

***Captured Voices: Five Centuries of Interplay Between Folk Literature and Print. An Exhibition.* Curated by Michael Taft.  
(Edmonton: University of Alberta. Pp. vi + 32, illustrations.)**

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Volume 21, Number 1, 1999

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1087773ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1087773ar>

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Publisher(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (print)

1708-0401 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Connor, J. J. (1999). Review of [*Captured Voices: Five Centuries of Interplay Between Folk Literature and Print. An Exhibition.* Curated by Michael Taft. (Edmonton: University of Alberta. Pp. vi + 32, illustrations.)]. *Ethnologies*, 21(1), 263–265. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1087773ar>

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***Captured Voices: Five Centuries of Interplay Between Folk Literature and Print. An Exhibition.*** Curated by Michael Taft. (Edmonton: University of Alberta. Pp. vi + 32, illustrations.)

The scholarly field known as history of the book (*histoire du livre*) generally focuses on the transmission of written text from author to reader, whether in manuscript or print form. Essentially interdisciplinary, the field embraces the approaches of both literary scholarship and cultural history. Where one considers creative and reception processes, including the influence of publishers and readers on a given text, the other examines the context for publication and dissemination — that is, prevailing political, religious, legal, economic, or societal conditions. Scrutiny of internal changes wrought in a text by physical production also plays a role in this new field; akin to classical scholarship, wherein variant texts are compared and analyzed to establish an archetypal document, the goal of this technique (analytical bibliography) ultimately is to produce critical editions of literary text.

Folklorists will recognize this latter methodology, which emerged at about the same time in anthropological work. Given the close affinity in these concerns and approaches, it is surprising to find little interaction among

bibliographers, book historians, and folklorists. Much work in folklore especially illuminates the often symbiotic relationship between oral and print cultures. If for no other reason, then, the library exhibition of printed material by folklorist Michael Taft, entitled *Captured Voices: Five Centuries of Interplay Between Folk Literature and Print*, deserves notice.

The catalogue of this exhibition, on view at the University of Alberta between February and April 1996, shows that eighty-seven items were displayed, arranged thematically in four groups: entertainment and aesthetics, collection and study, education, and political, ideological and social agendas. The overall focus on the transmission of folklore through the print medium allowed Taft to include forms other than books: chapbooks, postcards, a magazine, and notes for a sound recording. Aided by his annotations, the items provide a fascinating look at several centuries, countries, and languages. Canada, too, is well represented in popular publications of songs for political, wartime and temperance purposes: in a songster for the Canadian Colored Concert Company in Hamilton, a Methodist Sunday school songbook, a phonograph of songs of the voyageurs, and in folklorists' collections of French and Ukrainian folksongs. Clearly the Bruce Peel Special Collections Library provided a rich resource for this exhibition, one that Taft plumbed to advantage.

As Taft notes in a brief introduction, the exhibition concentrated on folk literary genres of song, tale, and proverb, thus excluding many other texts that might demonstrate the "interplay of folk and high-art traditions." Print is only one reproduction technology, and as he points out, oral and written works "shift back and forth, over time and through space, from one medium to another." Taft therefore presents a sound recording and alludes to movie popularization of folk narrative, but he leaves any connections to other media to be made by the viewer. Yet one or two reminders to young viewers about other forms of "interplay" between oral and similar technologies might not have gone amiss. They will likely have seen joke collections disseminated by photocopier and electronic media, for instance, rather than in booklet form; similarly, they may be familiar with multi-authored, continuous fiction on the Internet — for which perhaps only oral-formulaic theory can be employed profitably for literary analysis.

In an irony no doubt well appreciated by its creator, with the exhibition dismantled, only the ephemeral printed catalogue remains to record its very existence. That this work was undertaken in Canada, however, may speak to a

national interest in inclusiveness; indeed, when the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing — the main international forum for scholars in book history — meets for the first time in Canada in 1998, a proposed theme will be “interactions and boundaries between print and oral culture.” It is to be hoped that this move signals more lasting work in joint folklore/book studies to come.

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***Going by the Moon and the Stars: Stories of Two Russian Mennonite Women.***

By Pamela E. Klassen. (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1994. Pp. ix + 151, index, bibliography, ISBN 0-88920-244-3 pbk. \$19.95)

This engaging and well-written book revolves around the life histories of two Russian Mennonite women displaced by WWII and exiled to Canada. Using their evocative stories of childhood under communism, early adulthood during the war, and middle age in Canada, the author addresses several issues of theoretical and methodological importance. Her general concern is to shed light on the manner in which Mennonite women construct their religious identities. In view of the patriarchal overtones of Mennonite public culture, this comes down to an examination of how two strong women who had overcome extreme hardships unaided by men reconcile their personal experiences with the official definition of womanhood upheld by the church they belong to. Beyond this scholarly task, the author — a Mennonite herself — sets out a quasi-political goal, namely: “I wish to take my place with other Mennonite women embarking on the disassembling of patriarchal Mennonite history and epistemology, which has left so little space for women’s lives, thoughts, and power” (p. 2).

The three biographical chapters in which the two women describe their lives present compelling evidence for the inclusion of women’s voices in the official Mennonite historiography. The reader learns much about the crucial role of women in maintaining Russian Mennonite identity at a time when many male residents of the Ukrainian settlements had been killed or deported by the Soviets, or drafted into the advancing German army. Unfortunately, the captivating stories are often overshadowed by the voice of the compiler and interpreter. Klassen, who describes herself as a “feminist ethnographer”,