

**BNN Newsletter XI 2017.**

Dear members of Belief Narrative Network,

Here comes the November issue of the Newsletter which includes some very substantive contributions, inquiries and calls. Hope you enjoy the reading!

With the very best wishes,

Kristel Kivari

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On behalf of the BNN Committee:

*Mirjam Mencej, Willem de Blécourt, Terry Gunnell, Anders Gustavsson, Desmond Kharmawphlang, Fumihiko Kobayashi, Mare Kõiva, Kaarina Koski, Dilip Kumar Kalita, Mirjam Mencej, Maria Ines Palleiro, Tok Thompson and Ülo Valk.*

## **1. Announcements from the BNN**

### **Call for submissions for the 2018 student prize for best student paper in the field of belief narratives.**

The Belief Narrative Network of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research invites submissions for a student prize for the best student paper in the field of belief narratives. The award will be given every second year, that is at the interim ISFNR conference and at the ISFNR congress.

We have envisioned the winning paper being published in *Folklore, Electronic Journal of Folklore* (Tartu), along with 300 euros of honorarium for the participation in the ISFNR interim conference or congress. Additionally, the conference participation fee will be waived. For 2018, this would be at the ISFNR interim conference in Ragusa, Sicily, Italy, June 12-16, 2018.

Submissions: All research papers by undergraduate or graduate students, in English, written after January 1 of the previous two years (e.g., January 1, 2016 for the 2018 Prize), unpublished at the time of submission, and written on belief narratives (broadly construed) are eligible. Entries should be a minimum of 5,000 words.

Interested applicants must submit the following:

1. An electronic copy to the evaluation committee. For 2018, please send materials to Mirjam Mencej, at [mirjam.mencej@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:mirjam.mencej@ff.uni-lj.si) or [mirjam.mencej@guest.arnes.si](mailto:mirjam.mencej@guest.arnes.si) for distribution. To ensure blind judgment of papers, please remove the author's name from the paper. Papers should be sent as Microsoft Word document attachments or pdf.
2. A short (100-word) biographical statement about the author, including the author's current graduate or undergraduate status, and about the research.
3. Confirmation of receipt for electronic submissions will be sent. One submission per person please. The committee is under no obligation to award any winner. The online deadline for the submissions is 31 December 2017.

(Contribution by Mirjam Mencej)

## **2. Current publications published by the BNN members**

Robert Miller (Catholic University of America) has published "Mythic Dimensions of the Sources of the Jordan," *Aram* 29 (2017): 207-234.

The Jordan River has long been full of mythological overtones, and these go back to antiquity. The river itself flows from three or four sources in Syria and Lebanon, and these sources were themselves the subject of myth and legend. This essay examines ancient mythic associations with the Jordan's headwaters.

## **3. Other relevant publications**

## **4. Calls for papers**

[Studia Mythologica Slavica](#) welcomes contributions on the field of belief narratives and other related themes.

Please look and share the leaflet attached to the newsletter.

(Contribution by Monika Kropiej)

## **5. News on future events and conferences**

### **Conference "Deities, Spirits and Demons in Vernacular Beliefs and Rituals in Asia" 8-10 November 2017, University of Tartu, Estonia**

The study of religions in Asia has been increasingly expanding its spectrum of inquiry into the kaleidoscopic realm of local traditions that are specific to a village or a lineage of transmission. Tradition-bearers and ritual experts master the heterogeneous corpus of vernacular beliefs and ritual practices about deities, spirits and demons as an essential part of the foundations of their authority in the community. Local classes of supernatural beings have often been marginalized, sometimes even demonized by institutionalised religions, yet they are alive in daily life in Asia and engage with social and political changes in their respective local and national contexts. Also, narratives about such beliefs transform, all the while evolving with the context wherein they emerge.

The conference aims to gather scholars from the fields of folklore, anthropology, religious studies and area studies related to Asia. Contributions address one or several of the following issues:

Vernacular theories, beliefs and genres regarding deities, spirits and demons;

Sacred and haunted places;

Ritual experts and ritual practices dealing with deities, spirits and demons (exorcism, divination, geomancy, propitiation, etc);

Changing and emerging belief narratives in urban contexts in Asia;

Relationship between the living and the dead;

Vernacular terminology and conceptualisation of the supernatural and magic.

The working language is English, time limit for the presentation is 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for questions and discussion. Participants are expected to pay for their own travel and accommodation. Participation fee of the conference will be 60 EUR.

The conference is organised by the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu, in co-operation with the Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies, "L'Orientale" University of Naples, and the University of Tartu Asian Centre.

**The program of the conference can be found from the [conference's webpage](#).**

Organizing committee: Kikila Bhutia, Margaret Lyngdoh, Valentina Punzi, Baburam Saikia, Alevtina Solovyeva, Ülo Valk

## **6. News on past events and conferences**

### **The Eleventh Annual Conference of IACM/*International Association for Comparative Mythology* "Creatures of the Night: Mythologies of the Otherworld and Its Denizens" University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, June 8–11, 2017**

This year's IACM conference was announced as including the following topics: 1. Creatures of the Night: Mythologies of the Otherworld and Its Denizens (demonology, concepts of the afterlife and other-/netherworld, myths related to night, darkness, sleep, and dream, etc.); 2. Myth, State, and Nationalism; 3. A "free topic". Due to the interest of scholars who wanted to participate, the conference was prolonged for one day.

At the very beginning it has to be stressed that the conference was a full success. It was headed by Louise Milne (Scotland, UK), John Shaw (Scotland UK) and Boris Oguibénine (France) who gave opening addresses in the Playfair Library Hall, a beautiful 19<sup>th</sup> century library belonging to the University of Edinburgh. The first session was dedicated to the topic "The Night and the Otherworld" which was opened by Louise Milne. Talks by colleagues from Poland, Estonia, Norway and Germany followed: Marcin Lisiecki, Mare Kõiva and Andres Kuperjanov, Maria Magdolna Tatár and Attila Mátéfy. The afternoon session focused on the second major topic of the conference – "Myth, State and Nationalism" with speakers from the USA, two from Japan, Germany, Norway, Latvia and Serbia: Steve Farmer, Kazuo Matsumura, Kikuko Hirafuji, David Weis, Sarolta Tatár, Agita Misane and Aleksandar Bošković. Friday morning and afternoon sessions, as well as the Saturday morning session, were dedicated to the key topic "The Otherworld and its Denizens". Let me mention the speakers' names together with the countries they came from: Paolo Barbaro (France), Emilia Chalandon (Japan), Lucie Vinsova (Czech Republic), Aldis Pūtelis (Latvia), Pavlina Lukešová, Jan. A. Kozák, Yuri Kleiner (Russia), Vladimir V. Emelianov (Russia), Jule Bidmead (USA), Robert A. Segal (Scotland, UK), Devon Deimler (USA), Michal Schwarz (Czech Republic), Stepan Kuchlei (Czech Republic), Marina Valentsova (Russia), Signe Cohen (USA) and Nataliya Yanchevskaya (USA).

The conference continued with the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions which focused on "Indo-European Mythology and its Parallels". We are thankful to Emily Lyle (Scotland, UK) who, in spite of an injury of her arm which happened two days before, gave an opening lecture for this session. It was followed by a joint lecture of John Colarusso (Canada) and William Linn (USA), Boris Oguibénine (France) and Nick Allen (UK). The afternoon session followed, with lectures of Václav Blažek (the Czech Republic), Jelka Vince Pallua (Croatia), Peter Kahlke Olesen (Denmark), Arjan Sterken (the Netherlands), Ana R. Chelariu (USA) and Giulia Buriola's poster discussion (the Netherlands). On Sunday 11 June, the last day of the conference, three papers and two poster discussions included the topic "Mythology around the World": Hitoshi Yamada (Japan), Keiko Tazawa (Japan), Sunil Parab (India), Julie Gelderblom (USA) and Julie Gelderblom (USA). This session was enriched with the screening of two lovely animated films under the common title "Animating Indigenous Mythologies" filmed by Leslie

Mackenzie, a "Gaelic animator", and was concluded by a general discussion and concluding remarks.

All the abstracts can be reached on the IACM web page [http://www.compmyth.org/static/IACM\\_Edinburgh\\_2017\\_program.pdf](http://www.compmyth.org/static/IACM_Edinburgh_2017_program.pdf).

I am sure that nobody even noticed that the sessions were held from 9AM to 6PM, with a short lunch break, and that, as far as I was able to see, nobody chose to be a tourist during these days instead of attending the lectures. The conference was a good mixture of lectures and discussions. Although scholars from 17 (seventeen!) different countries gathered around a common topic, the number of participants was not so great that it would not be possible to carry on with the discussions in an intimate and productive atmosphere. Also, a very good idea was the Organizer's "market" of books so it was possible to peruse them and inform oneself about the newly published books and journals in the field. One of such books or journals, that will hopefully be exhibited on next IACM conferences will, as is planned, be the edition of papers from this conference.

The discussions were also held over a glass of coffee or tea or, during the two receptions, over a glass of wine. The conference was nicely concluded with an excursion on Sunday afternoon to the 15<sup>th</sup> century amazing and mysterious Rosslyn Chapel and was completed by a glass of local Scottish whisky in a local pub.

Contribution by Jelka Vince Pallua  
*Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar*  
10000 Zagreb  
Croatia

## **7. Useful links to websites**

## **8. Information on belief narratives and scholars of belief narratives in the media**

## **9. Other useful or interesting information related to belief narratives**

## **10. Study programmes**

## **11. Notes and Queries**

### **11.1. An inquiry by Tok Thompson**

Dear Colleagues,

I'm in the process of setting up a symposium on the Apocalypse for the Spring semester of 2018 (dates not yet set, but probably towards the end of the semester).

This will be hosted by the Civic Imaginations working group, in turn is hosted by the Annenberg School of Communications, here at the University of Southern California, in Los Angeles.

I am looking for scholars working on beliefs regarding the end of the world, ideally from various traditions (and both secular and religious). I am in hopes of inviting some keynote speakers to the symposium.

If you are interested, or know someone who is, please do get in touch!

Bests  
Tok

Tok Thompson, PhD  
Associate Professor of Teaching  
Anthropology & Communication

University of Southern California

Mail: KAP 352/ 3620 S. Vermont Ave  
Los Angeles, CA, 90089-2537

## **11. 2. Introductory article by Willem de Blécourt to the coming BNN conference (please see the article with original layout and illustrations from the attached pdf)**

The coming months, I will write a number of very short pieces about human – animal relationships in belief narratives, the theme of the coming BNN conference in Ragusa (Sicily). The deadline for the conference proposals is the first of November 2017 and thus my series will continue after that. Since my focus is somewhat narrowly western-European, I invite you to supplement my contributions with your own from elsewhere.

*Willem de Blécourt*

# A Man and His Dog

In the fifth chapter of book two of the final edition of his *De Praestigiis Daemonum*, Johann Wier (aka Weyer, 1515-1588) referred to the story about Monsieur, the dog of his teacher Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (von Nettesheim, 1486-1535).

Having mentioned the book ascribed to Agrippa, in the interest of truth, I will no longer allow a statement that I have read in several different writers to be wrapped in silence – namely, that the Devil, in the form of a dog, had been a companion to Agrippa right up until his last breath, and that he then vanished somehow or other. It never ceases to amaze me that men of such repute sometimes speak, think and write so foolishly on the basis of an idle rumor that had circulated. The dog was black, of moderate stature, and was named Monsieur in French (which means Master); and if anyone knew him well, I did, since I often walked him on a rope leash when I was studying under Agrippa. He was truly a normal male dog ...<sup>1</sup>

Wier continued to explain that Agrippa had loved his dog very much, had often kissed him and even had him sleep under his bed cover after he had banished his wife. Agrippa hardly ever left his study but he was informed about what happened throughout Europe. People said, news was fed to him by his devilish dog. In truth, Wier asserted, Agrippa conducted a lively correspondence with intellectuals everywhere. Although Wier mentioned that the story about Monsieur was based on an 'idle rumour', *ex inanissimo uulgi rumore*, he did not take such seriously.<sup>2</sup> He also refrained from extrapolating whether there were rumours about a sexual relationship between Agrippa and his dog which may very well have been the case as 'trafficking with demons meant having sex with them'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Translation John Shea, in: George Mora (ed.), *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance. Johann Weyer, De praestigiis daemonum* (Binghamton NY 1991), p. 113. The original Latin passage can be found in col. 165 of the 1583 Basel edition.

<sup>2</sup>The account appeared in Johannes Manlius, *Collectanea locorum communium*; Andreas Hondorff, *Promptuarium Exemplorum*; Wolfgang Bütner, *Epitome Historiarum*; and Zacharius Rivander, *Historien und New Exempelbuch*. See: Rainer Alsheimer, 'Katalog protestantischer Teufelserzählungen des 16. Jahrhundert', in: Wolfgang Brückner (ed.), *Volkserzählung und Reformation* (Berlin 1974), 417-519.

<sup>3</sup>Leo Ruickbie, *Faustus: The Life and Times of a Renaissance Magician* (Stroud 2009), p. 54.



Wier's sixteenth-century German tale is one of the few non-British stories about a so-called 'witch's familiar', an accompanying spirit in the form of an animal. This story was also told about Faustus, who had a devil/dog called Mephistopheles. Either Faust's dog had attached itself to Agrippa at some point or, what is more likely, the story about Agrippa's dog was written into the Faust tradition.<sup>4</sup> In 1548 the parson Johannes Gast (who died in 1552) wrote about his meeting with Faust:

At Basel I had dinner with him. (...) He led a dog and a horse, I believe them to have been demons, that were ready to follow him to the end. The dog sometimes assumed the likeness of a servant and carried the food, so I was told.<sup>5</sup>

Since Agrippa did not have a horse, at least there were no rumours about one, the two stories do not seem to chime very well. When he adapted his play *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* for an English public, Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) featured Mephistophiles in the guise of a Franciscan friar (not even a Dominican). The story about the dog became really famous when Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) worked it into his version of *Faust*, a play written in the late eighteenth century and first published in 1808. Now it had become a black poodle.

<sup>4</sup>Ursula Brunold-Bigler, *Teufelsmacht und Hexenwerk. Lehrmeinungen und Exempel in der "Magiologia" des Bartholomäus Anhorn (1616-1700)* (Chur 2003), p. 132.

<sup>5</sup>Ruckbie, *Faustus*, 200. From: 'Aliud de Fausto exemplum', in: *Sermon Convivalis*, II.



*Gustav Schlick, Faust und Wagner auf dem Spaziergang, ca. 1850.*



*Kupferstich von Th. Blaschke nach der Zeichnung von Joh. Heinr. Ramberg, 1828.*

From the perspective of the English familiar, the story about Agrippa's and Faust's dogs tells us at least two things. First: the relation between a witch (female or male) and the devil originated in the 'clerical underworld' and was disseminated in stories about magicians. That is to say that part of the answer to the riddle of the familiar's origin is to be found in the learned notions about raising demons. The magicians involved were men and one of the main issues of this voluntary pact was who controlled whom. Did the magician control the demon or vice versa?<sup>6</sup> Second: the English familiar needs to be seen in this context, which is wider than just England but more specific than just stories about the devil in animal form.<sup>7</sup> The familiar of the female witch was adapted from the demon of the male magician.

Jim Sharpe called the witch' familiar 'a central element in English witch beliefs' but could not explain why this had 'assumed such importance in England but nowhere else'.<sup>8</sup> The solution

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<sup>6</sup>See among other works chapter 7 of: Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud 1977).

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear From the Ancient Times to the Present* (New Haven/London 2017), p. 262-278.

<sup>8</sup>James Sharpe, 'Familiars', *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft* (Santa Barbara CA 2006), p. 347-349; see also his: 'The Witch's Familiar in Elizabethan England', in: G.W. Bernard & S.J. Gunn (eds), *Authority and Consent in Tudor England* (Aldershot 2002), p. 209-232.



to this last problem can be found in the Bible and especially in its translations.<sup>9</sup> The passage about the 'Witch' of Endor in the King James Bible went as follows:

Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. (1 Samuel 28: 7).<sup>10</sup>

The corresponding passage in Luther's Bible of 1545, for instance, has a *Wahrsagergeist* (prophesying or fortune-telling spirit); the early seventeenth-century Dutch translation contains a similar '*waarzeggende geest*'.<sup>11</sup> Since witches and fortune tellers were mostly different people, witches on the continent were not adorned with a familiar. Some of the more learned fortune tellers did indeed resort to spirits. Magicians such as Faustus, however, were not prone to end up in a witch trial. The question is, of course, whether Samuel had been translated into English when the first familiars appeared or whether the term 'familiar' was used in the translation because by the early seventeenth century it had become popular through the many pamphlets reporting witch trials.<sup>12</sup>

A familiar is characterised by its permanent relationship with the magician. It is not precisely a devil who consoles a witch and takes her to the sabbat. But sabbats were rare in England and for English witchcraft researchers the contrast was thus hardly noticeable. This may nevertheless not be the whole story because a creature was needed that the English could call a familiar. In other words, the familiar needed to be conflated with the *imp* to become the figure we know today. I will consider this in my next post.

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<sup>9</sup>Rainer Walz, 'Bible', *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, p. 117-120.

<sup>10</sup>[https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1 Samuel 28:6-8&version=KJV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Samuel%2028:6-8&version=KJV)

<sup>11</sup>About the 'witch' of Endor: Charles Zika, 'The Witch of Endor Before the Witch Trials', in: Louise Nyholm Kallestrup & Raisda Maria Toivo (eds), *Contesting Orthodoxy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke 2017), p. 167-191.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Ostling and Richard Forest, "'Goblins, Owles and Sprites": discerning early-modern English preternatural beings through collational analysis', *Religion*, 44 (2014), p. 547-72.