

Together with the anthology *The Good People*, edited by Peter Narvaez, and the 1991 issue of *Béaloides*, "The Fairy Hill is on Fire," Barbara Rieti's *Strange Terrain* marks a renaissance in fairylore studies, moving the study of fairylore from a literary study to one informed by ethnographic, psychological, phenomenological, and religious perspectives. Of these three books, Rieti's is perhaps the most important since it opens for investigation an area of fairylore long believed not to exist. Her book will, I hope, lead to further investigations of fairylore in the Americas. It deservedly won the Raymond Klibansky award for social sciences research in Canada. *Strange Terrain* will be essential reading for those interested in fairylore, and should end the belief that the fairies do not cross the ocean

Neil V. Rosenberg, ed. **Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined.** Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993. Publication of the American Folklore Society/Music in American Life Series. Pp. xiii. + 340, notes and index. \$29.95 cloth.

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Neil Rosenberg began assembling and editing the collection of essays in this volume following a panel discussion on folk revivalism at the 1987 meeting of the American Folklore Society. The book's essays include papers given at the conference and articles written for *Transforming Tradition* as well as essays reprinted for this compilation. Following Alan Jabbour's foreword, which vividly addresses issues essential to scholarship on folk music revivalism, Neil Rosenberg develops Jabbour's theme that it is more useful to examine an array of folk music revivals in North America rather than to speak solely of one American folk music revival. This organizing principle succeeds throughout the book, and Rosenberg's comprehensive and insightful introductions to the book's three sections provide a useful commentary which gives *Transforming Tradition* the tone of a fascinating panel discussion.

Many of the essayists came to study folk music through their own participation in folk music revivals. Rosenberg notes that all of the essays feature reflexive considerations of the writers' involvement in performing, documenting, or producing presentations of folk music. As Bruce Jackson points out, it is regrettable that past scholars of folk music have refrained from this type of self-reflective scholarship as they have often ignored revivalist movements when they were at their peaks. His article explores

how the belief that it was inappropriate to pay scholarly attention to the "popularizers" of folksongs resulted in a lack of solid ethnographic studies of various folk music revival movements. To compensate for this dearth of scholarship, many of the studies in *Transforming Tradition* focus on revivalism within the period of the late 1950s to early 1960s. Perhaps sufficient time has passed that the authors feel they can be more critical of the period, or perhaps yesterday's popular culture has indeed become today's folklore. Because the topics frequently involve autobiographical details, the quality of writing is highly readable and often anecdotal rather than academically arcane. The essays by Archie Green and Kenneth Goldstein exemplify this informal style. Green's essay describes his involvement in organizing a folk music club, while Goldstein's case study presents the issues that emerge in producing records by folk musicians. While they deal critically and intelligently with the urge to romanticize folklore, occasional hints of nostalgia slip through. The affection the scholars feel for the era is pardonable (if indeed it can be considered a sin).

Rosenberg organizes the book into sections entitled "The Great Boom," "The New Aesthetic," and "Named-Systems Revivals." He introduces the themes of each section and provides a brief abstract of each article. The five essays in "The Great Boom" provide both an overview of the 1950s American folk music revival as well as considerations of folk music clubs, folk and popular music, and production of recordings of folk musicians. The plethora of topics includes a consideration of the effect of a scholar's use of constructs such as "folk musician" and "authentic" on the ways in which folklorists present musicians within their scholarship and in public programs. The observations and insights offered are relevant across genres; the writers suggest that labeling an artist an "authentic tradition-bearer" can represent the folklorist's own assumptions, and thereby can carry with it an implicit bias that may not be congruent with an artist's own perception of his or her cultural expression. The three essays in "The New Aesthetic" examine issues in the historical period that followed the Great Boom of folk music. The essayists incorporate Canadian materials as resources for their discussion. The broader orientation to American folk music provides perspectives applicable to any revivalist movement, and the refreshing choice of materials introduces artists and events unfamiliar to many American folklorists. Anne Lederman's essay on "Barrett's Privateers" provides an excellent analysis of different community contexts for music. Without denigrating revivalists, she argues that while their music can be examined as an aspect of folk culture, their performance venues are qualitatively different than the social contexts for folk music as conceptualized in more orthodox terms. By examining folk music within

its characteristic performance venues, Lederman suggests a useful means for comparing early forms of folk music with the music of the New Aesthetic.

The seven essays of the “Named Systems Revivals” section provide relevant commentaries on issues raised in the preceding two sections. Rosenberg sees a “named system revival” as a process involving revival and innovation to the extent of an immersion within a cultural system that, characteristically, is named by the participants. Bluegrass, blues, old-time fiddling, and various forms of ethnic music are named systems that appeal to revivalist musicians. The scholars examine how community, authenticity, aesthetics, and politics are salient concerns within these types of musical systems, and their conclusions discuss omnipresent issues that folklorists have considered in highly divergent ways throughout their scholarship. This third section is the book’s most stimulating, and the writers display a wide range of perspectives on issues involved in studying and presenting folk music.

While all of the folklorists writing in this volume question fellow professionals’ frequently disparaging attitudes toward revivalist musicians who perform these styles of music, there is little consensus on the concerns that folklorists consider when they research folk music in contemporary settings. Discussing a range of genres and issues, they examine complicated questions germane to folklorists working in academe and the public sector. Various writers question the appropriateness of authenticity as a criteria for folk music scholarship. They examine the politics of culture evident in tying a particular genre to a particular ethnic group. Various essays consider the role of revivalists in public presentation. All of the writers address whether or not the “revivalist” label is even useful in describing folk music.

The range of perspectives in *Transforming Tradition* can be read in different ways. Some readers will become frustrated at the lack of accord among folk music scholars; the dialogue on folk music eventually emerges as a deconstructionist’s field day. Other readers will excoriate the essayists with whom they disagree and find fodder for their own positions in the writings of other essayists. What is needed is further development and synthesis of the arguments offered in the fifteen essays, and the book’s strength is its potential to provide useful means for wrestling with difficult questions. As Burt Feintuch notes, revivalism transforms tradition. Perhaps Rosenberg’s edited volume will lead to similar transformations in folklore research which could resolve some of the difficulties in conducting folklore scholarship and in staging public presentations.