REVIEWS

Folklore Methodology, by Kaarle Krohn.
Translated by Roger L. Welsch. Foreword by Archer Taylor.
192 pp. Index.
Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971. $6.00.

Reviewed by John A. Gutowski.

This commendable translation of the classic vade mecum for folkloric life histories will not inspire a Finnish method renaissance, but it should add another ordeal to the budding folklorist's initiation. Modern folklorists, following Von Sydow or Propp, disavow Folklore Methodology's quest for origin and dissemination because of the method's own theoretical shortcomings (ur-form reconstruction and automigration) as well as the practical insufficiency of texts fully representing both geographical and historical dimensions. Furthermore, as Archer Taylor's foreword concludes, "today we have gone further in folklore studies and are asking questions that the folkloristic method never tried to answer." Still, liabilities notwithstanding, exposure to Folklore Methodology can be justified on the grounds that some of today's questions cannot escape its domain. Aside from its historic import as antidote to nineteenth century monisms and as research paradigm for an influential scholarly generation, the book offers valuable information about oral transmission and techniques for formal analysis which transcend the loose theoretical underpinnings and the impractical goals of the Finnish school.

In the realm of formal analysis, Folklore Methodology details rigorous operational procedures which all folklorists, including structuralists, must master before each travels his separate path. Essentially Krohn formulates a common-sensical disciplined technique whereby texts are ordered, and then separated into their constituent elements capable of displaying every variation so that a pattern form can be abstracted from the regularly recurring traits. Folklore Methodology's implicit structural analysis is theoretically confined to particularistic, historical concerns: the determination of normal forms thence the ur-form of a type or group of related types. Modern structuralism, universalistic and non-historical, seeks the fundamental structure of the riddle, the magic tale, etc. In both cases theoretical vision differs; yet method remains basically the same. In any case, whether one deals with taxonomy, structure, style distribution, diffusion or transmission, Folklore Methodology provides an indispensable initial step.

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