

Eda Kalmre, *The Human Sausage Factory: A Study of Post-War Rumour in Tartu*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013. 180 p.

Eda Kalmre's monograph *The Human Sausage Factory: A Study of Post-War Rumour in Tartu* is a welcome addition to the study of legends of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. As Kalmre notes (pp. 18–19), this material was largely ignored during the Soviet period by specialists in the field due to the political situation at the time. This work uncovers an important contemporary legend cycle and its connections to previously attested legends about cannibalism from the 18th and 19th centuries in the European and American traditions (as well as those in the 20th and 21st centuries within these traditions). In addition, it analyses how this cycle was reinterpreted within the Estonian context during the early years of Soviet occupation in the post-War era of the 1940s and 1950s. Kalmre also includes some insightful analysis of the role of the legend in post-socialist Estonia, a much needed contribution to the discipline and to our understanding of this region. The author addresses the complexity of the legend cycle and its relationship to ethnic identity (Estonian versus the 'other'); to political and economic contexts in the Estonian SSR and in independent Estonia; and to the effects of war on the populace.

The book is composed of an introduction and six chapters. The introduction lays out the history of the project, which stemmed from the author's comments on the folkloric characteristics of the sausage factory story for a newspaper article in 2001. This opinion led to a backlash from her fellow citizens. Many interpreted that comment to mean that the story of the factory was 'untrue'. People wrote or called to say that they were eyewitnesses to the post-War phenomenon of the sausage factory (first attested in 1947); it was particularly important to them to set the record straight. The book is primarily dedicated to an exploration of why and how accurate descriptions of the past and belief in this legend are so relevant in post-socialist Estonia. The intro-

duction continues with a description of the documented history of the rumours and legend about the Human Sausage Factory and lays out the theoretical underpinnings of the analysis. The author relies on analytical tools from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, semiotic theory, and folkloristics.

Chapter 1 focuses on the history of legends of cannibalism, primarily in Europe, although she also touches on related legends in the Americas. This chapter examines the sources for legends about cannibalism: historical cases, the folk tradition of tales and legends and literary and popular culture. She argues that the *Hot Chamber in the House of Robbers* (ATU 956) is of particular relevance as a precursor to the sausage factory legend. The historical beliefs surrounding the uses of human body parts and fat as charms or miraculous healing agents are considered as well. Such legends, she contends, have emerged over the centuries at times of major social upheaval, precisely the case in post-World War II Estonia.

Chapter 2 describes the post-War context that produced the sausage factory legend. She contends that the violent disruption of the 'golden age' of Estonian independence from 1920–1940 led to the resurfacing of this legend pattern in the form of rumours and stories about the human sausage factory. Estonia suffered occupation by German (1941–1944) and Soviet forces (1939–1941) during the War. Ultimately, the Soviet Union absorbed the territory in 1944 and held it until 1991. Kalmre argues that both the devastation of war and the oppressive and violent practices of the Soviet Union allowed this legend to flourish. Of particular import was the secrecy surrounding the actions of Soviet-era security forces (the NKVD and its successor, the KGB). Since people operated in a vacuum of information, because newspapers did not print accurate information, rumour and legend came to function as history and a means to assert control over the ambiguous situation. The face of evil, then, shifted from the devil disguised as German barons (the dominant imperial force in the 19th cen-

tury) to the representatives of Soviet power: Estonian immigrants from Russia, Russians, and Jews, all described as dark and shadowy figures that contrasted physically from the Estonian populace. The author explores how these new residents disrupted a society that was ethnically uniform (one might question whether this assertion is accurate or simply based on perception of the nation).

Chapter 3 explores this view of the Estonian 'other' as the source of the legend. The chapter presents an overview of the role each ethnicity played in the legend. Estonians who had been living in Russia for decades returned after the USSR annexed the territory and were viewed as 'Russian' due to their differences in language and cultural practice. In point of fact, many of them were devoted communists and were vetted by the government and chosen to be resettled in their 'homeland' for that reason. The authorities were concerned that Estonia would be a hotbed for dissent and hoped to create a fractured populace. This opinion resulted in not only illegitimate arrests and exile of Estonians to Siberian prison camps, but also in resettlement practices from other areas of the USSR. The Russian ethnicity, represented at first by soldiers and then by security officers and other people in positions of power in the administrative structure were also suspect. Finally, conspiracy theories about the role of Jews in the Soviet hierarchy (as well as folklore related to blood libel) contributed to the argument that this ethnic group was the driving force behind the sausage factory. One could only wish that the author had considered a bit more why the German occupiers did not also assume this role in the folklore of the period as well, given Estonian history and traditional folk depictions of Germans noted above. In addition, the author mentions that the Roma and some Central Asian peoples also were connected to the legend, but does not explore their role in this conception of the *evil outsider* in any detail.

Chapter 4 focuses on the role of food contamination in legendry, the importance of the

idea that the human sausage was produced in a factory and suspicions about cannibalism during the war, in particular in Tartu's close neighbour, Leningrad, which suffered from a Nazi blockade. Tartu, like many post-War cities, suffered from a lack of basic necessities, and stories about the foods eaten and struggles to obtain food are still very much in circulation from people of the post-War generation. The market where the sausage factory legend was centred was particularly suspect, because abundant food (from regional farmers) could still be found there. Thus, people were relying on remnants of a capitalist system in order to obtain food in a 'socialist paradise' that promised a better life. As a result, the legend also functioned as a means to criticise the Soviet-era economic system and to provide a distinction between Estonian values and Soviet ones.

The final two chapters turn to the role of the legend cycle in present-day Estonia and are the most intriguing in the book. Kalmre provides an in-depth analysis of legends from four narrators. She examines how their experiences relate to the content of these variants and their perceptions of the legend and of the past. Key to an understanding of their views on these issues, she argues, is their personal interaction with the socialist system. Those who were successful and did not experience undue conflicts with the authorities perceive the legend as false, while those who underwent persecution view it as true. The last chapter explores the implications for this research as a means to uncover social truth, in particular the "beliefs, prejudices, values, and stereotypes of the post-war period" (p. 131) and the influence of folklore on memory and history in Estonia today. All in all, this volume presents a valuable analysis of the legend cycle of the human sausage factory and will be of use to those with an interest in legend broadly as well as urban folklore of the USSR and post-socialist state of Estonia.

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