

Michael Dylan Foster and Jeffery A. Tolbert (eds.). *The Folkloresque: Reframing Folklore in a Popular Culture World*. (Boulder, CO: 2016, University Press of Colorado. Pp.265, ISBN 978-1-60732-417-1.)

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COMPTE-RENDUS/REVIEWS

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When I first read the title, *The Folkloresque: Reframing Folklore in a Popular Culture World*, I was struck with the idea of “reframing.” Reframing can be extreme, embodying a whole new approach to a topic. It can also be as simple as looking at something from a different angle. I believe the concept of the folkloresque in this book is reframing contemporary folklore from a different angle rather than a whole new approach. It does offer a term that folklorist and popular culture scholars have been dancing around for years and by having a new label allows for a new platform upon which discussion can be built.

This collection includes an introduction written by Michael Dylan Foster which clearly lays out how to interpret popular culture as folkloresque. Foster asks the reader to look at the folkloresque as a “specific genre of popular culture” and lays out three major categories for the folkloresque: integration, portrayal, and parody. The rest of the book is divided into these three sections with a short introduction to each followed by 3-4 essays that address a topic within the context of these categories.

The first section, integration, is described in the introduction to the book as “how popular culture producers integrate or stitch together folkloric motifs and forms to make a product that appears to be inspired directly by one or more specific traditions.” In my work in material culture and fashion, this would be similar to using Russian motifs in the Valentino collection of 2006, which is described as “folkloric,” in order to make the wearer feel more connected to a folk Russian culture. The following four chapters explain the concept of integration by using a variety of folklore topics. Michael Dylan Foster’s chapter, “The Folkloresque Circle: Towards a Theory of Fuzzy Allusions,” examines integration within the framework of Miyazaki Hayao of the well-known animated Japanese movie, *Spirited Away*. It is an excellent, consistently written essay that clearly lays out the concept of integration of the aspects of folklore into popular culture

mediums in order to have a connective root in a culture, while being creative and explorative with popular mediums. The other three chapters in this section each explore a specific area of study such as the work of Neil Gaiman (Timothy H. Evans), pixies in the cultural fabric of Dartmoor in southern England (Paul Manning), and comics as an expression of folklore (Daniel Peretti). Each of these introduced new topics to me and helped unpack the concept of integration utilizing the concept of the folkloresque.

The next section is Portrayal, which is described as demonstrating the popular concept of folklore. The section, after a brief introduction, opens with an excellent chapter by Jeffery A. Tolbert. He applies the concept of the folkloresque in the framework of a contemporary video game, *Fatal Frame*. He examines two points: folklore when understood as folklore “deepens the player experience” and the use of folklorists (who are characters in the game) as authenticators to add to the player’s experience. The following two chapters explore the idea of portrayal from the lens of performance. In the first, Eamon Kelly’s storytelling (Chad Buterbaugh) is discussed in terms of how he evolved Irish contemporary storytelling from fireside to formal performance and then to new performers portraying Mr. Kelly’s work. J.K. Rowling’s “Beedle the Bard” book of Harry Potter folktales (Carlea Holl-Jensen and Jeffery A. Tolbert) is discussed in the light of how these folktales, written to help understand the imaginary world of Harry Potter, reflect our own popular folktales in order to make them more relatable to the reader.

The final section is parody, which examines how in contemporary culture the creators use aspects of folklore in their product that both creator and consumer acknowledge to be there. The folklore is not hidden or passed off to be real, but is obviously fake. This too can be related to the expression of folklore in clothing, such as motifs and slogans found on “ironic t-shirts” which have always been popular, but have seen a major resurgence in the past decade. Parody can run the gauntlet from amusing to inappropriate, which is well outlined in the chapters of this section.

The first chapter is on tasteless humour during the Penn State sexual abuse scandal (Trevor J. Blank). Although it is a good look at parody and humour in light of a horrific event, the topic was disturbing. This, in fact, is part of the point of the essay. As an outsider I had little knowledge of the subject and, therefore, could not understand the humour found in it. The second chapter is Greg Kelley’s analysis of metahumour. This chapter looks at the jokes we all know and breaks down how these jokes

are a part of our shared joke history and can be used as a parody reflecting contemporary culture. The following chapter focusses on Princess Tutu, an anime fairytale which reflects western fairytales while maintaining traditional Japanese outcomes. Discussed is how this parody of western fairy tales leaves the westerner uncomfortable with the outcome. The final chapter by Gregory Schrempp focusses on David Toomey's *Weird Life*; it looks at the relationship between popular science writers and monsters as a parody. David Toomey's search for life and creatures that do not fit our mould of life science, but can be compared to the monsters that exist in our folklore, has made a topic that is approachable usually by those with a biology background accessible to everyone who is aware of folkloric monster motifs.

In writing a book review it is difficult to convey the true worth of a publication by simply summarizing aspects, but I believe that anyone interested in popular culture and folklore should read this book. As someone who approaches folklore from a material culture background with a focus on fashion and museum collected artifacts, some of the topics in the book would not seem relevant to my area of study. But by looking at this book as a "reframing" of folklore for popular culture studies, I can apply it to my area easily and the idea of reframing has sparked for me a new way to approach my own work. This book has the potential to start a new discourse within our disciplines and have wide reaching changes in our approaches to popular culture.

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Michael Newton, editor. *Seanchaidh na Coille Memory-Keeper of the Forest Anthology of Scottish Gaelic Literature in Canada*. (Sydney, NS: 2015, Cape Breton University Press. Pp. 570, ISBN: 978-1-77206-016-4)

Michael Newton recognizes that scant scholarly attention has been devoted to the Canadian side of the literature of the Gaelic diaspora and, through this editorial achievement, teases out other areas of critical inquiry