

snake oil salesmen continue to ply their trades using new guises for old schemes. There is a growing body of scholarship that analyzes negative consequences of too easily accepting precepts from unorthodox health care, and folklorists, anthropologists, and humanities scholars should seriously examine these negative aspects of non-scientific medical practices. Just as this new volume provides researchers with insights into diverse belief systems about health, scholarship on folk medicine will also benefit from subsequent research that reveals the dangers of refusing to consider any form of treatment without an honest and conscientious application of valid healing logic.

Archie Green. **Torching the Fink Books and Other Essays on Vernacular Culture.** Foreword by Robert Cantwell. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. Pp. xxvii + 242, notes, bibliography of Archie Green's writing, index. \$18.95 paper.

Gregory Hansen
Arkansas State University

A revered advocate for public sector folklore, Archie Green's monumental contributions include lobbying for the American Folklife Preservation Act (Public Law 94-201) and major assistance in establishing the American Folklife Center and the Folk Arts Panel within the National Endowment for the Arts. Green has supported numerous public and private sector folklore organizations, and his wise counsel, tireless activism, and moral compass are at the heart good Folklore work. *His eloquent keynote addresses have inspired folklorists at numerous Folklore conferences, and Green continues to encourage and advise folklorists long after his retirement.* The twelve essays in *Torching the Fink Books* are an inspiring retrospective on his lifework. His articulate writing on topics ranging from folk etymology, country music, public folklore, and laborlore provides a vibrant foray into the scholarship of a premier folklorist.

Past president of the American Folklore Society and current Director of the America Folklife Center, Peggy Bulger, says it well in her notes on the book: "When someone asks me 'What is a folklorist?,' I will tell

them to read *Torching the Fink Books*.” Her accolades are echoed in Robert Cantwell’s brilliantly written foreword that insightfully explores Green’s passion for folklore. Cantwell’s discussion of the historical, social, and political milieus that have influenced Green is an exegesis on Green’s own contribution to contemporary Folklore studies. Cantwell’s foreword includes a fine discussion of the history of public folklore, and writers of intellectual history will be well-served to consider how Green’s contributions have influenced both public and academic folklore. Cantwell provides special attention to Green’s political orientation which Green, himself, describes as “anarcho-syndicalist with strong libertarian leanings” (xv). Green’s political stance is as conscientious and subtle as it is profound. Intellectual historians would do well to consider this ideology as a far more important influence on folklore than the putative claim that American folklore studies are incubated and remain nurtured in romantic nationalism.

These prefatory comments only set the stage for Green’s essays. Articles on occupational folklore provide fascinating insights into etymologies, workplace stories, rituals, and other facets of occupational culture that will resonate with many workers experiences. Forty years ago, Green’s seminal article “Hillbilly Music: Source and Symbol” opened up scholarly inquiry into early country music and commercial recordings of folk music. Today, it remains an important contribution to the social history of music. His comprehensive treatment of Austin’s “Cosmic Cowboys” was written twenty years ago, and today it reveals how the cowboy image continues to be constructed and reconstructed through American history. His essay on Thomas Hart Benton’s murals provide rich interpretations of Benton’s artistic vision, and Green’s keen eye reveals intriguing connections that bridge aesthetic boundaries between traditional art and depictions of American folklife in the fine arts. Shorter pieces on a joke about temporary office workers, a little-known folk artist named “Jack Fitch,” the nature of occupational folklore, and the wordsmith Peter Tamony add to the discursive essays in this volume and provide a hint of Green’s prodigious curiosity and creative research abilities.

The book’s core is Green’s eloquent writing on public folklore. “A Folklorist’s Creed and a Folksinger’s Gift” connects public sector folklore with Appalachian studies in an insightful history of folklore

studies in Appalachia. Green shows how early work by Cecil Sharp and Sarah Ogun Gunning displays historical continuities in later research by Alan Jabbour, Roger Abrahams, and contemporary folklorists. This essay analyzes differences and commonalities in the political orientation of folklorists and folk musicians, and Green's inquiry into the ethos of folklorists and 1950s and 1960s folk revivalists provides important contributions to a neglected aspect of the history of the discipline. A shorter article, "The Archives Shores," illuminates connections between folklore research, archival curatorial practices, and public folklore. In his inquiry into intersections between archival preservation, governmental policy, and professional practice, Green identifies the cultural pluralism of Horace Kallen as the basis for contemporary ideology on cultural diversity. Green rightly draws attention to Kallen's largely overlooked contributions, and future research on early formulations about pluralism developed by Kallen and his predecessors will provide an alternative intellectual history of the discipline. This augmented history will demonstrate how contributions from public programming must be taken into account in writing a more accurate history of Folklore as a profession and practice.

The book's quintessential essay is "Stitching Patchwork in Public." Green's beautifully written vision of his high ideals for public folklore. Originally delivered as the keynote address for a 1987 conference on public folklore at Western Kentucky University, Green's intricate use of historical narrative, personal recollections, and compelling metaphors inspires readers to reflect on interrelationships between folklife studies, historic preservation, cultural conservation, and ecology. This essay stitches together a patchwork quilt of ideas and values that are negotiated within public programming. In this pastiche, Green posits the core of good public folklore practice as an engagement with three primary factors: identifying cultural particularity, linking field research to preservation and conservation movements, and asserting the value of cultural pluralism. Green's compelling argument centers on ways in which folklorists can sympathetically work within local communities, develop strategies for supporting honorable cultural traditions, and foster a spirit of tolerance tempered with high ideals as they create and coordinate public programs.

It is facile to think public folklore undertheorized, intellectually deficient, or ethically dubious. Green's writing shatters the illusion that doing public folklore work precludes serious scholarship, providing a basis for research in the rich history of this work. This volume articulates theory within practice, challenging anyone who cares about the discipline to work intelligently and conscientiously in the field.

Narváez, Peter, ed. 2003. **Of Corpse: Death and Humor in Folklore and Popular Culture**. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press.

Gabe McGuire
Indiana University

The essays in this collection cover a wide range of different places and events, but are unified by a common focus on humorous responses to death. Peter Narváez writes in the introduction that death is fascinating precisely because, in a world of which human beings have increasing knowledge, death is the "universal enigma." While death itself may be a mystery, people's perceptions of it are cultural constructs, and ranging from religion to humor. Narváez writes that the essays in *Of Corpse* are intended to reveal the complexity and variability of humorous responses to death. The function of such humor can range from attempts to alleviate fear to a celebration of life in the face of death. The essays documenting this phenomenon are divided into four sections: disaster jokes; rites of passage, festivals, and popular culture.

Christine Davies begins the disaster joke section with her excellent essay "Jokes That Follow Mass-Mediated Disasters in a Global Electronic Age." She notes that the disaster joke is a relatively recent phenomenon, and asks why that might be. Her answer is that it is a response to the incongruity of television's interspersing a highly moralistic and sorrowful narrative of disaster with crass commercials. In her view, the disaster joke is a response to the attempted moral autocracy of television commentary, commentary that tells viewers how they should respond to the disaster. This section's second essay, Bill Ellis's "Making a Big Apple Crumble: The Role of Humor in Constructing A Global Response to Disaster" uses internet chat rooms