



## **Placing Texts: Folk Narrative and Spatial Construction**

June 3–7, 2012, Tartu, Estonia

*Graduate course of the Estonian Graduate School of Culture Studies and Arts (GSCSA)*

### **Abstracts**

#### **Prof Cristina Bacchilega (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu)**

Lecture:

Fairy Tales Transformed? Reading Practices in the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Folk/Fairy-Tale Web

This lecture focuses on how and to what effects contemporary understandings and social uses of the fairy tale have changed since the 1970s, a significant conjuncture in the Euro-American history of the genre and its adaptations. Methodologically, I will discuss the folk/fairy-tale web as a general site for critical inquiry into the genre's multimedial and multivocal intertextuality.

Seminar:

The Politics of Place: Translating Mo'olelo, Fairy Tales, and Ghost Stories in Hawai'i

Reading a chapter or two from *Legendary Hawai'i and the Politics of Place: Tradition, Translation, and Tourism* should make it clear that I do not speak for the 'āina of Hawai'i and that my focus is not on Hawaiian *mo'olelo* but on what happened in translation to this genre and the belief systems it narrativizes. In this seminar, looking at how translation (into Hawaiian as well as into English) of "folk" narratives was historically put to different uses as well as considering the place and role of a non-indigenous scholar in a colonized place are starting points for critical and comparative discussion.

#### **Prof Terry Gunnell (University of Iceland, Reykjavik)**

Lecture:

The Creation of Sacred Place out of Empty Space During the Settlement of Iceland

Iceland was settled in c. 870, and the process of settlement was documented in a work called *Landnámabók* (The Book of Settlements), the earliest version of which seems to have been put together in around early 1100. *Landnámabók* is a very valuable book indeed, because it contains accounts from families about what they have heard (passed on in oral form) about the way their forefathers dealt with a landscape which had hardly any history prior to the arrival of the Nordic settlers. In short, the book shows how a new land was mapped out with stories: borders were created; sacred sites were created, and sites connected with historical happenings; over and above, the book shows people quickly beginning to assign different parts of the landscape to different supernatural beings: the dead and the nature spirits. In this sense, *Landnámabók* has no parallel anywhere in Europe, because it shows us how a landscape became infused with the supernatural. But why did this take place? Does it say something about human needs or the way in which we deal with our environments?

Seminar:

Narrative and space; legend and landscape in Nordic legends

**Prof Ulrich Marzolph (Enzyklopädie des Märchens, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)**

Lecture:

What Nights? Localizing the World's Most Famous Story Collection between Expert Knowledge and Lay Perception

Seminar:

"The Arabian Nights" in its "spatial" constructions

**Prof Timothy Tangherlini (University of California, Los Angeles)**

Lecture:

Experiments in Network Classification for an Unlabeled Folklore Corpus

One of the on-going problems in folkloristics is related to the classification of archival resources. In this paper, we explore some of the computational methods for the classification of textual data. In most folklore classification schema, the underlying philosophy is "One item-one classification." These high precision classifiers work well when research questions align with the classification philosophy. This alignment is less and less the case. Here we discuss methods for classification such as Naïve Bayes classifiers, Support Vector Machines, and Principle Components Analysis. We propose using a multimodal network classifier, that can incorporate the feature space generated by probabilistic approaches such as LDA, for creating a more flexible folklore classifier. We illustrate the success of one such classifier using examples from Danish folklore.

Seminar:

Toward a New "Historic-Geographic Method" in Folklore

Maps have gotten a bad name in the study of folklore over the past century. In part, this is because maps were pressed into service in the search for urformen, and in part, this is because maps were seen as both overly reductionist and overly positivistic. But maps, as a representation of the man-made and physical environment, can play an important role as we try to understand the relationship between people, tradition, and the environment. Environment not only informs the inflection of expressive forms, but is also shaped by those same expressions. In this presentation, we explore different types of maps and how they can be used to explore aspects of the dynamic complex systems that comprise our focus of study in folkloristics. Examples are drawn from the Danish folklore collections of Evald Tang Kristensen, the Shoah Foundation Institute's visual history archive, and from the Internet (including phenomena such as tweets in the aftermath of the Japanese earthquake, and the rise of viral videos such as Kony 2012).