

passages such as, “[The concept of network] might even let us ground the split postmodern subject in some social reality, helping us trace, in Bakhtinian fashion, the dialogue of influences at play in an individual” (26), in an essay that doesn’t even include Bakhtin in its bibliography; or—in regard to a joke’s punchline—“As a critique, this inversion repudiates . . . the hegemonic Kantian ideal of the autonomous and complete individual” (166)? Kids, don’t try this at home.

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Folkloristik 2003: Fire Folkloristiske Essays [Folkloristics 2003: Four Folkloristic Essays]. By Flemming Hemmersam. (Albertslund, 2003. Pp. 64, foreword, notes, bibliography, index, English summary. N.p. paper)

Flemming Hemmersam’s “pamphlet” of four short essays, self-published in conjunction with the twenty-ninth meeting of the Nordic Ethnologists and Folklorists congress (Helsingør, Denmark, 2003), presents several models for exploring the impact of late capitalism on traditional expression. In these short essays, he is primarily interested in the power relationships that inform the creation and perpetuation of traditional expression. He focuses in particular on folklorism, which he defines as “lore for people,” and folklore, “the people’s own lore” (30).

Throughout the work, Hemmersam rightfully characterizes Danish folkloristics as being in crisis, a crisis made all the more acute given the unfortunate decision of the University of Copenhagen to close the “Center for Folkloristics” in 2001. But Hemmersam’s nearly dogmatic proposal that Danish folklorists focus their efforts on the study of “lore kapitaler” [lore capitals] and “lore formationer” [lore formations] (7-8) does not seem to offer the clearest route out of this crisis. In his preface—translated into a somewhat unidiomatic English and appended as a summary—Hemmersam proposes a specific reorientation of Danish folkloristics based on his idea of “lore capital,” a notion reminiscent of Bourdieu’s ideas concerning cultural capital, and ends with a polemical description of “Folkloristik 2003” (Folkloristics 2003).

Of the four essays in the short volume, only the second and third rise to the level of essay, while the first and last are simply notes. The first, "Fra Ribe til Hovedstaden" [From Ribe to the Capital], explains how Hemmersam discovered the study of folklore, details his studies under Laurits Bødker (whose contributions to the study of folklore in Denmark are valorized throughout the collection), and explains, however vaguely, Hemmersam's current position as "fighting for folkloristics in Denmark" (11).

Hemmersam's second essay, "Folkloristik mellem folklorisme og folklore" [Folkloristics between Folklorism and Folklore], outlines his critique of the relationship between folklorism and folklore, and emphasizes the role that master narratives—particularly that of capital—play in social and cultural control. His short summaries of the history of folkloristics in the Nordic countries and the United States—particularly of developments at the University of Copenhagen—are at best misleading, and do little to further the main premise of the essay.

The third essay, "Folkloristik i europæiske og globale perspektiver" [Folkloristics in European and Global Perspectives], proposes his key notion of lore capitals, "ophobning[en] af minde- og traditionsformer," [the agglomeration of memory- and tradition-forms] (30). He suggests that folklorists should limit themselves to looking at the different types of lore capitals (national lore, lore in a state, lore in a society, EU-lore, global lore, and so forth) and the relationships between and within these lore capitals. In this essay, Hemmersam also introduces some unusual expressions such as "civil into nation," "EU into nations," "global into nations" and "capital into nations" (29) without providing any clear explanation of these terms, detracting from the potential rhetorical weight of his argument.

The final piece, "Folkloristik og etnologi" [Folkloristics and ethnology], is another short note that can be seen as a hand extended to the ethnologists (particularly in Copenhagen), proposing that the two disciplines can complement each other without requiring a loss of independence for either one. Of course, at the University of Copenhagen, the Department of Ethnology is still vibrant, while the Department of Folkloristics has been closed, and so the extended hand looks a bit like the gesture of a drowning man.

Ultimately, Hemmersam views the goal of folkloristics as a critique of capital and power relationships in a global society. His overarching concern is the dialectic between folklore and folklorism, and he feels that folklorists should focus on articulating the power structures that

inform this relationship. Yet, quoting E. S. Hartland, Hemmersam notes that "Folklore is the science of tradition" (16). The exploration of imprecisely delineated notions such as "lore capital" can certainly figure in this science, but to suggest that such explorations should delimit the field of folkloristics is unwise.

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Fables of the Ancients?: Folklore in the Qur'an. By Alan Dundes. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003. Pp. xiv + 89, preface, acknowledgments, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paper)

In "Form and Matter in the Publication of Research," R. B. McKerrow (1877-1940) speculated on "whether the fate of 'English studies' may not eventually be to be smothered in a kind of woolly and impenetrable fog of wordiness that few or none will be bothered to penetrate" (116). For the humanities, which accompanied "English studies" into the fog, McKerrow's prediction has long since come to pass. Among folklorists, practitioners of Harvard's tribal religion of Oral Formulaicism write mystifying prose. Under these circumstances, those of us who struggled to learn English as adults will find the late Alan Dundes's clear, concise, and intelligent prose in an essay that addresses oral-formulaic theory a pleasure to read. Naturally, we may disagree with his views, but all would agree that he has a remarkable ability to present complex issues lucidly and with elegance without losing any of their intricacy in the process. *Fables of the Ancients?: Folklore in the Qur'an*, bears the unmistakable mark of his erudition and style.

Appearing on the heels of his *Holy Writ as Oral Lit* (1999), which considered folklore in the Bible, Dundes's *Fables of the Ancients?* is devoted to the study of folklore in the Qur'an. The introductory chapter explains to the uninitiated what the Qur'an is and presents a brief but useful history of Islam's sacred text and of Muslims' account of its revelation and compilation into a coherent whole. The second chapter,