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One of the tragic ironies of the intellectual history of Socialism is the way Stalinist regimes purported to create conditions for the natural growth of the arts—especially folk arts—unfettered by capitalist restrictions, while in fact subordinating all artistic activity to the service of the state. The resulting professional compromises in method, research, scholarship, and performance have left a climate of public and intellectual mistrust in central and eastern Europe today. In *Folklore for Stalin*, Frank Miller attempts to determine the effects of these compromises on traditional forms or oral compositions in order to understand the position of artistic genius under such conditions.

Miller begins with a review of the change of the definition of folklore in Russian scholarly circles. Considered “ideologically backward” in the 1920s, folklore emerged in the 1930s as “the oral poetic creations of the broad folk masses” (4). Various government agencies were established to foster and publish folklore composed in this new proletarian vein. Miller focuses on Stalinist adaptations of two genres of traditional Russian performance, *stariny* and *byliny*, genres which easily allowed for the introduction of nontraditional, Stalinist material. Miller pays special attention to Marfa Kriukova, whose genre of stariny, “old tales,” became noviny, “new tales,” in Stalinist trappings. Miller contends that this nontraditional material resulted in performances that were not just nontraditional but inauthentic, pseudofolklore, and propaganda. This work and the reputation of these artists disappeared quickly after the end of the Stalinist era.

Miller’s work raises some serious questions regarding the nature of authentic folk performance and the manner in which one recognizes it. What, for example, are the ethical issues involved in a government’s role in promoting folk arts? What is the nature and extent of academic compromise? And how resilient are traditional forms to radical changes in rhetoric? Miller’s index lacks generic definitions, a significant oversight if we consider that this is a debate over adherence to definitions. Indeed, *Folklore for Stalin* seems to equate evil politics with pseudofolklore and settle for that. Miller’s documentation of the institutional history of the folklore apparatus of Stalinist Russia, and his compilation of noviny are worthy of note even though he leaves out the human side of composition and scholarship. He mentions little of the artists’ personal feelings toward the fame they gained through introducing Stalinist themes, or whether the alterations were suggested,
encouraged, or coerced by scholars (who were coerced in turn?). We learn much about creativity under stress in this book, but we learn it from the results rather than from the individual creative process.


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Jens Lund's *Flatheads and Spooneys: Fishing for a Living in the Ohio River Valley* renders a detailed ethnographic account of the folklore and folklife of the commercial fisherpeople living in the Ohio River Valley. It provides one of the first comprehensive folkloristic considerations of the area by depicting both the traditional continuities and the innovative characteristics found among the river's inhabitants. Wending its way from Pennsylvania to Illinois, the Ohio River has provided commercial fishermen and fisherwomen with a source of food and income since the pioneer days. Lund opens his book with an account of the river's commercial fishing history, noting its importance to early Native American groups, and to the explorers and the pioneers. Each chapter examines the various aspects of fishing, such as the types of fish, the construction and uses of fishing boats, nets, hooks, lines, and traps found in the area, as well as the marketing, cooking, and consumption of fish. The chapter "River Folklore" especially details oral performances found in the lower Ohio Valley and includes personal experience narratives, humorous tales, jokes, and songs complete with notations.

For Lund, the fishing gear and techniques comprise the most distinctive features of the fisher folk character. Rather than limiting himself to isolating and describing these elements, he discusses the problems associated with river identity. Many of his informants are plagued by poverty and the ghostly image of a fortuitous past which they believe will never return. By demonstrating the presence of both tradition and innovation in fisher folk gear and techniques, Lund illustrates the ways in which the fishermen's and fisherwomen's lives are not simply mired in the past. He shows how those unwilling to adopt new methods simply would and could not make a living, observing that currently, those who can and do fish for a living derive a sense of pride and independence from their ability. Based on years of fieldwork stretching back to the 1970s, the book is replete with stories, quotations, examples of local dialect, and vignettes reconstructed from Lund's field notes. Despite the richness of the text, however, the reader lacks a