try to discuss, in order to enhance a critical review about folklore research, its methods and its aims.
In 1826, a professor of University of Tartu (Dorpat), Karl Friedrich von Ledebour and two of his former students, Dr. Alexander Bunge and Karl Meyer, launched out to the Altay Mountains to explore the local flora and fauna. In addition to the main goals of his expedition, Professor Ledebour also collected some ethnographic data on the Mountain Altai Old Believers and was one of first academics to do so.

Although his testimonies are rather matter-of-fact and lapidary, they allow us to form a general opinion regarding the history, lifestyle, economy, and group identity of that people. The wonder is that Ledebour almost did not mention about some of the specific features that seem to be common or even essential for the Old Believers from a modern perspective. Principally, it concerns food consumption restrictions, such as eating out of the same dish with heretics. Ledebour only once mentioned that a housewife refused to dispense tea to him and Dr. Bunge because she lacked appropriate cups, which he judged to be an example of inhospitality.

In view of ritual purity, it is a locus communis for anthropologists that regulations such as this are there to limit contact with any person who does not belong to the group. Of course, Ledebour did not ask his householders and guides deliberately about such restrictions. However, if anthropologists believe that they are so important for the identity of Old Believers, how could Ledebour, who was lived side by side with the Old Believers for several months, find himself in the situation like that only once? Even nowadays ethnographers collect materials on consumption restrictions from the same villages that Ledebour stayed in, thus the presence of them in 1800’s is implied retrospectively. However, “the mistake of Ledebour” indicates that these are modern scholars who are mistaken in assuming group and identity dynamics of Altai Old-Believers.
Between 1937 and 1938, pupils and teachers in about 5000 schools throughout the Republic of Ireland were involved in ambitious and far-reaching folklore collection spearheaded by the Irish Folklore Commission and carried out under the auspices of the Department of Education. The project was immensely successful and resulted in 1128 bound manuscript volumes, which now form a major part of the National Folklore Collection. This material, known as the ‘Schools Collection’, has recently been digitized and over 450,000 pages of text are now available online (www.duchas.ie).

The Schools Collection complements the fieldwork carried out from 1935 onwards by the Commission’s full-time collectors, and can be used as a corrective in several important areas where there are geographical, sociological or thematic gaps in the Commission’s fieldwork collection, the so-called ‘Main Manuscripts’. The Schools Collection’s geographical sweep was much broader, encompassing schools in each of the 26 counties of the Republic. The use of school children as collectors also resulted in a very different informant pool: the children collected from both male and female informants, resulting in a much greater representation of women than in the Main Manuscripts, where women were critically underrepresented. The Schools Collection also provides a welcome focus on child-centred subject-matter such as riddles, games and toys which are poorly represented in the Main Manuscripts.

This paper offers an analysis of the correlation between the parameters of folklore collecting (e.g. area, language and method of collecting, gender of collector) and the material gathered as a result. A comparison of the National Folklore Collection’s two major collections, the Schools Manuscripts and the Main Manuscripts, enables us to explore the choices made by the Irish Folklore Commission and to study the impact of these choices on the resulting folklore material.
Error, distortion or overenthusiastic storytelling?
The legendary of "Vadrózsák" (Wild Roses)

The focus of my research (and of the dissertation that I have defended this year) is the collector network of one of the most canonical collectors of the 19th century, János Kriza. There is a huge literature on it because of its canonicity, but if we give these writings a closer look, we can barely find any that use primary sources or that include novel data. What we find instead is the distortion of reality, and the reconstructions of stories conforming the personality of a given researcher or a particular time, which were integrated into the literature without critique.

The data (mostly without any references) have been legitimized by the personalities of prestigious folklorists. In my talk, I will give two examples for that. The first one presents the case of József Faragó, the Transylvanian folklorist, who spread the claim, from the 1940’s until his death in 2004, that the collection of Kriza’s letters were all destroyed in World War II and that he was the only one who had seen and copied them, and that therefore he is the only authentic person who could pass them on to the future. However, these letters have never been published and his heritage is not open to researchers. As a consequence, it was considered in the field that the letters perished and that the only way to get to know them was via Faragó’s heritage.

My second example is that of Pál Gergely, the assistant of the archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, who constructed and introduced a myth into the field with the help of Ágnes Kovács, a researcher of fairytales of the Folklore Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, according to which there were hundreds of pages rotting in the cellar of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences that originated from the collector network of János Kriza. The aim of my talk is to show that if someone tries to question the pillars of Kriza’s canonized research, instead of assuming the publicly held beliefs of the field, then it is possible to achieve a much more articulated picture of the collector network as a whole, as well as of its individual elements.
The Meaning of Folk Inscriptions on Embroidered Towels: ‘Gaffes’ of Embroideresses or Misconceptions of Researchers?

This paper is devoted to the semantics of inscriptions on Ukrainian epigraphic towels (from the beginning to the middle of twentieth century). Towels with inscriptions, or ‘epigraphic towels’, have not been the subject of a special investigation. Moreover, many researchers consider the embroidered verbal texts as not worth paying attention to or even as a threat to the real folk art. For example, the embroidered inscription “My dear eagle, where are you flying away?” on a towel with an image of a parrot has been interpreted as a “gaffe” made by a silly, uneducated embroideress.

I do not agree with this statement. The point is rather that these embroidered verbal texts belong to a folk type of outlook. The specific names may be used as synonyms in folk culture, unlike scientific outlook or our everyday speaking. We have some other cases of this phenomenon, such as usage of “bandura” instead of “balalaika” or “willow” instead of “birch”. And so, in my opinion, the usage of “eagle” instead of “parrot” is rather an evidence of folk world vision, than the proof of a “gaffe” having been made by the embroideress.
Changing Horses Midstream without Getting Wet: A Folklorist’s Story

As a public folklorist, who administers a state arts council’s folk arts grant program, one of my primary responsibilities has been to identify traditional artists who might be interested in applying for an Apprenticeship Grant to pass on their skills to qualified apprentices. At the same time, I have a particular interest in the arts and culture of newcomer communities.

So, in an effort to seek out newcomer artists, I began asking for contacts around my region. One name kept coming up over and over again, no matter whom I asked. So, as all good folklorists do, I contacted her and we set up a time to meet over lunch. She served as a liaison to the refugee community for a local social service agency and knew in her heart that the basic services were not enough to assist newcomer women through the integration process. We devised a gathering of several refugee women to talk about their needs and aspirations. I went into that gathering wearing my state folk arts coordinator hat, mistakenly assuming I would find artists in their midst and could direct them to our highly visible apprenticeship grant program.

Sixteen years later, we have created a non-profit organization that has produced two theater productions, an exhibition, a short video, a series of Story Circles, an annual Women’s Health Conference, and a series of Women’s retreats. None of this work has resulted in a single application to the apprenticeship grant program. But the work we have done together has met a much deeper and more meaningful need. This paper is about the mistaken assumptions we make as public folklorists with our own agendas and the powerful work that can result if we are open to being redirected.
Dace Bula (Riga)

From Field Errors to Confession Tales: Fieldwork Experience in Latvian Ethnographic Writing

The paper will deal with the accounts which folklorists produce, reporting on their field experiences. Using John Van Maanen’s concept of ‘tales of the field’, I will analyse the types of fieldwork reflections present in Latvian scholarship. Aside from Van Maanen’s realistic, confession and impressionistic tales, a fourth type can be found in Latvian folklore studies (and, possibly, in folklore studies more broadly), namely, the ‘romantic tale’. Each of these types will be analysed from the perspective of reflexive epistemology, posing a range of related questions. How sincere are scholars about their field encounters? How do confession tales, admitting professional mistakes, fallacies, and failures, influence the authority of scholarly discourse? How have the styles of field reports changed over time?
Evening performance: ‘Confessions of a Former Monkey Mind Doctor’ by Daniel Povinelli and Brandon Barker featuring Scott Gremillion and Katryn Schmidt
sponsored by: http://im-possiblethink.com/confessions/ (Ring Auditorium, Philosophicum, 2 Jakobi Street)

Once upon a time, in a not-too-unlikely present, scientists decide to “test” the ancient Aesopian fable of the Crow and the Pitcher. To their surprise, the scientists “discover” that crows can be trained to drop pebbles into a half-filled test tube to raise the water level high enough to get a drink. What was thought for 2,000 years to be a fabulist’s fancy, overnight becomes a scientific sensation. The Science of Animal Folklore is born. Researchers soon prove that ants actually will refuse to share food with lazy grasshoppers, that tortoises really can outrace hares, and that foxes definitely are able to tell the difference between a real lion, and an Ass that’s dressed like one.

Scientists soon declare that fables, myths, and proverbs cradle the truth of animal minds, and the world of professional folklorists splits at the seams. On one side, the animalists swallow the science hook, line, and sinker. On the other, the humanists smell a rat. There’s only one possible solution: convene a special meeting of the International Folklore Society to get to the bottom of it.

As the plays begins, we learn that the infamous ape psychologist, Doctor Fomomindo, has been called out of retirement to deliver the opening lecture. To everyone’s surprise, he shows up with his trained female chimpanzee, Mojo.

But just as Fomomindo starts, a letter arrives announcing that the Global Anthropological Society has voted to give apes full personhood. Amid the ensuing chaos, Fomomindo presses on with his lecture-turned-autobiographical-confession, fending off dissenters from all sides as he dissects the science of human-animal relations. In the end, he must help Mojo make a decision: should she accept humanity’s invitation to become a person . . . or not?

No simple answers await them.
Karina Lukin (Helsinki)

When the Field Strikes Back: Unwinding the Past and Contemporary Silences in Folklore Studies

Working with people is hard. The moments of interaction tend to go as fast as they came, and one is left with a faint impression of an event. A common strategy for folklorists has been to regulate the flow of events through interviews, lists of topics, motifs, and themes. The results have been archived, categorized, organized, and possibly analyzed. Successive researchers have, as a rule, earnestly wished that they had been in the field themselves, as they do not have even the faintest impression about the events. But recently, the relatives and descendants of those interviewed have asked, or even demanded, that the materials to be given back, as well as for new kinds of interpretations to be made. The archived materials are nowadays used in varying contexts of what has been called ‘heritage’ but also ‘indigenous studies’. Moreover, the interpretations made by folklorists have also become part of the scene.

This presentation will discuss past folkloristic field work in Finland and Russia, and its flashbacks in contemporary discussions about northern indigenous peoples. I will firstly open up moments of miscommunication and misinterpretation in the history of folkloristic fieldwork, and discuss how the collectors have in defining their objects silenced important aspects of the repertoires and lives of their informants. Secondly, I will show how these definitions and silences have continued their life in contemporary indigenous discussions. Thirdly, I will show how, through contemporary interpretative practices, folklorists are able to give voice to these silenced aspects, and wonder if it is possible to unravel the double silences in heritage and indigenous studies.
Brandon Barker       (Indiana)

Is Magic Real ... for Non-Human Animals?

Internet “traditions” though fickle and wont to change can and do reflect pervasive, perennial human interests. A good example is the recent rise of a compelling online fad: the presentation of magical sleights of hand to non-human animals. Therein, baboons’ jaws drop as playing cards vanish, dogs search fervently for a disappeared treat, and an orangutan even falls out reacting to the old cups-and-balls routine. Commenters and scholars responding to these videos probe the essence of the human/non-human animal divide all while problematizing the nature of magical reality. In this talk, I analyze this upstart animal-magic tradition as the manifestation of our very real, sometimes fallible anthropomorphic tendency.
Daniel Povinelli (Lafayette)

Animal Folklore – Just Read the Science?

Recently, some have suggested that human-animal interactions could be considered as a kind of folklore. Others have gone further, claiming that non-human animals have their own (non-human) animal folklore. These assertions often lean upon findings in the experimental study of animal minds that purport to show one or another human-like cognitive capacity. Based upon three decades of studying chimpanzees, this talk provides a skeptical scientist’s “emic” perspective on the allure of turning to science to inform the question of animal folklore.
Camilla Asplund (Visby)

Problems in Researching Disasters

In this paper, I discuss two problematic situations that arose during – and as a result of – my recent fieldwork on disasters in Finland. One concerns errors committed in the preparatory stage of one leg of my field trip, devoted to stories/experiences of an ecological disaster involving massive fish kills due to the leakage of acid sulphate into a lake in northern Ostrobothnia.

According to the information I then had, the type of land use accounting for this problem (the conventional drainage of acid sulphate soils) would soon be possible to correct through a groundbreaking venture engaging both researchers and farmers. My first letters and e-mails to potential interviewees appealed to this information. The day before I embarked on my trip to Ostrobothnia, one of my interviewees, a professional geologist, sent me a dossier containing clippings from an earlier fierce debate in the newspapers between farmers and geologists which was hitherto unknown to me. In essence, he saved me from making further mistakes during the interviews themselves, but my first false assumptions may have affected my possibilities of getting potential interviewees interested in my project.

The other error is one I have not yet committed, but fear that I will. During the other leg of my fieldtrip, I did interviews on experiences of a flood in Southern Ostrobothnia. Unbeknownst to me, this made me walk into a tangle of local politics and gender bias, as one interviewee felt that one of the other interviewees had disregarded her suggestions regarding flood prevention simply because she was a woman. She was clearly outraged by this, and I am not quite sure how to handle it, especially in the presentation of research results. Many aspects have to be taken into account, and I would be grateful for any suggestions you may have.
A Conflict between Flying Objects and Narrative Traditions

Speaking or writing about experiences that touch the borders of intelligible existence is most often as walking on the very same borders in discursive, poetic and moral sense. In order to be able to speak about the inexplicable, one has to put its feet on some kind of referential ground.

In my presentation, I will analyse the folklorists’ positions as reflected in the fieldwork materials kept in Estonian Folklore Archive that include the keyword “ufo”. I will also analyse the folklorists’ writings on this theme. In doing this, I want to bring out some comparative notes, where the paths of interest in phenomena and interest in narrative traditions diverge to contrary positions. As the discussion on the theme involves inevitably contesting cultural ground, it forces the writer (folklorist or ufologist) to formulate a clear social agenda. While it brings uneasy questions to anyone involved with these themes in contemporary culture, I am convinced that knowledge on ufos, and other theories on alternative and paranormal phenomena, brings more questions into the fieldworker’s repertoire, that will expand our understanding of tradition.
Maria Momzikova (St Petersburg)

How the Taimyr Pidgin Govorka became Russian: Some Materials from the First Soviet Polar Census

In 1926-1927, the census takers of the First Soviet Polar Census worked on Taimyr Peninsula. Among others were the painter Alexandr Lekarenko and the student-ethnographer Boris Dolghikh who stayed for several months with families of the Nganasans,¹ a local indigenous group. Beside their working duties of carefully collecting statistical information, they recorded several folklore texts. Since the census takers did not know the Nganasan language, the medium of communication was some variant of Taimyr pidgin named “Govorka”, based on Russian lexis. The recorded draft variants of folklore texts were pidgin variants as well.

After the census, these texts housed in the archive of the local museum in Krasnoyarsk (Krasnoyarskiy Kraevoi Kraevedcheskiy Muzey) and later were rewritten by Boris Dolghikh as fair copies. Besides the correction of typos, the language of these texts was normalized to standard Russian. Some of these rewritten texts were published in 1976 in Moscow in Dolghikh’s book: “Mythological Texts and Legends of the Nganasans” (Mifologicheskie skazki i predaniya nganasan).

The mistake of rewriting folklore texts that might be considered by the ethnographer as an improvement of them, is now perceived as some type of falsification. The first draft versions in Pidgin Govorka were forgotten, but the versions published in Russian were not taken seriously by researchers concerned with the language characteristics of folklore texts. Because these texts were not in Nganasan, nor in Pidgin Govorka, but looked rather like the translation of texts that were originally told in Nganasan. The forgotten draft versions at the same time were the first recordings of Taimyr Pidgin Govorka.

¹The ethnonym “Nganasans” was invented after this Census. Census takers used the term “Samoyeds” at this time.
Folkloristic Material and Student Fakery

We have run a programme of Ethnology and Folkloristics at Vytautas Magnus University for 25 years, and we would like to share the experience of the teachers of folklorists. Our students have two or three practical courses based on fieldwork and various courses in which they can use their collected material for writing of analytic works. Therefore they had to: 1) collect ethnological material and folklore, 2) prepare the collected material for archive, 3) systemize and classify the material and plots of the folklore according to genre classifications and to put the written, audio and video material into an e-archive, 4) to analyze the collected material and write their academic studies.

They do indeed make various mistakes at each stage mentioned above. Sometimes these mistakes are made inadvertently, at other times, the students try to cheat the teachers with the intention of gaining better marks. So, in our presentation we would like to speak more widely about mistakes of students: can we use material which is collected by students? How can be these mistakes “repaired”? 
Misunderstanding perspectives and characters of ‘feminine’ genres

In the course of the history of folklore studies, the categorisation to male and female genres has guided the ways the local singing cultures have been understood and valued. This categorisation takes place in two levels: the singers themselves have had gender-related understanding on performance and interpretation of certain poems and genres, and the scholarly conceptions of male or female character in particular genres has affected the processes of collecting and interpreting songs.

As demonstrated by Satu Gröhndal, male singing culture with its long mythological epics in Viena Karelia has often been highlighted, while Ingria with female, lyrical, personal and ballad-like singing have not received so much attention by those interested in the mythological aspects of poetry. When trying to describe briefly the poetic properties of different local cultures, I tend to follow this line by easily associating mythological, ancient, epic, male, Northern and Karelian on one hand, and everyday, recent, lyric, female, Southern and Ingrian on the other hand.

In my paper, I will discuss the difficulties, which are partly caused by these mythological-geographical-historical-generic stereotypes and partly caused by my personal biases, of interpreting poems by female singers or genre associated with feminine characteristics. These mishearings and misreadings relate to understanding the possible points of view of the singer and the possible mythological aspects of young female characters in Ingrian and Finnish Kalevala-metric poetry. May a young maiden of a ballad-like story have some mythological quality?
Field trips to the so-called ‘Lithuanian islands’, i.e. to villages within Belarus, took place in the period 2010-2012. For most researchers, it was a rare occasion to collect as much information as possible about the vanishing culture of the Lithuanian minority in Belarus. Everyone had their own desires which prompted courageous decisions concerning primal historical sources and artefacts.

One day emotions and negotiations between the team members reached a critical threshold. First of all, several decisions regarding proper behaviour in the host country had to be taken. Secondly, it happened that the hospitality of the local village community was overestimated when community of researchers was invited to the sauna and wrong behaviour was followed by the outsiders. As a result, supernatural signs reached some participants through dreams and mysterious mist. On one hand, these experiences helped to recharge the emotional state of the team, because everyone wanted to share his own story. On the other hand, there is still open discussion about wrong and/or right decisions and interpretations of this situation.
Natalia Dushakova  (Moscow)

There is no Devil near a Church.  
Or, an Interview in the Wrong Place

The paper discusses the issue of choosing a place for an interview. It is based on my field experience among Old Believers in Moldova, Romania and Ukraine.

As a religious community, Old Believers spend a lot of time at the church. It is also a place they meet and communicate. So it was chosen as one of the convenient places for conducting interviews. It is obvious that one can’t get the necessary information on dwelling practices without seeing the dwelling itself. But asking about family rites near the church at first seemed a good idea. However, analyzing and comparing interviews on these topics taken at the church and at informants’ places, I found significant difference: near the church informants were less “superstitious”. In the interviews they often emphasized that believing there is a domovoi, or a witch can harm the newly-weds at the wedding, is at least stupid: it’s just a superstition, and they are religious people for whom it’s a sin to believe in all that.

Even more interesting conclusions come from the interviews on prohibitions in everyday life. At the church a folklorist never gets a motivating part of a prohibition presented as a strict rule one can’t disobey (the situation is a bit more complicated in collective interviews). At home my informants not only gave those motivating parts of prohibitions, but also told about real life practices on how these rules were violated and what they did to escape punishment for that.

In my presentation, I will provide fragments of interviews on the same topics taken at different places and demonstrate how choosing a wrong place for an interview can affect the results.
what's the opposite of fallible?

infallible, perfect, unerring, strong, reliable, certain, correct, definite, sure, divine