Studia Fennica
Folkloristica 26

The Finnish Literature Society (SKS) was founded in 1831 and began publishing books in 1834. Now, the society publishes scholarly literature on ethnology and folkloristics, linguistics, literary studies, and history.

The first volume in the Studia Fennica series was published in 1933.

Studia Fennica consists of six subseries: (since 1992) Ethnologica, Folkloristica, Linguistica, (since 2002) Historica, Litteraria, and (since 2007) Anthropologica.

In addition to publishing, the Finnish Literature Society conducts research, maintains a research library and an archive containing folklore and literary collections, and promotes Finnish literature abroad.

oa.finlit.fi

Editorial Office
SKS
P.O. Box 259
FI-00171 Helsinki
tiedekirjat@finlit.fi

Living Lament

Explorations in Shifting Ideologies

Edited by
Viliina Silvonen and Eila Stepanova

Finnish Literature Society • SKS • Helsinki • 2026

VERTAISARVIOITU
KOLLEGIALT GRANSKAD
PEER-REVIEWED
www.tsv.fi/tunnus

The publication has undergone a peer review.

unesco
Inscribed on
the National Register
Memory of the World

The collection of archived publications
of the Finnish Literature Society is included
in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

STUDIA FENNICA FOLKLORISTICA 26

Cover: Eija Hukka | Series Cover Design: Timo Numminen
Layout: Jaana Tarsa | Series Layout Design: Markus Itkonen
EPUB: Tero Salmén

ISBN 978-951-858-832-3 (Print)
ISBN 978-951-858-833-0 (EPUB)
ISBN 978-951-858-834-7 (PDF)

ISSN 0085-6835 (Studia Fennica. Print)
ISSN 2669-9605 (Studia Fennica. Online)
ISSN 1235-1946 (Studia Fennica Folkloristica. Print)
ISSN 2669-9583 (Studia Fennica Folkloristica. Online)

DOI https://doi.org/10.21435/sff.26

A free open access version of the book with full-colour versions of all the figures is available at https://doi.org/10.21435/sff.26 or by scanning this QR code with your mobile device.

BoD – Books on Demand, Norderstedt, Germany 2026

Table of Contents

Frog and Viliina Silvonen, in collaboration with Eila Stepanova
Navigating Laments and Ideologies 7
An Introduction

Charles L. Briggs
Incommunicability 22
How Lamentation Pushes Us to Rethink Colonial Models of Poetics, Performance, and Communication

Frog
Scandinavian Laments in Modern Times 42
Evidence versus Invisibility

Madis Arukask
The Changing Corporeality in the Twentieth-Century Seto Burial Laments 62

Aušra Žičkienė
Motifs of 'Souls' as Signs of Mythical Thinking and Folklore Practice 82
From Traditional Lithuanian Laments to Popular Discourse

Hannah Kaarina Yoken and Arja Turunen
Feminist Lamenting 99
Women for Peace and the Finnish Itkijänaiset

Viliina Silvonen
Affective Arrangements in Laments 117
Emotions as a Connecting Feature and a Separator in the Contentious Field of Lament in Finland in the 2020s

Larissa Mulder
Lamenting Through Time 141
Unravelling the Metacultural Evolution of Irish Mourning

Authors 157
Abstract 159
Index of Persons and Places 160
General Index 163

Navigating Laments and Ideologies

An Introduction

Frog
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5967-6281
Viliina Silvonen
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7191-4956
in collaboration with
Eila Stepanova
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0704-6362

What is lament? This question is deceptive because the answer may appear self-evident, yet 'lament' and its counterpart, 'lamentation', are used in a variety of ways with overlapping but sometimes quite different meanings. These range from a visible enactment of sadness to a piece of writing about loss, and from a sad or longing tune to a protesting complaint. In folkloristics and related fields, lament is approached as a socially communicated, practice-based genre of verbal art or ritual wailing. However, this is only a single and quite particular form amid the variety of categories that can be called lament, from the Bible's Book of Lamentations and literary works to the myriad uses of the word currently surrounding Donald Trump in his second presidency, where they can be poignant, jocular, or derisive. The different frames of meaning can also be deeply entangled with powerful connotations and associations that may confer value or undermine significance. The potential for the words 'lament' and 'lamenting' to have negative connotations is evident from *The Cambridge English Dictionary* (2025), which describes lamenting with words like 'sadness' and 'complaint' and gives related words such as 'gloominess', 'bitter', and 'wretchedness', while the characterisation of 'lamentable' as linked to a grievous complaint can carry connotations that what is lamented is very bad and deserving of severe criticism (*s.vv.* 'lament', 'lamentable'). Conversely, identification with the folklore genre can, in contemporary Western societies, confer the value of tradition and connections to the past. The respective verbal art becomes receivable as literature, many people considering it beautiful poetry, even if it might be heart-wrenching. The diversity of values, interpretations, and associations reflects the embeddedness of people's views, understandings, and associations in ideologies. Indeed, the respective values, interpretations, and associations are nested in networks of ideologies linked to people's positions and experiences, whether they valorise lament as a powerful instrument for personal expression or stigmatise it as a troubling or embarrassing display of emotions. This nexus of lament and ideology forms the centre of the present volume.

This book is centred around cultural research on lament and what happens to lament, including how it may be mobilised in modernised societies, from the nineteenth century through to the boom of social media. The volume is not developed to advocate for a particular definition of lament or concept of ideology. The authors of the individual chapters approach these from diverse perspectives arising from differences in the frameworks they use in combination with the cases they discuss. The objective is

to explore the potential interconnections between lament traditions and ideologies, which enables advancements in methodologies and the knowledge of domains that emerge at this intersection, while the present introduction is intended to orient the reader to these explorations.

The majority of contributions to this collection approach lament as a type of verbal art that expresses strong emotions, especially of grief. Many connect with genres of what were commonly called 'folk' traditions throughout much of the twentieth century, but the predominant orientation of this book is to address traditions, practices, and uses of lament in modernised societies. Tensions have surrounded whether all of these should be viewed as 'lament', what qualifies as 'the same' tradition, or whether different practices should all be considered lament in the same way. Opening these tensions and their backgrounds provides a relevant entry point into the intersections and entanglements of lament and ideology that are explored through the diverse contributions of this book.

Laments Lost or Alive and Well

Historically, the most central and often iconic situation of lament performance is at the boundary between life and death. It is therefore ironic that the history of lament research has tended to build an image of lament traditions as things belonging to the past, as dead or dying within 'a larger tale about modernity as loss' (Wilce 2009, 3). An underlying thematic concern of this volume is the life and death of laments in different cultures and societal contexts. What James M. Wilce calls the 'exaggerated death of lament' (ibid.) is confronted here as rooted in ideologies of modernity. Stepping back from the idea of lament as non-modern and necessarily excluded from modernised societies, the chapters of this book illustrate that lament is alive and well, with relevance in current Western societies. They also further deconstruct the ways lament has been engaged from positions of modernity.

The waning or even disappearance of certain traditions, including lament, has been an ongoing topic in the field of cultural studies dating back to when interest in traditional cultures first arose in Europe in the late eighteenth century. Describing such disappearances as 'death' or 'extinction' reflects an evaluative encoding through the use of biological metaphors (Hafstein 2001). The whole discourse developed through National-Romantic ideologies of folklore as opposed to modernity, which would corrupt and destroy the traditions (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Anttonen 2005). The imagination of authenticity as found only in illiterate 'peasants and primitives' (ibid.; see also Bendix 1997) was integrated in a system of polarised contrasts (cf. Gal and Irvine 2019) such as literate/illiterate (oral), institutionally educated/uneducated, scientific/superstitious, and so on. These included an opposition of dynamic/static, which denied traditional culture the possibility to change and develop without losing value. The static traditions identified with the past were implicitly contrasted with modernity, in which progress was considered inherently valuable. Within this ideological environment, it was logical that the most 'authentic' traditions were found in the places most remote from modernisation, such as regions discussed in several cases in this book. The texts of such folklore genres could be commodified by modernity, but the progress of peasant culture into modernity's industrial workforce was the slayer of 'authentic' traditions.

Within this type of ideological milieu, the position of lament could be rather precarious. This women's genre of outpouring emotion was characterised by loud displays in which melody could easily seem secondary to the vocal performances of grief. Historically, local traditions were usually documented and described by educated men who tended to marginalise women's practices and for whom grief was an emotion that should not be publicly displayed (Wilce 2009). Lament was sometimes seen as savage and primitive, even shameful, which placed it at odds with the National-Romantic movement's drive to elevate traditional culture as heritage within nation-building projects (Frog, this volume). These factors sometimes limited the documentation of laments or shaped the image of the tradition that was produced.

The discourse on the 'death' of traditions was reimagined at the end of the twentieth century in terms of a transition from one life to the next. The turn to performance involved a transformation in the conception of folklore from idealised static texts to dynamic practices in which variation both in relation to specific situations and over time was fundamental (Abraham 1968; Bauman 1975; Ben-Amos and Goldstein 1975). Reimagining traditions as in ongoing transformation went hand-in-hand with challenging the earlier view that folklore was exclusive to non-modern milieux (Dundes 1977), later followed by deconstructions of the concept of authenticity (e.g. Bendix 1997), and the deconstruction of the concept of folklore itself in relation to modernity (Bauman and Briggs 2003). Lauri Honko ([1991] 2013) proposed that the life in premodern culture was only the 'first life' of folklore, which was followed by a 'second life' dislocated from that environment as it is 'resurrected' from archives. The metaphorical transition from one life to the next is particularly resonant with the use of lament for a person's transition to a life in the otherworld (Honko [1978] 2013), and Anna-Liisa Tenhunen (2006) extended this model to a 'third life' in her study of the reinvention of the Karelian lament tradition in Finland. Thinking of traditions as having different 'lives' provides a fruitful lens for thinking about sameness and difference through their transformations without devaluing younger generations as merely derivative of older ones any more than children are merely derivative of their parents. The central hazard of this type of thinking is the risk of inferring that a new life of a tradition involves the death of the old one. In reality, traditions may have multiple, simultaneous lives. Thus, in parallel with the emergence of the third life of Karelian lament in Finland, its second life continued in the archives (Stepanova 2014; Silvonen 2022), as did its first life in Russian Karelia, where, for example, a news crew accidentally recorded a performance of a lament in 2021 (Stepanova 2023).

Despite the numerous attempts to break free from the dichotomy between lament traditions inside and outside of modernity, modernity's ideologies of non-modern traditions and 'authenticity' persist in both the minds of researchers and in popular thought (see also Bendix 1997, 219). In this volume, Madis Arukask, Larissa Mulder, Viliina Silvonen, and Aušra Žičkienė open comparisons between the non-modernised lament practices collected in archives and their adaptations and transformations in current Western societies. The loss of lament has been an ongoing topic of discussion in research and to some degree in the public sphere, and the question of authenticity is also discussed among present-day lamenters. Some have focused on the distinctions between their own laments and those of a non-modernised tradition, while others have sought to establish a link between these. The fact that the so-called third life of Karelian lament in Finland sparked public debate, including questions of cultural

appropriation (Silvonen and Kallio 2023), demonstrates that these themes are current and important. Although lament traditions are still often imagined as dead and belonging to the past, this is mainly attributable to the dominant ideologies that have rendered invisible their various manifestations in the present.

Navigating Ideologies

The development and use of the categories above are deeply entangled with ideologies, but ideology is no less slippery as a concept than lament. Nevertheless, variations in the concept of ideology remain tightly tethered to 'ideas', whether synonymous with 'beliefs' or imagined in terms of values and concerns. Ideologies are known through discourse, whether they are consciously reflected on, or people are completely naturalised to them as an organic part of their worldview, whereby the culture of everyday life is seen as no less natural than gravity. Ideologies provide a lens of good and bad, right and wrong, and they determine the relative value of, for example, a lament versus an epic or a lullaby, or even whether a lament can be recognised for consideration at all (see Gal and Irvine 2019). Whatever the case, ideologies are always centred as 'ideologies-of' something as opposed to something else, whether this is a cultural era like the Enlightenment or modernity, a phenomenon of nature like death, a phenomenon of culture as broad as colonisation (Briggs, this volume), as specific as a Seto burial lament (Arukask, this volume), or a phenomenon like emotion that is at the intersection of nature and culture.

An important dimension of ideologies is that the understandings and interpretations that they entail are also 'ideologies-of' in the sense that they are embedded in the aims and values of some group and bound up with the respective social position, relationships to other groups (perhaps including in the past or inhabitants of unseen worlds), to the environment, and so on (van Dijk 2012; Rehman 2013; Rehman and Ampuja 2023). Ideologies provide both unconscious and conscious models of thinking that affect people's behaviour in everyday life. They shape people's approaches to laments as well as how they practise, conceptualise, and talk about lamenting. They underlie the differences between how laments were understood by folklore collectors and their informants, and also by other cultural insiders and outsiders. This social dimension of ideologies is prominent in the chapters of the present volume, where the dominant ideologies (Kroskrity 2001, 203) emblematic of a culture, nation, or the Global North are at odds with ideologies of societies or groups that are seen as outside of or subordinate to it. The connection between ideology, people's positionality, and their relative evaluations makes it a flexible tool for examining the various lament traditions and the uses of lamenting in society.

The Roots of Tension around Defining Laments

Discussions around the question *What is a lament?* have caused tension between researchers and lamenters, and also among lamenters themselves (see Fenigsen and Wilce 2012; Silvonen and Kallio 2023). Some of the issues pertain to the question of what practices can be designated as laments, on what terms, and by whom lament

is defined. This issue is entangled with the historical approach to 'folk' traditions as something outside of modernity, creating an imagination of lamenters and lament traditions that excludes them from a modernised society.

The very word 'folk' carries the ideological baggage of having been taken up in especially the nineteenth century to refer to populations – 'peasants and primitives' – that had not yet transitioned into modernity (Bauman and Briggs 2003). This use of 'folk' became seen as artificial (Dundes 1977) and was devalued (although see Bronner 2022). In this volume, individual authors each use their own preferred terminology where they address such traditions. Above, we have used 'non-modernised', which is a clumsy expression. This is because, if a tradition is called 'non-modern', this still carries the implication that the tradition is excluded from modernity, even though it is found, for example, among people who are literate, institutionally educated, and use mobile phones. This again reproduces an ideology related to the old usage of 'folk', according to which such traditions are excluded from modern societies.

Early folklore research emerged around the study of non-modernised traditions with a comparative orientation. The identification of something as a lament or as lamenting is an outcome of researchers' analysing the respective practices. Inevitably, they would situate those practices as a category in relation to similar ones seen in other cultures. Such categories are today described and theorised in terms of genres, but they were initially mostly intuitive. Determining the features that characterised them and formulating definitions for them was a gradual process and researchers continue to debate these today; as the frames of reference and focal points of interest change, so does our conception of the category. The formation of a cross-cultural category like lament was at the intersection of comparative interests and the development and negotiation of a vocabulary for talking about types of traditions found among non-modernised populations (Frog et al. 2016). When looking at what is called lament in modernised practices, the frames of reference for the category differ in two key respects. First, the earlier concept of being non-modernised does not apply. Second, the identification as lament, however defined, can be the practitioner's own classification rather than one unilaterally determined by the researcher. Neither approach is inherently wrong, but the identification as lament works differently for people in divergent positions with a broad variety of perspectives, emphases, and needs (see, e.g., Silvonen and Kallio 2023).

In research, most definitions of lament have developed exclusively to describe a genre of folklore rooted outside of modernity (although see, e.g., Wilce 2009, 2). This tendency has continued through folklore research's turn from traditions as verbal texts to performance and practice (Abraham 1968; Bauman 1975; Ben-Amos and Goldstein 1975; see also Honko 2000), the rise of gender studies (e.g., *Feminist Studies* 1970–present; see also Nenola-Kallio 1982; Bourke 1988), and the critical reconceptualisation of folklore as not something exclusively non-modern (Dundes 1977). Lament traditions that took shape in modernised societies seem to have only gained attention following the turn to emotions that began at the end of the twentieth century as affective and corporeal aspects of performance came into research focus (Lemmings and Brooks 2014; cf. Tolbert 1990; Tenhunen 2006; Wilce 2009). The durability of the view that has excluded lament as a tradition from modernity is that the understanding of the category was built on the often-implicit presumption that it is a non-modernised genre of folklore. That premise required that the tradition was transmitted intergenerationally through exposure to and participation in local practices in an immersive

way – which is what was seen as making it a collective tradition of a 'folk'. This type of lament tradition is normally distinguished by a combination of the embodied performance of grief with some form of verbal art, although the development of the rubric 'lament' as encompassing such folklore practices from around the globe and from all eras of history makes it challenging to define more narrowly (see e.g. Böckel 1913; Honko 1974; McLaren 2008; Stepanova 2015). The whole concept of folklore emerged through ideologies of the 'folk' as representing the past of modernised societies, and thus that their traditions were the heritage of the latter (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Anttonen 2005; Frog 2022). This conferred value on the particular traditions as important and positive (Anttonen 2005). At the same time, it also produced polarised views about authenticity for what qualified as a source for this type of tradition (e.g., Dorson 1969; Bendix 1997) – problematic views that are still encountered today.

Within that approach, understanding the tradition as a social and collective phenomenon was paramount. This collective quality was interpreted through different ideological lenses over time, which gave the respective traditions value in relation to current interests. In early research, the folklore presented by 'folk' was considered incidental to the people themselves, while its collective quality enabled the historical reconstruction of a tradition and was the foundation of its value as national heritage (e.g., Krohn 1926). In contrast, since especially the 1990s, the same factor has been foundational to the study of the dynamics of meanings, variation, and ideologies governing a tradition (e.g., Foley 2002). However, the factor being distinguished was ultimately rooted in the criterion of how the tradition was transmitted in order to qualify as folklore. The tensions and disputes that surround traditions in modernised societies are nested in the endurance of these deep-rooted and often implicit features, and it requires work to get past these, not only individually, but at a social level of understanding. The concept of folklore has been deconstructed and rebuilt again and again for over half a century, which now makes it easy to accept that folklore is also ubiquitous in modernised societies rather than being something only found outside them. In contrast, the critical deconstruction of the category 'lament' only began quite recently (e.g., Wilce 2009), and it is still commonly imagined through the category of a century ago, and it carries the baggage of the dominant ideologies of that time.

Continuities, Transformations, and Locating the Identity of 'Lament'

Early research imagined traditions as having ideal forms that were either static or could be reconstructed, whereas today, traditions are recognised as continuously being varied and evolved by people in society in relation to changes in their worldviews and individual and social needs. This is illustrated in the present volume by Arukask's study on the Seto lament tradition of southeast Estonia. Arukask shows how performers adapted to the discord between the language and motifs of the inherited tradition on the one hand and changes in conceptions of the human body and what happens to it on the other. The same process is addressed from another angle in the case of Karelian laments in Finland by Silvonen in this volume. In this case, people in modernised milieux adapt and transform laments based mainly on recordings, photos, and transcriptions, infusing them with new meanings and significance that have given lament a place in their society. The combination of continuities and transformations characterises the evolu-

tion of traditions over time, yet it is precisely the impacts of modernisation and the transmission of information or knowledge through media associated with modernity that have been contentious in whether or not something is 'really' lament.

It is worth noting here that there is a paradox in the tensions and disagreements about the category of lament. The same framework of ideologies that excluded lament from modernised milieux and excluded impacts of modernity from a tradition's authenticity simultaneously constructed its value for those milieux. The value that was created for the tradition was for the people in modernised societies, making both the traditions themselves and imaginations of authenticity important, but it did so by imagining a tradition like lament as belonging to the past, not to the present. Consequently, the same ideologies that make some people feel it is very important to identify current practices as lament or as 'the same' tradition also make other people oppose this, despite the variety of things called laments in their own societies (see also Fenigsen and Wilce 2012).

When considering continuity and change in traditions, how a tradition is learned has an impact and should not simply be dismissed. However, it is a mistake to imagine a black-and-white contrast between internalisation through immersion in a society's living practices and approaching them from the outside. The difference should not be confused with a qualification as 'lament' that would only reflect the authenticity judgements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the case of Seto lament discussed by Arukask, the transmission of verbal art is socially embedded. As a tradition of verbal art, the transmission process integrates language, poetics, rhetoric, music, and embodied performance. The variations and adaptations in individuals' performances are then produced and received in relation to collective perspectives. When a tradition is internalised through documents and recordings, the individual learning them selects what they consider emblematic or significant and interprets it according to their personal views and needs, whether the aim is to hold tightly to the documented practice or done quite freely (see Wilce and Fenigsen 2015). The difference between these can be approached as a criterion of classification, as discussed above, but the difference and its consequences get interpreted in alternative ways according to presumptions about what qualifies as lament to start with.

The transmission process has general implications as a principle but can be very ambiguous in practice, because a highly idiosyncratic understanding of a tradition may be rooted in transmission through first-hand experience (e.g., the lamenter Valentina Jevsejeva: see Stepanova and Matveinen 2017, 27–30), while a sophisticated understanding without first-hand transmission may be much more in alignment with the tradition's conventions (e.g., the lamenter Emmi Kuittinen: see Silvonen and Kuittinen 2024). The ideology of authenticity based on the transmission process has tended to erase that researchers themselves develop competence in the traditions they study, whether through immersion in the culture or through the sources from its documentation (e.g. on medieval traditions, Clunies Ross 1994, 26). Indeed, such competence was foundational to researchers' authenticity evaluations in early collection, in which some folklore collectors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries show a profoundly subtle and nuanced understanding of the respective tradition, even if their priorities and value judgements are viewed quite critically today. Even in these cases, denying the respective competence is like denying that they have competence in a language because they learned it at a university, and denying that a performance based on such competence is lamenting is like denying that they are speaking that language when they talk to you.

It might be tempting to criticise the injustice of the ideologies in which these judgements and biases are rooted. However, here, too, is a paradox. The ideologies that built up these imaginations of authenticity and their polarised evaluation also drove the documentation of the respective tradition. In cases where the tradition has disappeared or is difficult to encounter in the present, that documentation is the only accessible gateway to the tradition. Without those ideologies and their biases, there might be nothing to take up and make relevant to people today. In this volume, Frog shows that Scandinavian research tended to use 'lament' for expressions of grief generally and never brought it into focus as a folklore genre, which would have given it value and relevance for documentation. As a consequence, Scandinavian laments were never studied and not a single transcript of a lament is currently known, despite myriad references to lamenters and their performances. It is important to reflect on and overcome ideologies that produce biases of thinking in black-and-white terms, and it is equally important to reflect on their roles in the past, which have brought us to the present, with all of its complexity.

Lament, Communication, and Tensions with Modernity

Recent research has foregrounded lament as communication (Stepanova 2015). That lament is more than simply crying or wailing as an outpouring of grief has been foundational to conceptions of the category since the outset. This was built into approaches to lament through the lens of non-modernised traditions at the level of definitions: it was commonly defined as a genre characterised by the formal regularity of its verbal art (e.g. Honko 1974; McLaren 2008; Stepanova 2015). This feature is ultimately only a consequence of defining lament through a transmission process, which is presumed to include performers' internalisation of language, poetics, and other regular performance features. This has been one of the sites of tension and disagreement surrounding some adaptations of traditions, where, for example, the particulars of poetics and even the language of performance may be secondary to emotional expression, communication, and spiritual efficacy (Wilce and Fenigsen 2015, 198–203; see also Silvonen, this volume). However, non-modernised genres are also not necessarily defined through language and poetics: belief legend is defined through what is told rather than in what way; verbal charm is defined through the supernatural effects of uttering it whether it be in poetry or prose, and so on. What is sometimes seen as a marked difference between conceptions of lament evaporates when formal regularity is recognised as linked to only one type of performance practice.

Drawing on approaches to language ideologies (on which, see Kroskrity 2001; Gal and Irvine 2019), in his chapter, Charles Briggs brings into focus a tension between laments and modernity that has generally gone unrecognised. He looks critically at modernity's conception of 'communicability' as salient, unambiguous, and literal language use. Against that backdrop, Briggs argues that laments and their affective potential are characterised by 'incommunicability', which makes them a potentially powerful tool in social interaction. This potential is further illustrated in Hannah Kaarina Yoken and Arja Turunen's chapter, which shows how lament was mobilised for political purposes in a feminist movement of the 1980s that criticised the primacy of language over emotions in communication and political decision making, among other things. The

disjunction between the dominant ideologies of modernity and lament can be utilised to wield lament as an instrument of power.

This volume demonstrates that communication is fundamental to lament. More than that, however, laments serve as a medium through which individuals seek to both comprehend and comment on the world, its prevailing order, and what happens in it. And, in some cases, lament may be directed to impact and transform the lives and situations or people and the societies in which they live.

Explorations

This volume consists of seven chapters that each present a case study about laments and lamenting in different contexts, variously considered from the perspectives of folklore studies, ethnomusicology, history, anthropology and religious studies. Although some of the studies reach the Americas, they are concentrated in northern Europe, where lament traditions have long and complex histories of interaction as well as a developed research history (Frog and Stepanova, forthcoming). The earlier research in the field offers an important backdrop for the discussion of developments and transformations of lament in the respective cultures, while the areal emphasis also supports the cohesion of the book and avoids the exoticisation of lament traditions by elaborating their diversity around the world. Rather than thematic sections, the chapters form a chain-like progression that explores the ground where ideologies and lament traditions meet, a broad territory laced with paths that knit the chapters together into a complex whole.

These explorations are opened by 'Incommunicability: How Lamentation Pushes Us to Rethink Colonial Models of Poetics, Performance, and Communication', in which Charles Briggs argues that lament is fundamentally opposed to modernity's construction of literal and transparent propositional representation as the exclusively valorised ideal of expressive behaviour. Laments are brought into focus for their remarkable expressivity. Karelian lament is used to illustrate how the language and rhetorical devices characteristic of the cross-cultural, non-modernised genre create a heavy filter for the propositional content that itself becomes an empowering mediator of meanings. Briggs establishes lament as a quintessential counterpoint to the dominant ideologies governing Western sensibilities about communication. He considers how those dominant ideologies correlate incommunicability with otherness, making it iconic of an opposed or excluded social position. He then presents a case study of a mysterious outbreak of illness in a Venezuelan rainforest and parents' instrumentalisation of lament and their strategic inhabitation of the position of incommunicability in order to press for a diagnosis of the threat to their children's lives and for justice. Briggs argues that scholars should exchange the intuition to take the dominant ideology of communicability for the conscious engagement of incommunicability as a default in scholarly inquiry, which he advances as a strategy to break from colonial models of communication and their impact on our thinking.

The discussion moves from incommunicability to silence in 'Scandinavian Laments in Modern Times: Evidence versus Invisibility'. In this chapter, Frog introduces Scandinavian lament traditions and the evidence for them in an exploration of why they have gone largely unrecognised and ignored, silencing women's voices. The evidence for these traditions is generally very limited, but German comparativists already gave

it consideration in the early twentieth century while a famous Norwegian author's description of the tradition in his home region was widely circulated, even in schoolbooks. Nevertheless, Scandinavian researchers left the traditions largely unacknowledged, undocumented, and undiscussed. This case is analysed as illustrative of a dominant ideology of modern, educated Lutherans toward public outpourings of grief as a significant factor in the invisibility of the lament, and which dovetailed with the laments not being seen as sufficiently poetic to warrant interest for heritage-construction projects.

Madis Arukask advances from the breakdown of traditions and their erasure from social memory to how they change in the wake of increased outside influence in 'The Changing Corporeality in the Twentieth-Century Seto Burial Laments'. The human body and its location after death are placed at the centre of this study, approached from the perspective of folk religion. Arukask introduces laments and the arrival of impacts of modernity to the region of the Seto of southeast Estonia. He reveals that tensions emerged between the formulaic language and motifs rooted in traditional poetry and the changes in contemporary thinking that challenged these. Arukask explores how performers were compelled to negotiate a compromise between current understandings and collective tradition as contemporary beliefs and inherited practices became disaligned. This exploration of the tensions between a non-modernised lament tradition and modernity offers a bridge to discussions of transformations and reuses of such traditions in modernised societies.

In 'Motifs of "Souls" as Signs of Mythical Thinking and Folklore Practice: From Traditional Lithuanian Laments to Popular Discourse', Aušra Žičkienė explores the ways the Lithuanian lament tradition has been adopted and applied in new forms. Žičkienė shows how some fragments of exceptional laments from the nineteenth century circulated during the 1970s and 1980s and became key points of reference in popular culture for connecting with grieving. These fragments provided resources that were revitalised and produced in new forms of expression that meet current people's needs and interests. Žičkienė illustrates the dynamics of how traditional culture receives value through creative reinterpretations that update its relevance, both for individuals and for forming group identities.

In 'Feminist Lamenting: Women for Peace and the Finnish *Itkijänaiset*', Hannah Kaarina Yoken and Arja Turunen introduce the main activist group that sought to bring emotion into a central position in politics and its subgroup called *Itkijänaiset* (the Lamenting Women) that instrumentalised lament performance as a collective protest strategy. Yoken and Turunen investigate how this group adapted and utilised lamenting in the peace movement. Through archival evidence and oral history, they explore how lament became incorporated into a pacifist-feminist ideology, hybridising associations of the tradition with new meanings in attempts to impact the state. They reveal that this group saw themselves as part of a global peace movement and show that lament was used to further this pacifist-feminist ideology also elsewhere, beyond the borders of Finland. Although they focus on the Finnish activist group, this chapter reveals ways that lament became linked to contemporary ideologies and instrumentalised in political debates internationally.

In 'Affective Arrangements in Laments: Emotions as a Connecting Feature and a Separator in the Contentious Field of Lament in Finland in the 2020s', Viliina Silvonen examines the diverse field of laments in contemporary Finland from the perspective of emotions and seeks a better understanding of the tense and sometimes conflicted