Reviews

Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World. Edited by Trevor J. Blank. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2009. Pp. ix + 260, acknowledgments, introduction, appendix, references, about the contributors, index.

Folklore and the Internet provides a much-needed published collection of folkloristic research about online behaviors in a single forum. The general realm of Internet research unifies the articles as each researcher has varying methodologies, topics of research, and presentations of conclusions. As more academic fields expand their research into online forums, the field benefits from the research of folklorists who see online expressions as behaviors negotiating the constraints of digital media and not representations of static text. Each chapter analyzes computer-mediated behaviors, including Russell Frank's analysis of the practice of forwarding humorous e-mails, Lynne S. McNeill's analysis of a specific internet meme, "End of Internet" websites, and a Webography of public folklore resources complied by Gregory Hansen. Each researcher in this volume must define boundaries either through the presence of online relationships, which are congruent to those expressed in real-time communities, or through the presence of stark differences. The methods used by the researchers in this volume will be helpful for other researchers defining the structure of online material because of the noticeably different methods researchers use to approach what can appear to be tenuous communities. Furthermore, analysis of online behavior must consider general preconceptions about Internet behavior, which will influence even academic readers. These preconceptions differ from the reality that online behavior and materials are mediated through a system of computer codes structuring websites, commercial interests, and, as one of authors, Robert Dobler specifically points out, complex issues of legality (179).

Each article must justify the existence of a valid, research-ready online community and discuss possible conflicts or barriers to understanding the fluidity or rigidity of this community. Robert Glenn Howard analyzes the vernacular web of communication created by fundamentalist Christians discussing their experience with spiritual warfare online (159). He specifically states, minus the exact name of the search engine he used, the three specific terms he used to narrow down the sites he examined and on what basis he excluded certain sites (166). The instability of a search engine, which chooses hits based on relevance, is disclosed to the reader in a reflexive analysis of his methods. Confronting the instability of online communities serves as a basis for outlining each choice of research materials and constraints placed on the material to make it manageable. In general, this leads to a high degree of clarity about theoretical and methodological choices individual authors made, including the archiving methods and researcher's critical interpretations of a user's presentation of his or her own identity online.

In general, researchers made their topics accessible to readers who might not be familiar with the forum or website

through written description. William Westerman's article about editor bias on *Wikipedia*, embodied in a conflict over userboxes, was the only article to contain images. On a whole, the anthology would have benefited from the inclusion of images since some cited materials are not still extant or easily accessible. Aside from Westerman, other researchers used descriptions of website layout and the pathways used to access material on specific sites to convey the websites' structure to readers, since even a static image does not adequately represent the process of moving through a space on the web. In the future, collections of online research might benefit from supplemental online materials. For this collection, some conclusions would have been more easily reached and illustrated with the inclusion of an image. For example, Westerman's inclusion of a "real" *Wikipedia* article and a parody of the same *Wikipedia* article used to illustrate the conflict over userboxes would have rendered his argument less effective if the images were only described to the reader, due to the complexity of the image (141-142).

Aside from this concern, the volume achieves the goal of presenting a cohesive presentation of the status of online research in the field of folklore. The editor of this volume, Trevor Blank, currently an instructor of American studies and folklore at Pennsylvania State Harrisburg, calls on folklorists conducting research online to engage "in a greater dialogue with allied disciplines" and to free themselves from self-imposed academic boundaries (4). In this respect, the selected articles are successful at including perspectives from other fields and varied perspectives within the field of folklore. This includes perspectives from educators like Marc Prensky, who advocates for change in education systems because learning styles have changed due to technological influences, and perspectives from public folklorists managing materials online. This is to the benefit of folklorists engaged in Internet topics and Internet researchers from other fields and will hopefully increase interdisciplinary dialogue. Often, these chapters draw on previous folkloric research conducted on real-time behaviors to draw out similarities and differences to online behaviors. Elizabeth Tucker's work on the characterization of missing women online, for example, draws from her own work on haunting of physical spaces and research done on the transmission of legend material in real-time. Gregory Hansen's development of public folklore's presence online relies on Sharon Sherman's construction of documentary videos' modes of presentation to develop the structure of websites. These and other chapters mediate current online research, which is defined by changing conditions of online behavior through previous research rooted purely in the physical realm. Links to past research are useful for developing parameters in the online research and expanding the scope of the previous research.

Almost every researcher notes the changing role of time between the transmission of folklore in physical space and face-to-face contact and transmission of folklore in online forums. Lynne S. McNeil notices that the process of meeting people online differs from social processes in real-time because "the *pace*

and *scope* of these social processes that have increased so exponentially" (83). This collection succeeds in demonstrating that there are online boundaries, which are not always analogous to real-time communities, and which can be delineated in order to conduct meaningful research. It also hopefully establishes a basis for increasing research in the area, including the development of changing perceptions of time in online forums. These issues (the static nature of time in the case of Robert Dobler's frozen MySpace pages or, conversely, the rapid development and transmission of information) have begun to be developed in this collection. Further work can develop the effects this warping of time has on the transmission of folklore and the process of conducting fieldwork utilizing online resources with reflexive analysis of researchers' own experiences.

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Recycling Indian Clothing: Global Contexts of Reuse and Value. By Lucy Norris. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. Pp. ix + 226, notes, bibliography, index, 7 illustrations, 16 color plates.

In *Recycling Indian Clothing*, Lucy Norris maps the reuse and transformation of second-hand clothing in India as it moves across broad spectrums of society. Divested from middle class and elite Indian wardrobes, and picked up by local Waghri traders (Gujarati merchants that buy and sell used cloth), these garments recirculate—often in dramatically new forms—in markets both in India and abroad. Norris highlights the social relationships deeply embedded in the collecting and repurposing of cloth, and the unique cultural value that fabric has on the subcontinent. Working through Indian notions of purity / pollution and traditional beliefs that attach personal, and often sacred, associations to cloth, Norris reveals that the circulation of used clothing from India is highly complex and multi-tiered in its movement and engages both men and women from all social strata and religious backgrounds. By shedding light on this understudied aspect of South Asian material culture, Norris seeks to show that the remaking of old clothing is, in fact, a process of remaking selves.

Pulling from Igor Kopytoff's theories about the biography of objects and Arjun Appadurai's notion of the social life of things, Norris attempts to move away from strictly anthropological and historical studies of Indian clothing that closely document "traditional" textiles; she instead places emphasis on the shifting meaning and value of garments

in their disposal and subsequent reuse. Her book joins other scholarly studies that explore the highly personal roles that clothing fulfills in peoples' lives, notably Emma Tarlo's *Clothing Matters* (1996), Joanne Eicher, Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, and Kim K.P. Johnson's *Dress and Identity* (1995), and Jane Schneider and Annette Weiner's *Cloth and Human Experience* (1989).

And yet, Norris's study differs in important ways: by focusing on the circulation and repurposing of *used* clothing, an understudied topic in general, she is able to highlight several global contexts in which Indian cloth finds new life and meaning, a departure from earlier texts that center on the role of cloth solely within a South Asian context. Her fieldwork begins by looking closely at the domestic market in which old clothing (e.g., worn-out silk *saris*, cotton *dhotis* and *salwaar* suits, jeans, sweaters) from the wardrobes of well-off urban residents is exchanged for money or other goods by Waghri traders. She engages in a form of "wardrobe archaeology" (34), documenting the personal connections associated with cloth as she sifts through the closets of female neighbors in the Trans-Yamuna district of New Delhi where she lived for one year. Norris then traces these old garments as they leave the homes of middle class women and are dispersed by Waghri traders into a highly segregated network of merchants, designers, and entrepreneurs, who in turn sell these old garments as-is to the poor or use them as raw material for "new" products to be sold on a global stage.

Key to Norris's study is the significant cultural value attached to cloth in India,

a notion that emerges from Tarlo in particular. Fabric is rarely thrown out when no longer wanted or needed, but instead is most often given new life as hand-me-downs and gifts to servants or relatives, or used as currency to barter for new and desirable home products (most often stainless steel pots). Both historically and in the present-day, cloth in India is a "bio-moral substance" (7) that transmits ideas of holiness, purity, and pollution to the wearer. It also confers status, and, when gifted, it retains something of the spirit of the giver, imbued with his/her power or essence. Cloth in India also has connotations with political struggles for independence in the first half of the 20th century, made most famous by Gandhi's *swadeshi* campaign and championing of hand-spun, hand-woven *khadi* cloth. As Tarlo has argued, the decision of what to wear in India is one rife with social significance, and is not a choice taken without thought or consideration. With this cultural context in mind, Norris's examination of the circulation and reuse of second-hand clothing in India carries particular significance.

Norris recounts a familiar story to scholars and students of modern and contemporary India: since the liberalizing of India's economy in the 1990s, there has been a dramatic increase in the consumption of material goods and, with it, an increase in waste. Unwanted clothing constitutes a large portion of that waste. Similarly, as nuclear families replace extended family units, older clothes once handed down to younger family members and household servants are now tossed out with other kinds of refuse, particularly in urban spaces like Delhi. However, Norris shows that, unlike

other kinds of material waste, clothing is particularly flexible for reuse: unstitched *saris* and *dhotis* can easily be converted to skirts or blouses, old *salwaar* suits can find new life as cushion covers, and scarves can be turned into handkerchiefs and polishing cloths.

Similarly, Norris complicates the meaning of terms such as "waste" and "recycle," and shows that the boundaries between "new" and "used" are highly permeable, particularly when examining objects across global contexts. As her research reveals, old clothing cycles through a series of traders, tailors, and merchants to emerge as "new" home furnishing products and tailored "ethnic" garments for foreign tourists and consumers in the UK, Europe, Australia, and the United States. Along the same lines, export surplus clothing and fiber scraps produced in Indian factories (e.g. extras from a print run, factory rejects, leftover fabric pieces from cut garments) are sorted and sold at weekly wholesale markets in Delhi and ultimately find their way into "new" products marketed to middle and upper-middle class residents of the city. It is in highlighting this global movement and transformation of cloth that Norris contributes significantly to the field; she shows that objects, like people, experience their own life cycles that transcend a single place or moment of origin, and that the process of mapping these biographies is an essential part of understanding the value of material culture.

While Norris's emphasis on the "afterlife" of second-hand Indian clothing allows her to probe deeply into the unchartered world of Waghri traders and the personal lives of middle class women who exchange their old silk saris for new kitchen utensils, her neglect of the details of cloth itself—the aesthetic features and ways in which specific textiles were made—renders obscure potential reasons for *why* particular clothing is valued in the first place. By providing photographic examples and a more detailed discussion of the technical differences between a silk Benarasi *sari* and a cotton *kota doria* sari, for example, Norris would be able to reveal the nuances of value placed on these garments by individuals involved in their trade and transformation. It is perhaps in this way that Norris' field, cultural anthropology, can learn from the disciplinary tactics of art history and visual analysis; exploring the aesthetic features of an object can uncover often unspoken reasons for why people value certain things, ultimately producing a more complete biography of an object. Despite the sparse use of illustrations and lack of detailed visual and historical analysis of actual textiles, Norris succeeds in opening up for scholarly discussion an important new area of textile and South Asian studies, and produces a text that will be enjoyed across disciplines by students and scholars interested in global practices of recycling and the circulation of material culture.

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Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory: Russian Literary Mnemonics. By Mikhail Gronas. Routledge Research in Cultural and Media Studies, vol. 28. New York: Routledge, 2011. Pp. xiii + 174, introduction, notes, bibliography, index.

Mikhail Gronas's book *Cognitive Poetics and Cultural Memory* is an intriguing analysis of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian literature and literary culture from the perspective of what Gronas calls "mnemopoetics." While the material analyzed is Russian, this book is an admirable test case for a theoretical framework applicable far beyond even the study of modern, let alone Russian, literature.

Gronas sets up his initial case for mnemopoetics in his introduction, arguing that however much new media change the *way* we remember, the need to remember remains. His four chapters attempt mnemonic / cognitive reinterpretations of "four distinct phenomena: the vagaries of taste, canon formation, the social uses of poetry, and literary creativity" (8). Gronas draws primarily on cognitive poetics, cultural memory theory, and memetics (analysis of memes), but memetics is the dominant member of this triad. His approach is "mnemocentric," to use his term, in that it focuses on the survivability of units of cultural production. He hypothesizes "that what sexual pleasure is to genes, aesthetic pleasure is to memes, the minimal units of cultural evolution, first postulated by Richard Dawkins in 1976" (1). The conceptual framework of evolution, the "survival of the fittest," is ubiquitous throughout the book,

bleeding into metaphors of war at times, and culminating in a poetic conflation of memory and organism in the final line of the book: "Our only way to survive in the world is to make it memorable" (131).

The chapters themselves are relatively self-contained and include occasional helpful reviews of Gronas's arguments up to that point. Chapter one, "Mnemonic Critics: Conceptual Metaphor in Literary Judgements," is an attempt at a history of the rhetorical and linguistic mechanisms of the discourse of taste. Gronas dissects several conceptual metaphors of the literati in nineteenth-century Russia (X is the Russian Y, literary critics as barroom brawlers, etc.) as case studies in the way in which the discourse of taste organizes its object and makes it memorable. Chapter two, "Mnemonic Readers: The Literary Canon and Mnemonic Survival," shifts focus from the perception of literary works to their perpetuation. He takes the formulation "the canon is cultural memory" to its logical conclusion, noting that "...if one takes canonicity as a measure of historically enduring reproducibility, one could argue that the canon is quite literally a mnemonic system" (53). In keeping with his debt to memetics, Gronas covers the canonicity of texts of any size and structure, including "minimal units." Gronas's example for this chapter is just such a minimal-unit: Konstantine Batiushkov's phrase "memory of the heart" from his poem "Moi Genii" (My Daimon). To explain the success of this phrase in the Russian cultural memory, he turns to cognitive science. The mechanisms of canonization, he argues, turn out "to operate in much the same way as the mechanism whereby new lexical units and concepts emerge and

then secure their place in the language" (70). When it comes to a minimal fragment, the mechanism is the same. Batiushkov's phrase survives because it fills a semantic gap, designating the "unnamed but recognizable," which the more ambiguous term "memory" does not specify (70). The approach is limited to what Gronas calls "micro-canonicity," as the "unnamed but recognizable" in longer works such as *War and Peace* is just too complex for such analysis.

Gronas's third chapter, "Mnemonic Lines: The Social Uses of Memorized Poetry," explains the unusual survival of "traditional verse" in Russia in terms of the continued practice of memorizing poetry and the continued usefulness of mnemonic poetry. This chapter describes the "mnemonic culture" in which poetry circulated, a culture which was enabled by and founded on the memorization and recitation of poetry in schools. Early Russian revolutionaries attacked rote learning as backward, but by the early thirties, "...school poetry memorization was rediscovered as one of the most effective weapons for infusing a sense of national and ideological coherence into the minds of Soviet children" (89). Memorized poetry is a double edged blade, however, and mnemonic poetry proves an invaluable resource in a world of banned texts, whether for recording the atrocities committed, providing distraction, or simply maintaining one's humanity and dignity when stripped of all but one's thoughts. Many of Gronas's examples, in fact, come from the Gulag—but he notes that poetry was *able* to function as it did there because the precedent was already established outside, in society as a whole, where

poetry was intended to be memorized and incorporated into intellectual and social life.

Gronas's final chapter, "Mnemonic Poets: The Tip-of-the-Tongue State, the Saussurean Anagram, and the Mechanisms of Mnemonic Activity," shifts emphasis to the mnemonics of the poet's creative process by way of the mystery of Saussure's anagrams, theme words which the famous linguist found broken up and hidden in poems both ancient and new. Gronas's case-in-point, Mandelshtams's poem "Swallow," also serves to illustrate the "tip-of-the-tongue" state. Gronas argues that both phenomena are examples of perceptual and semantic "priming," seen in the tip-of-the-tongue state by the way in which the target word is "blocked" by other words which are either semantically similar ("doctor" when trying to remember "nurse") or phonetically similar ("hearse" when trying to remember "nurse"). In the anagram, the "theme word," which is never explicitly articulated, shows up in phonetic clues (syllables, rhymes, etc., derived from the theme word) and semantic clues (the poem itself is, after all, "about" the theme word to some degree). Unlike rhyme, which is a mnemonic device available to the listener, the anagram is for the exclusive use of the poet, as potential fragments of the poem war with each other in the memory of the working poet for survival in the final product.

Mnemonic studies have historically been associated with oral poetry or Classical/Medieval literature and learning, rather than modern literary culture. Gronas, however, insists that "literature is *still* mnemonic" (2). Gronas's

theoretical framework and analysis are far reaching, but, as he admits, his chosen test-case (Russian literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) is particularly suited to a mnemocentric approach, and even involves a larger degree of "orality" than is normally expected in modern Western literature. Still, the major premises of his study are clearly relevant to a wide variety of fields. "Making memorable" is a productive reframing of the functionality of conceptual metaphor, and is, of course, applicable anywhere language is used, whether spoken or e-mailed. Gronas's refinement of the "cultural memory" theory of canon (canon as cultural mnemonic) is just as relevant across the board, and his analysis of "micro-canonicity" via memetics both recalls the formula hunting of the mid-twentieth century oral theorists (from Parry and Lord to Magoun and Kellogg) and looks forward to new ways to approach the informal dispersal of "minimal units" on the internet, where the word "meme" is already a "meme" in its own right. While the chapter on Sausurean anagrams may seem obscure, Gronas argues convincingly for a connection to the cognitive phenomenon of priming, and from that develops a theory of the creative process which could be reasonably integrated into work on anything from formal (metrical/rhymed) poetry, to oral epics, to hip-hop. The degree to which his work is relevant to the study of free verse and other ostensibly "non-mnemonic" or "non-oral" texts is perhaps an open question, but Gronas makes a convincing case for the usefulness of a mnemocentric approach in a variety of fields.

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Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds. By Celia Pearce and Artemesia. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009. Pp. xiii + 327, forwards, acknowledgements, photographs, games cited, works cited, index.

Communities of Play is an elegantly written, yet supremely accessible, book in which Celia Pearce examines emergent fan cultures in contemporary digital gaming. Drawing from her own experiences as a player, game designer, and scholar, Pearce constructs an ethnographic study of a fan group centered on the video game *Uru: Ages Beyond Myst*, and the diaspora, which has emerged since the game's demise. This study reveals the power of play and its impact on culture, while simultaneously giving an interesting and much needed twist to the study of diasporic communities and the immigrant experience, allowing us to follow these fields of research into virtual worlds. She asserts that "although the worlds may be virtual, the communities formed within them are as real as any that form in proximal space" (17).

Pearce utilizes an ethnographic approach centered on an eighteen-month study of the Gathering of Uru (colloquially known as TGU), a neighborhood (or hood) within the game that formed in 2003 and lasted well beyond the demise of the game, coalescing into what she identifies as an online diaspora. She illuminates how the forced exodus of game players affected members of TGU, and how these newly dispossessed were able to find alternative spaces to reconvene and examine their communal anxiety over their separation from their virtual homeland.

She explores the complicated system of community formation and maintenance in virtual worlds and how online community structures work together in a colloquial decision-making process, which has been shaped by virtual, historical, commercial and aesthetic principles. Pearce pays particular attention to the distinctive conventions of *Uru*, including elements such as virtual geography, eventually conflating the ideas of communal identity and virtual space into the shared notion of identity as place. Though no explanation as to why the game was shut down was ever given by the game's developer or publisher (Cyan and Ubisoft respectively), she does explore the community's narrativized response to the removal of their space.

The author dutifully acknowledges her place in the world, as both participant and scholar of this community. Yet she does not get lost in the idiosyncrasies of the community in an auto-ethnographic sense and eschew quantitative or theoretical approaches. She is careful to examine technical distinctions such as the difference between the MMOG (massively multiplayer online game) and the MMOW (massively multiplayer online world), and thoroughly explores the contrast between lucid (created by game designers) and paidiaic (created by players) world constructions. She ably combines participant observation as a qualitative research measure with more sociologically quantitative methods, and this methodological approach impressively demonstrates the importance of studying contemporary online communities and emergent cultures in both ethnographic and sociologic contexts.

The book offers a clear, concise, and accessible text for the reader detailing the intersection of technological, personal, and cultural contexts through which play and its diasporic community are imagined, constructed, maintained and consumed. It is divided into five parts (Play, Community, and Emergent Cultures; The *Uru* Diaspora; Playing Ethnography: Research Methods; The Social Construction of the Ethnographer; and Beyond *Uru*: Communities of Play on Their own Terms), each further divided into easily digestible chapters that focus on specific aspects of this dialectical contextual intersection.

There are possible dangers associated with Pearce's methodological approach, namely the difficulty of studying a group to which she is so closely tied; and it could be said that the study borders, at times, on a becoming more a passionate fan manifesto than legitimate scholarship. Yet this potential criticism also works to Pearce's advantage as this approach ultimately highlights the strengths of participant observation in online fieldwork. The relatively narrow, yet statistically significant, scope of this study allows the author to emphasize the individual and communal importance of play as cultural foundation. Pearce asserts that communities of play, centered on play practices which she separates from other types of folk practice, warrant their own models of community formation and maintenance, particularly within the context of technologically mediated play. While focusing on play, she is simultaneously able to underscore the vital role of technology, history, and aesthetics in the development of virtual communities and diasporas. The

closeness of the author to her subject is perhaps one of the greatest strengths of the book as Pearce refuses to risk essentialism by offering us a simple quantitative study that relegates shared expressions of play and community to mere numbers or generalizations. Instead, she supports sociological methodologies with an incredibly focused and detailed qualitative study, which allows her to explore more deeply the cultural contexts that create emergent cultures.

This weakness-turned-strength is also what makes *Communities of Play* such an important addition to the fields of diaspora and virtual community studies, especially as the interest in communities in online spaces is continuing to grow (Bainbridge 2010; Castranova 2006 & 2007; Nardi 2010; Taylor 2009). While the example provided in the study is about one fairly unique virtual community existing as diaspora, this book is not, in essence, about the Gathering of Uru. Instead, this book is about *how* to approach a subject that is at once intensely personal, intensely cultural, utterly dynamic and continually emergent. Pearce provides an invaluable model for studying emergent communities in a contemporary context that stresses the complex networks and contexts, which create practicable models of community and play. This study allows us a form through which we are able to better understand virtual communities as accelerated forms of emergent cultures. Indeed, the intergame immigration recounted in this book is expedited by the communicative properties of the community's medium: the Internet. *Communities of Play* is an important addition to the fields of game studies, fan studies, popular culture, folklore and diaspora studies, and should be read by anyone hoping to undertake an exploration of communities in virtual spaces. This work has uses well outside its intended field and has applicable lessons that are of value to any interdisciplinary scholars, from cultural anthropologists to historians to video game designers. It is accessible enough for use in the undergraduate classroom, challenging enough for the most invested scholars, specific enough to be of use to virtual ethnographers, yet broad enough to be of use to other fields of studies as well. *Communities of Play* is an exemplary work that lays a firm foundation for expanding the study of play and community, particularly in online worlds.

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Jokes and Targets. By Christie Davies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011. Pp. ix + 314, acknowledgments, introduction, references, index.

The study of humor is serious business, but it requires far more than simply collecting the text of a joke in order to fully understand its meaning and social significance. A joke's performative context—who told it, why, and how the joke was transmitted, received, and subsequently passed along—is equally important. However, the overarching social contexts that presage a joke's (or body of jokes) utterance offer the greatest insights into its creation, content, and audience. With *Jokes and Targets*, sociologist Christie Davies has compiled a fascinating, straightforward, and comprehensive look into the social histories of several major joke cycles about specific targets, or "groups of people who are the butt of jokes upon whom a conventional comic script pins some undesirable quality" (6), in an effort to reveal and contextualize the origins behind a myriad of these popular jokes.

Utilizing an interdisciplinary framework, Davies shares compelling insights into why popular joke targets have attained such longevity in joke cycles. He does not concern himself with tracing particular jokes back to their original creators—such a task is futile—but rather how the historical events and social contexts that facilitated their creation, dissemination, and popularity ultimately rendered the jokes meaningful. Among the broad groups Davies profiles are dumb and desirable blondes; the oversexed French; Jewish men and women; men who have sex with other men (hetero- and homosexual alike); greedy American lawyers and the U.S. legal system; and the Soviet Union. Additionally, Davies offers an interpretive overview of the numerous occupations, ethnic groups, and social classes that have been humorously pegged as "stupid" or, conversely, "canny" in popular joke cycles over the years.

Following an excellent introduction in which the author provides a brief literature review of humor scholarship and outlines *Jokes and Targets*' key ideas and terms, Davies is quick to lay the theoretical groundwork for the book. Davies's writing is somewhat dense, and at times his propensity for expansive detail obfuscates his argumentation, which is perhaps most evident in the more theory-laced beginning and concluding chapters of *Jokes and Targets*. This is not to say that the author's prose is indecipherable—on the contrary, it is quite accessible throughout most of the book. However, he is clearly at his best while deconstructing representative case studies of popular targets and their social and historical origins. In doing so, Davies presents the contextual intricacies of each target with effortless mastery, providing complete and often amusing explanations for why jokes about these particular targets exist. Most convincingly, he surveys historical French cultural attitudes and preferences about sex (and how they were viewed by other Westerners, namely Americans and the English) in order to explain and contextualize the preponderance of sex-themed jokes about the French (76-112). The author's discussion of the gender roles, sexual preferences, and occupational/religious expectations of Jewish men and women (113-153) is

also exceptionally compelling due to the sheer breadth of source material and Davies's provocative interpretations, as is his inquiry into why political jokes about the Soviet Union managed to persist among those living behind the Iron Curtain, and why those jokes were especially meaningful to those joke tellers under the control of totalitarianism (213-252). Finally, Davies concludes with the contention that "stupid" jokes are "always told about those on the edge of a country or a cultural or linguistic area, with the tellers being at the center" (254), which he supports with commodious explanation and illustrative examples in the book's closing pages.

Despite the overwhelming strength of *Jokes and Targets*, there is room for a brief complaint. Davies is quick to dismiss the inherent integrity of joke materials collected online, claiming that "studies of humor that rely on the internet alone are often badly flawed" and that "editors and website compilers are always tempted to take and adapt jokes from other sources in a way that produces jokes that bear no relationship at all to their new setting. Those who send the sites jokes by letter or e-mail can be equally guilty of distortion" (14). While there is some truth behind Davies's rationale, especially in the case of self-proclaimed "joke websites," it is unfair and misleading to suggest that such distortive practices reflect how most people interact with humor online; for one, joke compilation websites are not even the most popular source for joke seekers to acquire or post new material. In any case, the Internet should not be conceptualized as a mere static archive, but rather a dynamic locus for vernacular expression. Increasingly, individuals tell jokes through social media in ways that are analogous or complementary to oral communication practices; people interchangeably use technology *and* face to face interaction to share humor with peers and community members. More, not less, study of Internet-based humor is necessary. Even though Davies does acknowledge the benefits of using the Internet for humor research and cites numerous Web-based materials throughout his research, his general characterization of humor on the Internet seems somewhat antiquated, which is an unfortunate diversion from his otherwise sterling work.

Nevertheless, *Jokes and Targets* is well worth the price of admission. It is a valuable addition to Davies's existing and esteemed corpus of humor research, standing favorably alongside *Ethnic Humor Around the World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), *Jokes and their Relations to Society* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998), and *The Mirth of Nations* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2002). On its own merits, *Jokes and Targets* is essential reading for scholars of humor, who will surely appreciate the detail and care of the author's work. Given the volume's comprehensiveness and wealth of bibliographical resources, it would be especially valuable to scholars in the humanities or qualitative social sciences who are newer to the study of humor. And with its interdisciplinary appeal and accessible prose, *Jokes and Targets* could be adapted easily into advanced undergraduate and graduate courses about humor, especially those focusing on its social dimensions, as well as other relevant course offerings in sociology, history, American Studies, and folklore, among others.

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Japanese Demon Lore: Oni from Ancient Times to the Present. By Noriko T. Reider. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2010. Pp. 208, introduction, footnotes, bibliography, index, illustrations.

Aman stands on a bridge. He is awed in the presence of the beautiful woman before him. Just as he is about to surrender himself to her embrace, she changes. Suddenly he is confronted by a hideous, horned, slavering demon whose hunger is not for sex, but for his flesh. Such scenes of sudden transformations are ubiquitous in Japanese demon lore, which, in the centuries of living memory, has contained creatures called *oni* who feed on human flesh and, as often as not, provide object lessons for the hearer of the tales.

Dr. Reider's book on demon lore is timely in several senses of the word. Not only does she take the reader through Japanese demon lore over its entire recorded history, but in discussing the evolution it has undergone over time, she also touches on how changing mores and perspectives have influenced the understanding and interpretation of demons in general and *oni* in particular. This expanded point of view also speaks to the current popular portrayal of historically evil or trickster figures as sympathetic, misunderstood, and even romantic (such as in the television series *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer* or *Twilight* films). This work also raises the question of how much impact Japanese culture, and especially Japanese pop culture, has had on Western society.

The book starts with a general definitional overview of the place of *oni* in Japanese culture. *Oni* are a type of demon from Japanese folklore, who have been imbued with Buddhist characteristics in the time since that belief system established a foothold in Japanese spirituality. Reider provides a linguistic breakdown of many of the *oni* specific terms, which demonstrate this apparent bridge between the early Shinto/animistic beliefs of the islands and the Buddhist influence.

While they are horrific in appearance—possessing horns, fangs, superhuman height, and so on—and cannibalistic in nature, they have never been wholly evil. *Oni* have conventionally represented the marginalized and counter-hegemonic in Japanese society, serving as object lessons for teaching normative social behaviors. For example, instructions on how to defeat *oni,* as well as to resist those aspects of our nature which may lead us to become them, have been their primary purpose. In other words, they have functioned as demons do in folklore the world over.

This latter point is demonstrated most poignantly in chapter three, "Women Spurned, Revenge of Oni Women: Gender and Space," which examines, among other features, "ugly women," wives, and others who are rejected by men and become *oni* in order to take their revenge. Some of these shunned women successfully destroy husbands and mistresses. Most *oni* are killed for their pains. Reider's reading on this aspect of *oni* lore looks at both the actions of the marginalized—the unattractive women—and those who have flouted conventions such as marriage. *Oni* are equally often portrayed as outcasts, or even outsiders. For example, during World War II, *oni* not only took on their traditional forms, but

the term was also applied to the ultimate outsider: the leaders of American, Russian and Chinese forces (107). This demonstrates the essential folkloric nature of the *oni* inasmuch as their *lore* is contextually adaptable as culture and context requires.

Reider provides snapshots of *oni* lore from the earliest recorded Japanese folklore all the way through the present. In this study, she provides a very thorough cross-section of their characteristics—such as the ability to alter gender and appearance, as needed, the kind of person who may become an *oni* (as they are not all born demons), and narratives of how they are defeated. She also shows how the presentation of demons in folklore and popular culture has changed over time, stopping at different eras in Japanese history to discuss the alterations specific characters and characteristics have experienced.

What is particularly interesting to me is how *oni* have become increasingly sympathetic figures in modern popular culture. More and more, audiences are asked to view *oni* characteristics and behaviour, such as gender bending, demon shape and cannibalism, as, if not "good," at least not wholly bad and misunderstood. This makes them popular characters in anime and manga, two kinds of media that have made and are continuing to make a strong impact on American popular culture. How much this changing view on *oni* colours the current Western view of "creatures of the night" (such as vampires, as beings with the same moral potential as humans) is hard to say. *Oni* can be grouped in a similar class with vampires if blood sucking is viewed as analogous

to cannibalism, but in both cultures such "demons" have become multi-faceted beings in recent decades that their status is quite variable.

However, as an academic work, the book makes several leaps in logic regarding the origin of *oni*, other aspects of their nature, and the way they functioned as social controls. This may be a result of cutting for space or insufficient footnoting, but there are a few areas where more information would have made for a more informed reading. For example, there are several areas in which, after recounting a story of an *oni* with a "straw raincoat of invisibility," Reider notes that:

This *kyogen's* oni …probably descends from the Japanese line of oni…. The treasured hat and cloak with the power to make their wearer invisible might have been a main source of the oni's power of invisibility (25).

There is far more discussion of shape-changing and gender disguise in her study than of invisibility, but, regardless, she provides little more evidence of this statement than the above. However, this gloss does not detract overmuch from the total quality of the work.

On a personal note, having dealt in my own research with liminal spaces, I cannot help but be fascinated by the number of *oni* encounters that take place on bridges. Whether this is simply characteristic of the examples Reider chose, or part and parcel of the way *oni* straddle more than one world, especially as cultural Others, there is no way to determine from this book, and, at the very least, I would like to have seen an acknowledgement of this seemingly disproportionate fascination with a space between.

These criticisms aside, *Japanese Demon Lore* is an excellent overview of *oni* that explores *oni* lore and legends and tracks their evolving characteristics through history. While the narratives and *oni* artwork make this book worth reading, Reider's discussion of the Japanese view on the marginalized and those who refuse to follow social conventions, such as obeying the orders of the emperor, keeps the work interesting for both the academic and lay reader alike. The work is very informative and presented in a style that is sophisticated but also relatively jargon-free, making for wide audience appeal.

For the student of Japanese folklore, mythology, and religion, it is an excellent addition to a collection and as a good study aid. It stands up well next to works on the supernatural like Gillian Bennett's *Alas Poor Ghost* (nee *Traditions of Belief*), Barbara Walkers's 1995 collection *Out of the Ordinary*, and the works of Elizabeth Miller unraveling the myths and folklore of Dracula from the reality. Reider additionally analyzes the ideographic nature of the Japanese written language to illustrate how the *oni* have been and are understood. This last aspect can be a little difficult to understand for non-speakers / readers, but is still fascinating as both a linguistic lesson and an example of the evolution of written Japanese.

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Thomas Kinkade: The Artist in the Mall. Edited by Alexis L. Boylan. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. Pp. 283, introduction, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations.

By the time of his unexpected death earlier this year, the paintings of American artist Thomas Kinkade (1958-2012) could be found in one in every twenty homes in the United States, to say nothing of countless medical waiting rooms and office lobbies (Art and Design, New York Times, April 27, 2012). Yet few of us have ever seen an "original" Kinkade. His reputation rests instead upon reproductions of his original paintings, which typically depict either cozy English-style cottages amidst verdant gardens, sturdy lighthouses perched at sea's edge, or quaint streetscapes of towns and cities circa 1930 to 1960, all painted in his signature style of dappled pastel colors rendering dramatic light effects. Kinkade's success has made him something of a household name, but it has also engendered the hostility of critics who deride him for pandering sentimental kitsch to a mass public. Refreshingly, the contributors to *Thomas Kinkade: The Artist in the Mall* avoid judgment and take the artist's popularity and ubiquity seriously, and, as a result, they are able to offer a series of probing and insightful essays that analyze Kinkade as a cultural phenomenon.

The volume consists of eleven essays, each addressing a specific topic, from Kinkade's art-historical pedigree to the latent political and religious content in his imagery. Each author crafts a compelling, well-researched argument, employing high standards of scholarly rigor. What

ultimately distinguishes this volume, however, is the cumulative impact of all eleven the essays on the reader, who gains a depth of insight, not just the breadth that is more common to monographs. I attribute this to two factors. First, the authors all pursue, more or less, the same methodology, an approach editor Alexis L. Boylan identifies as that of "visual culture studies." Whereas traditional art historical scholarship focuses on canonical works of art and attributes their meaning to an artist's intentions and goals, these scholars seek to understand the diverse ways in which widely circulating, non-canonical, and commercially produced images are employed by everyday people to generate, reify, and sustain their worldviews. By privileging reception over production, this method acknowledges that meaning in images is generated through viewership and is therefore bound up with cultural values. Second, but related to the first, the arguments made by the authors speak to each other in subtle and surprising ways so that the volume acquires an unexpected intellectual richness. Indeed, by the time the reader has turned the last page, it is evident that the Kinkade phenomena is a force to be reckoned with, as it intersects so many aspects of contemporary American life, including consumerism, neo-conservatism, evangelicalism, urban planning, memory, nostalgia, and aesthetics.

While summarizing each essay is not possible in this brief review, an indication of the kind of insight offered by the authors—and visual culture studies methodology more generally—can be had by delving into one of the book's common themes: the paradoxical nature of the Kinkade phenomenon,

and the social and ideological work that the images do for their viewers. To Kinkade's appreciators, the imagery of his painting appears historically correct, evocative of specific memories. Yet these memories are an ahistorical fantasy, mirages of some earlier, more easeful time when the anxieties engendered by the market economy and globalization did not exist. Paradoxically, this fantasy can only be most fully "realized" through the purchase of a Kinkade; thereby appreciators must actively participate in the potentially debilitating consumer ethos from which they seek refuge. In fact, Kinkade inverts the commonly held view that the market corrupts art. For the artist and his followers, just the opposite is true; his popularity in the marketplace testifies to the authenticity of his "art," and market ideology validates the fantasy the "paintings" perpetuate.

Beyond history, this fantasy extends to politics and religion. The paintings make no overt political statements, but nonetheless promote a social vision of neo-conservativism by presenting as an ideal a prettified mid-twentieth century neighborliness, where benevolent white middle-class families share "traditional" views of domesticity, community, and nationalism. This community ethos is contradicted by the isolation of the domestic structures in Kinkade's landscapes, to say nothing of the actual gated community built in Vallejo, California that was inspired by Kinkade's painted ideal. Similarly, the paintings eschew overt religious iconography, but his fans nonetheless see in them an expression of the artist's born-again relation to God, and, by extension, a Christian message of hope and inspiration. Yet, as these authors make

clear, full participation in Kinkade's pastel kingdom is predicated upon middle class patterns of consumerism—and a desire to live in pre-civil rights America.

Finally, the paradoxes extend to Kinkade's relationship to the art world. While he was alive, he positioned himself against the clichés of alienation and elitism associated with art found in white-walled galleries. He instead painted familiar subjects in a soothing, legible, quasi-Impressionistic style, and his commodified reproductions were— and continue to be—sold in homey, shopping mall-based galleries replete with sofas and fireplaces, and staffed by friendly, picture-loving people. He thus presented himself a populist providing an art accessible to all, regardless of income or education. However, prices for his reproductions are not uniform, but increase significantly the closer they mimic—through actual hand-painted accents applied to them—the painterly qualities of the original. The artist also hid among his houses and foliage symbols that make reference to his personal life—a visual code recognizable only to his most ardent enthusiasts. Both strategies emulate the art world he deplored, fostering an elite group of Kinkade connoisseurs who collect the "highest quality" reproductions and who are knowledgeable enough about the artist to "read" a deeper meaning into his imagery. In the end, these and other paradoxes make *Thomas Kinkade: The Artist in the Mall* a compelling read for any scholar interested in understanding the ways in which people use images produce, maintain, and even contest cultural values.

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Still, the Small Voice: Narrative, Personal Revelation, and the Mormon Folk Tradition. By Tom Mould. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2011. Pp. xi + 388, introduction, appendix, notes, works cited, index.

Still, the Small Voice explores the cultural significance of personal revelation narratives in Mormon culture. While not a Mormon, Tom Mould carefully researched and clearly articulated an emic view of this pervasive, important practice and its relevance to Mormon worldview. Mould's study includes ethnographic fieldwork with a ward in North Carolina; access to three archives: the Fife Folklore Archives at Utah State University in Logan, the William A. Wilson Folklore Archives at Brigham Young University in Provo, the Utah Humanities Research Foundation Records at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City; and finally the published records of church members and leaders in journals and magazines. Mould admits to the regional limitations of his research, but does an excellent job broadly outlining this important practice in Latter-day Saint culture and offering interested scholars many avenues for further research.

Chapter 1 situates personal revelation narratives within the Mormon tradition as both intensely personal and fundamentally public. Because these narratives recall religiously affirming experiences and act as such in their own right, Mould correctly identifies them as a significant and often overlooked source for studying Mormon culture. Mould mentions, and I agree, that folklorists have too often focused on the fantastical,

monstrous, and superstitious rather than the far more common, "though sometimes less spectacular encounters with the divine" (55). And that is exactly why this kind of study is long overdue. For instance, three Nephite stories have been a mainstay of Mormon folklore scholarship for decades, but as a Latter-day Saint myself, I can say these are rarely shared. Tom Mould's research, then, is more reflective of everyday Mormon experience. Personal revelation is central for Latter-day Saints because it sits at the intersection between their spiritual and temporal lives, in which they ask God for help in their daily lives.

With his focus on writing the everyday reality of Latter-day Saints, Mould's analysis is rooted in Richard Bauman's performance theory. To uncover the framework, esthetic response, and culture-specific contexts, Mould relies on thorough rhetorical analysis of these memorates. The importance of the narrator, audience, and historical and cultural contexts that give rise to the narrative form are prominent in every chapter. While speaking of genre in Chapter 3, Mould shows how author and audience expectations center on proving the divine in everyday life. That concern connects to the founding of Mormonism and is itself a central tenet of belief: that God speaks to people today. It shows how Mormon tradition and cultural life are arenas for performing one's beliefs. In Chapter 4, Mould uncovers the various rhetorical purposes these memorates are put to: instructing, forming connections with ancestors or progeny, and "performing" one's membership in the Latter-day Saint community. These "retroactive" revelations in the narrative

tradition show how Mormons interpret spiritual and deeply personal experiences in culturally informed ways.

Mould notes how blurry the lines are between genres and how overlapping the functions of these narratives can be. The personal revelation genre blends aspects of personal experience, legend, and sometimes even myth. Chapter 5 explores the cloudy division between experience itself and the personal and cultural forces at work in the interpretation of that experience by Mormon believers. Chapter 6 then explores the often overlapping but conveniently separated modes of oral and written narratives. Mould makes a strong case for vibrant oral and written traditions that coexist with abundant points of contact and cross-pollination. Here, as in other places, Mould's strength is his inclusiveness. He focuses on the material without tiptoeing around outliers or apparent contradictions, and rather vigorously chases them and finds how they fit into the highly personal, but culturally informed, tradition of personal revelation.

While Mould's material is well documented, and his analysis is spot on, his claims are more suggestive than conclusive. In Chapter 5, for instance, Mould notes that women typically receive revelation about premortal existence while men more often receive revelation about the afterlife. It is a tantalizing detail about future orientation and possible gender and cultural influences on what has been seen as a very broad cultural marker in America. These and other details in *Still, the Small Voice* open up many avenues of research for major themes in folklore and cultural studies. Mould himself outlines many of these

avenues in the afterword, but in many of the concluding sections of his chapters, I wanted him to push his analysis further than he seemed willing to. Whether this was out of respect for his informants, due to the sheer size of his study, or the endless implications of his subject, I am not sure. Still, his overall conclusion about personal revelation's importance and how its meaning is shaped culturally and dialogically between experience and expectation rings true to my experience in the tradition and my training as a folklorist.

Folklorists and Mormon scholars alike should find ample use for *Still, the Small Voice*. While the book is primarily folkloric, the pervasiveness and centrality of personal revelation narratives in Mormon culture and experience makes this book a great companion to other studies, such as Terryl Givens's touchstone publication *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture*. Mould's treatment grounds personal narratives not only in their contemporary context, but also in their historical prototypes and religious Ur-forms, so the student of Mormon culture should find numerous revelations of their own in Mould's well-documented treatment. For example, Chapter 2 outlines the inherent tension between sharing and not sharing personal spiritual experiences that Mormons must navigate with muted language to avoid ridicule, embrace humility, and share what is seen as proof of righteousness without appearing self-righteous. The act of narration brings all these culturally relevant forces to almost every performance of these commonly shared stories.

Being a member of the group Mould analyzes, I found his treatment kind and his conclusions spot on. While my experience diverges somewhat from some of the details (not every ward has a Bishop assuring timid testifiers that "there are no coincidences," for instance), Mould, who admits of giving only a regional treatment, has presented a very broad and far-reaching portrait of Mormon cultural life in America today. His work is well researched, clearly presented and should open up many promising paths of inquiry for folklorists and students of Mormon culture.

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Performance and Politics in Tanzania: The Nation on Stage. By Laura Edmondson. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007. Pp. x +175, acknowledgements, introduction, glossary of terms, notes, references, index.

"All the world's a stage." These words have never been more apt than in describing Laura Edmondson's much needed contribution to performance scholarship in Tanzania. Positioning herself strategically among three performance companies in the post-colonial, post-socialist nation-state, Edmondson has created a stellar multisited ethnography that comprehensively and confidently explores the complex and often paradoxical relationships between global affairs, state agendas, nationalism, popular culture, ethnicities, urban and rural communities, gender, and individual and collective identity / agency.

Her introduction sets the stage by providing glimpses into the performances of three distinct Tanzanian performing companies—Tanzania One Theater (TOT), Muungano, and Mandela—presenting the reader with a visualization of the many differences to be found against the "Western tendency to homogenize African ritual and performance" (9). Edmondson reveals the underlying forces at play connecting them—and the Tanzanian people—together, and in doing so argues that "the uniqueness of Tanzanian popular culture theatre calls for theoretical approaches that push beyond oppositional models of resistance or capitulation" (6). In creating her own theoretical approach, she provocatively introduces and employs such terms as collaborative nationalism, alternative nationalism, strategic nationalism, and cosmopolitan nationalism to describe cultural expressions that demonstrate the "continuous cycle of collaboration, complicity, and conviviality" to be found within Tanzanian theatre (7). She asserts that the negotiations of national identity are neither top-down nor bottom-up, but rather a mix of direct and indirect collaboration among the many players.

Edmondson is careful to provide the historical context in which the performance companies emerged. In her first chapter, she discusses the post-colonial development of performance in Tanzania, revealing the complexities of identity construction amid a transitional, liminal period from colonialism to statehood, and socialism to post-socialism. The reader is vividly shown various aspects of performance, including the influence of China, which provided overseas *sarakasi* (acrobatics) training to Tanzanian artists to arouse sentiments of socialist identity. Another aspect is the effects of *ngoma* (dance), whose performance via the National Dance Troupe initially divided the poor and upper classes when the elite pushed to marginalize its performance, believing it to be a representation of the subaltern and consequently embarrassing to the nation. The elite advocated for drama instead, in an attempt to combine the country's precolonial tradition with their "modern leanings" (22). These three aspects of performance—drama, dance, and acrobatics—formed the tripartite model, whose intended purpose was to propagate the government's concept of *ujamaa* ("familyhood") by molding a

sense of nationalistic identity through representations of Tanzania's precolonial heritage, its colonial history, and its socialist future.

These national troupes of dance, drama, and acrobats which formed the tripartite model disintegrated in 1981 as a result of competition among cultural troupes, who existed alongside the national troupes as an alternative branch of nationalist performance. Edmondson also describes the effects of the 1980s, the war with Uganda, and the pressure from the International Monetary Fund to liberalize the economy. This resulted in the general consolidation of performance into three companies—Tanzania One Theater (TOT), Muungano, and Mandela—as well as a handful of cultural troupes, who worked to construct and reconstruct, define and redefine what it meant to be "Tanzanian."

Edmondson asserts that the three companies did not engage in this conversation as equals, but rather within a competition of resources. Tanzanian One Theatre (TOT) became affiliated with the ruling party, receiving better equipment and a reputation of modernity with its performance "collud[ing] with the ruling party's (CCM) agenda to shape the terms of post-socialist national identity through the guise of popular culture. TOT's image as a trend-setting, hip alternative to Muungano resonated with CCM's anxiety to shed its image as the old guard, unable to 'move with the times'" (43). It was within the frame of this new model that identity was recreated during the 1990s, with performances reflecting the new cultural trends and hybridization resulting from increased interaction with the West. Power and morality were

re-conceptualized on stage, shaped by capitalism and competition to part from the old nationalist ideals as performance transitioned from promoting unity and justice to instead portraying reality with instances of offenders getting away with acts of violence.

She also discusses women, gender, and class relations in this new national context. For the former two, she examines the role of tradition in women's agency and negotiation during this time of complexity among a broad spectrum of players and interests. In presenting traditional practices as forms of identity expression and agency for women, the author argues that "[t]his strategy refutes the notion that modernization is equated with female empowerment, for it depicts tradition as a resource rather than simply as a means of oppression" (99). She still gives credit where it is due, however, discussing in one of her many detailed performance examples a skit in which actors depict the rape of a woman and molestation of a child, equating their respective vulnerabilities, and in so doing conveying the message that it is not women's "fault" when they are sexually assaulted.

For the latter, she examines the dichotomies of rich and poor, and urban and rural. She explores how all three performance groups portray these relationships differently in terms of synthetic nostalgia and syncretic nostalgia, which she posits as speaking to the balance of tradition with its invention, counter-invention, and reinvention. In one example, the author argues that the newly-introduced electronic music provided a sense of unity among competing ethnic groups, acting as a

common denominator throughout the various performances of "tradition."

The book's final chapter describes one of the performance group's ascension to the top of Tanzanian performance popularity and the role of East African nationalism, Tanzanian democracy, and popular culture in the new millennium. "Democracy in the hands of Tanzanian politicians might indeed have become a dull affair," she declares, "but...it persisted as a messy and vibrant force that theoretical frameworks and narrative closures could not possibly contain" (140).

Edmondson seamlessly communicates the powers involved in such processes of cultural negotiation and leaves little to be desired for a multisited examination of Tanzania's culturally influenced political development. Her research is solid, her theory sound, and her writing style enjoyable. *Performance and Politics in Tanzania* will make a valuable addition to any scholar's library.

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