When I first read the title, The Folkloresque: Reframing Folklore in a Popular Culture World, I was struck with the idea of “reframing.” Reframing can be extreme, embodying a whole new approach to a topic. It can also be as simple as looking at something from a different angle. I believe the concept of the folkloresque in this book is reframing contemporary folklore from a different angle rather than a whole new approach. It does offer a term that folklorist and popular culture scholars have been dancing around for years and by having a new label allows for a new platform upon which discussion can be built.

This collection includes an introduction written by Michael Dylan Foster which clearly lays out how to interpret popular culture as folkloresque. Foster asks the reader to look at the folkloresque as a “specific genre of popular culture” and lays out three major categories for the folkloresque: integration, portrayal, and parody. The rest of the book is divided into these three sections with a short introduction to each followed by 3-4 essays that address a topic within the context of these categories.

The first section, integration, is described in the introduction to the book as “how popular culture producers integrate or stitch together folkloric motifs and forms to make a product that appears to be inspired directly by one or more specific traditions.” In my work in material culture and fashion, this would be similar to using Russian motifs in the Valentino collection of 2006, which is described as “folkloric,” in order to make the wearer feel more connected to a folk Russian culture. The following four chapters explain the concept of integration by using a variety of folklore topics. Michael Dylan Foster’s chapter, “The Folkloresque Circle: Towards a Theory of Fuzzy Allusions,” examines integration within the framework of Miyazaki Hayao of the well-known animated Japanese movie, Spirited Away. It is an excellent, consistently written essay that clearly lays out the concept of integration of the aspects of folklore into popular culture.
mediums in order to have a connective root in a culture, while being creative and explorative with popular mediums. The other three chapters in this section each explore a specific area of study such as the work of Neil Gaiman (Timothy H. Evans), pixies in the cultural fabric of Dartmoor in southern England (Paul Manning), and comics as an expression of folklore (Daniel Peretti). Each of these introduced new topics to me and helped unpack the concept of integration utilizing the concept of the folkloresque.

The next section is Portrayal, which is described as demonstrating the popular concept of folklore. The section, after a brief introduction, opens with an excellent chapter by Jeffery A. Tolbert. He applies the concept of the folkloresque in the framework of a contemporary video game, Fatal Frame. He examines two points: folklore when understood as folklore “deepens the player experience” and the use of folklorists (who are characters in the game) as authenticators to add to the player’s experience. The following two chapters explore the idea of portrayal from the lens of performance. In the first, Eamon Kelly’s storytelling (Chad Buterbaugh) is discussed in terms of how he evolved Irish contemporary storytelling from fireside to formal performance and then to new performers portraying Mr. Kelly’s work. J.K. Rowling’s “Beedle the Bard” book of Harry Potter folktales (Carlea Holl-Jensen and Jeffery A. Tolbert) is discussed in the light of how these folktales, written to help understand the imaginary world of Harry Potter, reflect our own popular folktales in order to make them more relatable to the reader.

The final section is parody, which examines how in contemporary culture the creators use aspects of folklore in their product that both creator and consumer acknowledge to be there. The folklore is not hidden or passed off to be real, but is obviously fake. This too can be related to the expression of folklore in clothing, such as motifs and slogans found on “ironic t-shirts” which have always been popular, but have seen a major resurgence in the past decade. Parody can run the gauntlet from amusing to inappropriate, which is well outlined in the chapters of this section.

The first chapter is on tasteless humour during the Penn State sexual abuse scandal (Trevor J. Blank). Although it is a good look at parody and humour in light of a horrific event, the topic was disturbing. This, in fact, is part of the point of the essay. As an outsider I had little knowledge of the subject and, therefore, could not understand the humour found in it. The second chapter is Greg Kelley’s analysis of metahumour. This chapter looks at the jokes we all know and breaks down how these jokes
are a part of our shared joke history and can be used as a parody reflecting contemporary culture. The following chapter focusses on Princess Tutu, an anime fairytale which reflects western fairytales while maintaining traditional Japanese outcomes. Discussed is how this parody of western fairytales leaves the westerner uncomfortable with the outcome. The final chapter by Gregory Schrempp focusses on David Toomey’s Weird Life; it looks at the relationship between popular science writers and monsters as a parody. David Toomey’s search for life and creatures that do not fit our mould of life science, but can be compared to the monsters that exist in our folklore, has made a topic that is approachable usually by those with a biology background accessible to everyone who is aware of folkloric monster motifs.

In writing a book review it is difficult to convey the true worth of a publication by simply summarizing aspects, but I believe that anyone interested in popular culture and folklore should read this book. As someone who approaches folklore from a material culture background with a focus on fashion and museum collected artifacts, some of the topics in the book would not seem relevant to my area of study. But by looking at this book as a “reframing” of folklore for popular culture studies, I can apply it to my area easily and the idea of reframing has sparked for me a new way to approach my own work. This book has the potential to start a new discourse within our disciplines and have wide reaching changes in our approaches to popular culture.

Maureen Power
Curator of Special Exhibitions
The Rooms, Newfoundland


Michael Newton recognizes that scant scholarly attention has been devoted to the Canadian side of the literature of the Gaelic diaspora and, through this editorial achievement, teases out other areas of critical inquiry
under-served in Gaelic scholarship thus far: implications of translation, linguistic hegemony, reflexivity, and reader response. As a result of his healthy contextualization, Newton has succeeded in contributing to the canon of not only Gaelic literature, but of Canadian literature more broadly, and has fleshed out the image of the Gael as it pertains to the earliest sense of Canadian multiculturalism.

Seanchaidh na Coille is organized thematically, first introducing the Gael as among Canada’s primary settlers. Newton declares the common “two solitudes” vision of Canada’s formative years as insufficient and, identifying Gaelic as the third most spoken European language at the time of confederation, suggests instead a “multitude of solitudes.” Throughout, Newton highlights the problematic Canadian conflation of Scottish Gaels with Anglo-British and, to a lesser extent, Lowland Scottish populations. Newton’s aversion toward these assimilations is also apparent in Seanchaidh na Coille’s source material. Rather than focusing on the Scottish “hero” and his works as determined by Anglophone standards of achievement, Newton’s selections, ranging from the eighteenth century through to the 1930s, consider “Scottish Gaelic Literature in Canada” to be equally publications, speeches, and letters, and the oral-dominant songs, poems, proverbs, legends, prayers, conversations, and stories. “Verbal forms of cultural expression may be harder to recover and appreciate than material manifestations of culture” he writes, “but the activities, accomplishments and perspectives of Gaelic communities, whether in Scotland or Canada, cannot be properly understood without taking these into account” (p. 9). Newton’s translations of this literary material are sensitive to the nuances, literary techniques and stylistic tropes of Gaelic expressive culture, rendering the anthology valuable in both broad and specific terms.

Following the introduction, Newton presents the theme, “The Subjugation of Gaeldom,” which frames the immigrant experience in terms of the social and physical conditions in Scotland and in Canada. Included is an anonymous text related to the Glencalvie Clearances of 1845 and an extensive variation of the North Uist song, “Oran Fir Ghriminis” (A Song of the Tacksman of Griminis). This song, generally considered to have ten verses in Uist, is collected in a fifteen-verse version in Nova Scotia, inviting comparative analysis of the omissions and elaborations that are part of oral literature. In this section and throughout, readers are encouraged to refer to Newton’s valuable section of author and collector biographies as well as maps outlining the sites of significant family names, orators and events.
A contextualizing focus continues in the “Militarism and Tartanism” section, throughout which Newton emphasizes the ironies of the Highland soldier as emblematic of British imperial supremacy. Many of the selections highlight social betrayal and clan militarism and revolve around the wild Highland warrior stereotype. The subordinate status of the Gael and the accompanying sense of inferiority and backwardness is made evident in the literary materials but also in the exoticized, tartan-clad masculinity of the Highland Games and the growing gap of perceptions and habits between Gaels born in Scotland and their descendants born in North America. The selected texts range from romantic celebrations of loyalty and military might to comical criticisms of tokenism and covert ethnic rivalries.

“Migration” and “Settlement” are linked sections. The literature describes the challenges of settlement (plant, animal, and interpersonal), guidelines for migration (directions, materials, conditions, support networks, chain migration), reflections on the promise and hardship inherent in the migration experience, and meditations on the continuity of culture. Many are inflected with a culturally specific use of descriptive language and humor. Newton highlights a common strategy for “turning the shame of dispossession into a narrative of self-determination and triumph” (p. 145), which is extended into discussions of nostalgia and retrospect, as well as literary lineage. Allan “The Ridge” MacDonald's songs, for example, create a relationship between his voyage by sea and his predecessors’ land-based achievements that is both literary and genealogical. Of supreme significance is the Gaelic newspaper, Mac-Talla, which chronicled the memories of the first generations of immigrant Gaels as well as their subsequent concerns in Canada. An excellent essay by its editor, Eòin MacFhiongain, is included, here, with an account of immigrant communities from the Highlands and Islands to Cape Breton in 1903. His global awareness and critique of the challenges of assimilation is among the most valuable inclusions in this anthology.

“Love and Death” also emphasizes continuity but introduces a specifically Gaelic spirituality and affection that is informed by imperialism, diaspora, and a close relationship with nature and mythic symbolism. This is also apparent in works grouped under “Religion.” Newton includes elegies, laments, and clerical praise songs that speak of politics and pedigree, as well as community cohesion. It is within these sections, too, that Newton demonstrates the significance and stylistic evolution of meter, metaphor, and other compositional choices in Gaelic songs of praise. He also calls attention to English “loanwords” as a means of poetically signifying “foreign
and unassimilated concepts and practices” best kept at a distance (p. 341).

“Language and Literature” deals primarily with preservation efforts and oral traditions indicative of a healthy linguistic tradition (Gaelic spoken in the home, in schools, in publications, and in public office). The role of language in nurturing strong community and familial bonds is central and invoked in response to Anglophone takeover. Among the literary motifs that emerge in response to linguistic assimilation is the insistence that Gaelic was the language spoken by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and passionate letters appear in publications such as Mosgladh, the Gaelic periodical of the Scottish Catholic Society of Canada.

“Identity and Associations” both celebrates the proliferation of Gaelic societies throughout the country and criticizes them. A letter in Mac-Talla complains that “Gaelic organizations cater to the interests of the aristocracy and military to the detriment of the language and culture they are meant to serve” (p. 429). The “Politics” section includes a speech given at the Nova Scotia Assembly in 1879 which speaks to the place of Gaelic in provincial education. Political figures are also memorialized in song, often with qualities identical to those needed by a true highland leader (lineage, reliability, bravery, commitment to community).

Newton’s anthology is engaging and accessible. He defines literature in a broad and culturally appropriate way and encourages dialogue across time, medium, geography, station, and scholarly discipline. His observations are supplemented by thorough footnotes and a considered bibliography, as well as appropriate acknowledgment of Gaelic institutions throughout the country. The anthology has both academic and common appeal and invites inquiry through its generous presentation of previously inaccessible material. Its contents promise to contribute to future scholarship in a way that both complicates and enriches the image of “the Gael” in Canada and is, therefore, a welcome addition to any interdisciplinary library.

Marion MacLeod
University of Chicago

It is tempting to pick up printed comics and assume that we can understand them. On the surface, this is possible as we make sense of what is “going on,” often without thinking much beyond what is in the frame, strip, or book. However, as analytical readers, we know that there is more that we can glean from an isolated page. This holds true for Paul MacKinnon’s Old Trout Funnies (OTF) comic art creations established in 1970s Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Ian Brodie’s book, Old Trout Funnies: The Comic Origins of the Cape Breton Liberation Army, does an admirable job in both presenting MacKinnon’s OTF collection and providing context and explication to allow readers to appreciate the comics and calendars while having information with which to consider the comics on a variety of analytical levels.

The book opens with Brodie providing context for the period in which MacKinnon created the OTF. He discusses the broader social context of Cape Breton in the mid-1970s, including economic factors, such as industrial downturns and unemployment, and cultural responses to these situations. Brodie also describes the origins of the Cape Breton Liberation Army (CBLA) and the OTF themselves, based, sometimes closely and sometimes loosely, on friends, people, and places from MacKinnon’s experience and the region in general. The CBLA itself has its roots in the political and pop cultural discourse of the period as well as MacKinnon’s own social circle. The OLF emerged from the CBLA and other sketches MacKinnon shared with his friends, which were developed into a comic book as part of a college project. The OTF and CBLA evolved over the course of three issues, a series of calendars, and other work. Along with laying out the context and timeline for the development of MacKinnon’s work, Brodie also outlines a few approaches readers can take to interpret the OTF. He succinctly touches upon thematic considerations; nevertheless, Brodie advises us, “Before trying to read too much into the work, it is good to remember that MacKinnon’s intent . . . was to provide something humorous for a particular audience” (13).

The central part of the book, which inhabits over half of the volume, is the reproduction of MacKinnon’s work itself. Beginning with the first issue, this section includes all the published issues, some shorter as well as unpublished materials, and the calendars. The content of the art is reproduced without modification or annotation, with the exception of
some page transpositions for the flow of the material. In this way, the reader has the opportunity to encounter the OTF as much on its own terms as possible in a book of this nature. This presentation allows us, if we wish, to immerse ourselves into the world of the OTF and to go on adventures with the CBLA, without focusing on the contextual and interpretive sections that are on either side of the comics collection. The rare and unpublished materials offer us shorter stories with recurring characters and glimpses into incomplete works. The calendars continue to show us the development of MacKinnon’s work. Though less overtly narrative than the comic issues and strips, they provide insights into MacKinnon’s perspective on Cape Breton culture over the period the calendars were in production (1979-2000, with some exceptions). The 2000 calendar rounds out the OTF collection.

A strength of the book is how it presents MacKinnon’s work. As much as it can, the book allows the reader to interact with the material on its own, to try to understand it without marginal notes. In part, this helps us try to keep in mind what Brodie advises us to do in the opening section. However, it also helps to underscore to readers not familiar with the work, the time period, or the region (or any combination of those) how much we can learn in order to continue to unpack the material. We can appreciate the artwork and enjoy the stories and images without knowing all of the references and in-jokes, but seeing all of the material together makes us keenly aware of what we might not be getting out of our reading – it invites us to want to know more.

The third section of the book helps us in this undertaking. It provides us with a thorough list of notes, annotations, and explications regarding the content of the OTF. Notes are grouped by location in the collection to facilitate readers’ being able to go back and forth between the notes and the original material. Brodie pulls together information collected from interviews with MacKinnon, archival sources, and other research to provide contextual and interpretive insights. For example, the cover of the first issue of OTF has six entries that range from providing background on General Peyton, the protagonist of the issue featured on the cover, to an entry explaining why the pricing information was left blank. The level of detail in the entries is impressive: not only do they provide insights into the components of MacKinnon’s work, but they also allow us to see how his life and the world of the period fed into it.

Brodie’s work balances providing scholarly discussion of MacKinnon’s work and allowing the art to have the space to stand alone. This is not an easy balance to strike in book form, but Brodie has done it well. The
research about the context, content, and interpretation of the collection is notable and accessibly written. The reproductions of MacKinnon’s original work and the corresponding information and discussion provided by Brodie help the reader explore how the OTF attempts to reach its audiences, including MacKinnon’s friends as well as a larger general audience, and how the characters and material were adapted and developed over time. The calendar notes are especially helpful to readers less acquainted with the content and context. Some of the calendars contain dense collections of images, and the notations provide details that assist with the unpacking of these images.

An index to the book might have been a useful addition in order to help readers locate references to people, places, and topics across the whole of the book. However, the length of the first and third sections of the book is not so long as to make it unmanageable to find references by scanning through the text. Also, Brodie notes in the interpretation section when characters, topics, and terms recur throughout the comics, which helps to connect content across the various visual materials.

The collection of MacKinnon’s artwork and Brodie’s discussion provides a valuable glimpse into Cape Breton culture in the mid-1970s and beyond. Readers interested in this region and period would find this book a useful resource, especially if interested in youth culture, economy and unemployment, entertainment, and humour. The book would also be of interest to readers with a focus on mainstream or alternative comics as a form of folk expression.

By the end of Old Trout Funnies: The Comic Origins of the Cape Breton Liberation Army, one is left feeling as if one has gained a familiarity with the materials while still feeling that there is more to discuss about MacKinnon’s work and how it provides insights into the tensions it plays with. Brodie’s contextualization and interpretation sections serve to introduce us to the world that surrounds MacKinnon’s art and guides us through the material, drawing our attention to people, places, and events relevant to having an understanding of the work. Nevertheless, Brodie does so without overworking the discussion, without seeming as though everything that can be said about the work has been said. In the end, there is a wealth of material in MacKinnon’s work to unpack, and this book is successful in presenting its material in a way that promotes possible future study.

Virginia S. Fugarino
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Research as Resistance takes a critical look at the resurgence of marginalized knowledges, including those of women, the disabled, sexual minorities, and racialized minorities, and how these knowledges are employed within research to work against dominant knowledges and methodologies. Gender, class, and race are central aspects of social research; however, they are continuously at the periphery. This book emphasizes an anti-oppressive research approach which encourages researchers to commit “to a set of principles, values, and ways of working, and [that] can be carried out anywhere – it’s a matter of choice amid various constraints” (p. 18). In other words, not all ethics review boards and communities will hold you to the standards of anti-oppressive research; it is the choice of the researcher to morally operate within these guidelines themselves.

As a researcher, distancing oneself from dominant knowledges and methodologies presents an opportunity to explore the ways research can be used as a tool for social change in its ability to expose subaltern knowledges and the power they hold for resistance. Editors Susan Strega and Leslie Brown emphasize that this second edition contributes new material on engaging meaningfully with research subjects and being a critically reflexive researcher, especially in relation to the researcher’s positionality.

Authors reflect and critique their research methodologies through epistemological and ontological foundations since dominant research and methodologies operate within an epistemology of Whiteness. In her updated chapter, Margaret Kovach argues that transformational research must operate on “the epistemological assumption of these varied methodologies contend that those who live life on the margins of society experience silencing and injustice” (p. 46-7). It is through these reflections that authors establish their positionality. In her own reflection, Mehmoona Moosa-Mitha notes how anti-oppressive research allows for dialogical and fluid ontological claims, along with situated and embodied knowledge that is grounded in lived experience as an epistemological foundation.

In reflecting on the foundations of research methodologies, a critique of “outsider” research emerges. Kovach notes that within decolonized methodologies, the solution of “community-based” research continues to operate within the White or outsider paradigm. Within their respective chapters, Margaret Kovach, Qwul’sih’yah’maht (Robina Anne Thomas)
and Adam Gaudry provide complementary analyses on Indigenous methodologies and how they need to involve elements of engagement, respect, and reciprocity. Citing leading scholars on Indigenous methodologies (Smith 2012; Wilson 2008; Minde 2008; Chilisa 2011), these authors outline important guidelines for researchers working within Indigenous contexts. These include, but are not limited to: recognizing indigenous knowledge as legitimate knowledge; building a relationship of reciprocity with participants and community; respecting collective knowledge and worldviews; respecting storytelling as methodology; ensuring research will benefit the community; and including the community in the research decision-processes.

In addition to these guidelines, authors on Indigenous methodologies also encourage researchers to look into the histories of the communities and understand the socio-cultural dynamics at play while becoming self-aware of our privileged positions as researchers. This is true of any research context; however, is especially important when working with populations on the margins. Potts and Brown emphasize the importance of being flexible within a research setting through operating within an anti-oppressive epistemology. They note that researchers should be open to input on the project and be willing to redesign based on the needs of the community. In particular, they emphasize that research needs to have a wider scope for what “counts as knowledge” (p. 38) and for researchers to ensure the research is available and accessible to their population.

There is a continuous negotiation of one’s theoretical positionality in research. Moosa-Mitha argues that anti-oppressive theory is both critical and difference-centred (p. 67). Susan Strega outlines how she has merged poststructural and radical feminist theories to guide her research through understanding power as relational and rejecting dualism to overcome dominant epistemologies. Eli Manning’s exploration of genderqueer methodologies is a practical application of Strega’s analysis. In this new chapter, Manning uses queer theory to create distance from dichotomies’ ways of thinking and navigate the problematic binary within the modernist ontology in order to move towards the development of a queer ontology.

The five new chapters (Holder; Fraser & Jarldorn; Manning; Macias; and Gaudry) in the second edition are excellent resources for students. They present practical examples in using qualitative methodologies, positionality, community engagement, and discourse analysis. Jenny Holder provides an overview of how she negotiated her position within a community action research project in a practical application of the anti-
oppressive methodologies. Holder outlines challenges to informed consent, participant withdrawal, and confidentiality within a small group setting. Heather Fraser and Michele Jorldorn provide a detailed outline of how to analyze a complex interview, interpret transcripts, identify trends, and translate the interview narrative into an academic text. Both Manning and Macias demonstrate how they were able to navigate different theories in order to apply them within a social justice framework. Gaudry outlines his positionality as a Métis researcher navigating space as an Indigenous person and a researcher, an insider and an outsider.

The new additions to the book clearly fill a gap in the application of anti-oppressive theory to the real world. These chapters provide cohesion to the strong theoretical and methodological material present in the original chapters. Eli Manning’s chapter adds an intriguing addition in terms of the experiences of sexual minorities; however, there is still a gap in material covering the disabled and non-Indigenous racialized minorities. While I appreciate and agree with the critiques of “outsider,” White, or Western research in this book, I caution readers against a holistic “insider” perspective on social justice research. Objectivity can be lost when the researcher is too close to the situation and elements may go unnoticed due to familiarity. Despite their position as an insider, if one is in the privileged position of a researcher, one’s positionality shifts, albeit partially, to that of an outsider.

Katie K. MacLeod
Dalhousie University