

customs and incorporation of new ones. The last chapter of the book, in which the author brings attention to recent changes in the spring-to-summer celebration, suggesting that the celebration continues to change in terms of mode, medium, message, and audience, further illuminates the flexibility of celebration. The focus on speechmaking and oral performance has been replaced by representative bits of Sweden such as food items, music, and costumes that indexically point to a Swedishness that is understandable to anyone who wishes to take part. Indeed, the celebration is often referred to as, simply, “Swedish Day.” Attebery suggests that this change from verbal to non-verbal performance in the face of declining bilingualism is a way to “preserve ethnic tradition in the midst of language loss” (161). By examining the Midsummer celebration over time, *Pole Raising and Speech Making* is an important contribution to the field of folklore studies, immigration studies, and history, describing how tradition, rather than static repetition, is a continual process, which survives as long as the participants find it useful.

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Science, Bread, and Circuses: Folkloristic Essays on Science for the Masses. By Gregory Schrempp. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2014. Pp. x + 167, acknowledgments, introduction, references, filmography, author bio, index. \$26.95 paperback.)

Following on the heels of his earlier work, *The Ancient Mythology of Modern Science* (2012), folklorist Gregory Schrempp here turns his attention to ten instances of popular science writing and their impact—or potential impact—on the reading public. His approach is to examine how certain suasive aspects of modern science are presented for the general (i.e., non-technical) reader using rhetorical techniques that he sees as drawn from mythology. He looks at how writers compare astronomic magnitudes to homely

and familiar experiences (“if the Earth were the size of a baseball, then...”), using what he considers a “proverbial” approach; how learning to think like science “heroes” such as Leonardo da Vinci and Copernicus can improve the intellect (a theme continued with an essay on science gurus such as Carl Sagan); Richard Dawkins’s notion of ideas that “go viral” (memes), as applied to fairy tales; how science writers create a cosmic mythology as a way of providing “bread and circuses” (the term originates with the Roman writer Juvenal) for a populace supposedly adrift in a cold and unfeeling universe; the “Capra-Corn Cosmos” as sketched in the science-education films produced by Frank Capra in the 1950s; the homely and emotionally charged musings of Garrison Keillor and Carl Sagan about planetary imagery; the “lessons” of the Space Shuttle *Columbia* disaster; a “mythological reading” of Stoppard’s play *Jumpers*; and a look at Lucretius as the popular science writer of his day.

In all these essays, Schrempp focuses on particular writers as exemplary of the general theme of a “science for the masses” that makes use of a rhetorical scaffolding that one finds in classical mythology to convey a message for our time. His take is generally careful and slightly ironic (less slightly in some instances), and the interpretations make sense, though they are of course his own. To write about anything is to interpret it; to read what is written adds another layer of interpretation; to transcribe one’s interpretations adds at least one more layer; and to read another’s interpretation is to add yet another: thus, in reading this review, you are adding still another layer, and one could go on and on. But while these layers evoke, invoke, and provoke a complex semiotic web of intertextual responses, absent transmission of the notions and rhetoric, such as metaphors, provided in these popular presentations, subsequent interaction among consumers of popular science writing, or dialog between its writers and their reading public, can we really consider the various topics and their interpretive schemas folkloristic? Mere mention of textual genres such as cosmic myths, hero legends, and fairy tales references folkloristics at a remove. Surely a genre, or even a textual instance of one, does not in isolation qualify as folklore.

Only in *practice* are such categories and instances the instruments of a response reflecting a folk sensibility. Schrempp offers no instances of ongoing proliferation of the notions generated through popular science writing.

While it is true, as Umberto Eco points out, that “a text is a lazy machinery which forces its possible readers to do a part of its textual work” (Eco 1981:36), and is thus interactive *in a way*, the modalities of interpretation are largely imposed by the semiotic strategies within the text itself. What Schrempp accomplishes is a fine display of his own insights through an idiosyncratic schema, but the result is less folkloristic than text linguistic in character. While text linguistic and discourse analytic approaches can greatly contribute to folkloristic analysis, they are not the same thing. Who are the folk here? Are Schrempp’s readings representative of a general outlook, and is that outlook reflected in folk discourse, or do we have only individual readings of a given text?

What I take away from Schrempp’s very interesting work is that while it is a stretch to call these essays “folkloristic,” his approach brings to mind more strongly the work of the Australian school of Social Semiotics, initiated by Michael Halliday and developed by Hodge, Kress, Thibault, and others. It is an appropriate continuation of his earlier work on the mythological rhetoric that he sees inherent in scientific writing generally.

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