

The conference was organised by the working group of the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies on narrative studies and PUT1481 (“The Role of Imaginary Narrative Scenarios in Cultural Dynamics”).

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Piret Voolaid

SYMPOSIUM DEDICATED TO THE 80TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF ACADEMICIAN ARVO KRIKMANN AT THE ESTONIAN LITERARY MUSEUM

In July 2019, the renowned folklorist, academician Arvo Krikmann (1939–2017), would have turned 80. To celebrate this as well as to honour him and acknowledge the donation of Krikmann’s library to the Estonian Literary Museum, a symposium was organized at the Estonian Literary Museum on Saturday, September 7, under the auspices of the annual conference of the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies.¹

The programme of the symposium consisted of opening words by Liisi Laineste, a plenary session, presentations as well as a books display, and photographs depicting Krikmann’s academic life. There were many Krikmann’s colleagues and former students among the participants of the symposium. The papers were based on Krikmann’s main fields of research as a folklorist: jokes, proverbs, phraseology, and riddles, to name just the main subjects. He also had many other interests. On the methodological side, the Finnish method (the historical-geographic method) is worth mentioning, which he adapted and applied to the Estonian material. Later on, when computers became available, his method to supplement the results with cartographic tables and statistical summaries added new dimensions to the study of the material. An overview of Arvo Krikmann’s publications and academic activities is available at https://www.etis.ee/CV/Arvo_Krikmann/est.

In her opening words Liisi Laineste emphasized that Arvo Krikmann’s research was internationally widely known and highly appreciated. His extensive research was mainly dedicated to the short forms of folklore and their sources, folk humour, semantics of phraseology, and the theory of figurative speech.

As the plenary speaker, Władysław Chłopicki from Jagiellonian University, Poland, concentrated on various aspects of the creative mind that link folklore studies and humour studies. He pointed out how humour in general and stand-up comedy in particular share the basic speaker-stimulus-audience contextual triad with language in general, focusing on a specific case of an improvised outdoor performance by a Polish comedy group, which was organised on the birth anniversary of Jan Kochanowski, a Polish Renaissance poet who contributed to the growth of modern Polish with the power of his talent and creative imagination.

Liisa Granbom-Herranen from the University of Turku, Finland, took a glance at paremiology and the unique position Estonia has gained as one of the leading countries in paremiological theories and methodologies largely thanks to academician Arvo Krikmann.



Władysław Chłopicki. Photograph by Alar Madisson 2019.

At the heart of Krikmann's studies lay the methodological and theoretical trends he familiarised himself with in the 1960s, primarily the Finnish method (also called the historical-geographic method) which he adapted and applied to the Estonian material. At about the same time the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School was established, which paved the way for Krikmann's semanticological classification of proverbs. Moreover, Krikmann used the premises of structural linguistics and applied linguistic statistics to the study of short forms of folklore. All this took place before the time that international academic connections were established.

Jonathan Roper from the University of Tartu, Estonia, spoke about dictionaries as a possible source for folklore material. He emphasised Krikmann's ability to see the potentiality dictionaries had as a reservoir of paremiological data, as, for example, in his work *Fraseoloogiline aines eesti vanimais grammatikates ja sõnastikes* (Phraseological material in older Estonian grammar books and dictionaries) (1986).

The last speaker was Sergey Troitskiy from the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia in Saint Petersburg, Russia. The focal point of his presentation was parody. As the starting point, he presented a Russian humour scandal where a parodic amateur video by Ulyanovsk cadets (2018) was disputed by the wider public. He raised the question of if and why parody is dangerous for the official discourse.

Krikmann's varied interests are reflected in the composition of his library. It contains over 1500 items of academic literature, including books, manuscripts, and lecture notes. The library also holds a number of unique books that Professor Krikmann had obtained through his established network of academic connections. Krikmann's library is kept at the Estonian Literary Museum.



Academician Arvo Krikmann's library. Photograph by Alar Madisson 2019.

In summary, Arvo Krikmann was content neither with the existing ways of collecting material nor with the expected methods, but elaborated them. Thanks to his interest in open-access publication, many of his texts and articles are available on the Internet. At his time, the computer-based databases of Estonian short folklore genres were something unheard of. His academic insight and ability to see old phenomena from a novel point of view inspired him to apply computerised methods to support his research. He created digital databases, computed maps, and provided statistics. He used old and new materials, archives, and books as well as the Internet. At the same time, he appreciated and commended the former researchers and their studies, and encouraged us all to find something new.

Liisa Granbom-Herranen

Note

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