

Anna Kearney Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revival: The Cultural Politics of Kenneth Peacock's Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*

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Volume 24, Number 2, Fall 2009

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds24_2rv01

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Publisher(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

0823-1737 (print)

1715-1430 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Klassen, D. (2009). Review of [Anna Kearney Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revival: The Cultural Politics of Kenneth Peacock's Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*]. *Newfoundland Studies*, 24(2), 281–283.

REVIEWS

Anna Kearney Guigné, *Folksongs and Folk Revival: The Cultural Politics of Kenneth Peacock's Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*. St. John's: ISER, 2008. 331 pp., map, photography, endnotes, bibliography, audiography, index, CAN 29.95 (paperback); ISBN: 978-1-894725-06-4.

ANNA KEARNEY GUIGNÉ'S *Folksongs and Folk Revival* examines the historic shaping and impact of the late Kenneth Peacock's three-volume 1965 publication, *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*. The author sets Peacock's training as a musician, his interest in using folk musics to expand his musical vocabulary as a composer, and his research in Newfoundland into a personal, local, and national context. This approach offers the reader a case study of the cultural politics of folksong performance and research in Canada focused on the 1950s and beyond. As a folklorist with an ethnomusicology background, Kearney Guigné is well-positioned to undertake research on both the music and the cultural politics of Peacock's song collection.

As Kearney Guigné notes, Peacock was a "reluctant convert to folklore" and it was a chance meeting in Ottawa with his University of Toronto classmate, Margaret Sargeant, which resulted in his transcription of wax cylinders of Huron music for Canada's National Museum. This meeting eventually led to a recommendation that he undertake the first of his six research trips to Newfoundland in the summer of 1951 (quoting Tom Kines, p. 142). Over the next 10 years, this research would yield interviews with "118 individuals in 38 communities ... 766 songs and melodies: 638 on tape and an additional 128" in transcription, with 546 songs published under 411 titles in 1965 (p. 1), the largest published folksong collection of any Canadian ethnic or geographic group.

Kearney Guigné organizes her discussion chronologically in eleven chapters, first offering the story of her own encounter with Peacock's work in an introduction. She then devotes the next two chapters to contextualizing Peacock's Newfoundland research within contemporary folklore scholarship and early twentieth century efforts to document Newfoundland folksong. Chapters four and five offer a framework for Peacock's musical preparation for research on behalf of Canada's National Museum, and chapters six to ten detail this fieldwork, examining it in rela-

tion to the Canadian folk music revival of the 1960s. Kearney Guigné concludes with a coda reflecting on Peacock's contributions to folksong scholarship.

While Peacock's contribution to Canadian folksong has long been in question, Kearney Guigné argues that his work is more than a highly edited, de-contextualized "song collection." She contends that Peacock furthered Canadian, and particularly Newfoundland, folksong scholarship in several significant ways: by researching a group other than the aboriginal and French traditions targeted by the National Museum in the early to mid-20th century; by using cutting-edge recording equipment at a time when roughness of recording was often equated with authenticity; by providing both still and movie camera footage of singers and their communities in an era characterized by audio folksong documentation; by systematically transcribing his recordings, and those of other folksong collectors, at a time when most collections existed in recorded format only; and ultimately, by providing for those interested in Newfoundland folksong an accessible publication with songs from across the province. He did this at a time when Newfoundland folksong was equated with a limited selection of east coast songs, most notably those popularized through widely-distributed free songsters that were published by St. John's businessman Gerald S. Doyle beginning in 1927.

In the context of these contributions, Kearney Guigné also offers a candid appraisal of problematic aspects of Peacock's research: his tendency to romanticize rural Newfoundland culture and thus to ignore country and western influences in those musics; his predilection for publishing composite renditions of a folksong; his nonchalance about including descriptive contextual comments; and, his interest in providing artistic renderings of folksongs, issues often questioned by those who differ in their understanding of folksong authenticity and fidelity to recorded field materials.

The major value of Kearney Guigné's work lies in her ability to provide thoroughly researched case studies which highlight issues central to the politics of Canadian folksong scholarship. Using primary source materials, she deftly reveals differences in folksong research agendas among scholars such as Maud Karpeles — an English scholar hunting for remnants of British ballads, Helen Creighton — interested in occupational folksongs in Atlantic Canada, Edith Fowke — a collector with an interest in labour history and accused of collecting "bawdy" songs, and Peacock. Additionally, Kearney Guigné details their varied working relationships with the National Museum, the role of folksong popularizers like Alan Mills, Fowke, Samuel Gesser, and Tom Kines and their radio broadcasts, the policy differences between Marius Barbeau and his successor Carmen Roy at the National Museum, the differences in American and Canadian approaches to folksong scholarship and dissemination, and the influence of Peacock's publications on those involved in Newfoundland's 1960s and 1970s east coast folk music revival. In effect, Kearney Guigné offers her reader an invisible listener presence during both congenial and confrontational exchanges amongst prominent folksong scholars and popularizers, a number of them now deceased, in an era in which folksong played a role in emerging

national consciousness. Consequently, the book offers not only a case study of Peacock's research in Newfoundland, but also a perspective on the social networks shaping both Anglo-Canadian folksong research and the mid-20th century Canadian folksong revival.

The thoroughness of Kearney Guigné's study and its potential usefulness to her readers is amply demonstrated by her detailed documentation of sources which comprise ninety pages, almost one-third of her published work. In addition to an extensive listing of primary archival and secondary sources, Kearney Guigné provides notes which detail her interviews for this study, an audiography focused on Newfoundland folksong, a listing of Peacock's own publications, and an index which pays close attention to folk music scholars, the 1960s and 1970s North American folk music revival, her own interviewees, and the Newfoundland place names central to her research. Additionally, she includes a song and tune title index complete with Francis James Child and G. Malcolm Law's ballads, a feature often missing from lesser publications. Consequently, the bibliographic elements of this book offer a veritable reference library for those interested in Newfoundland folksong scholarship. Unfortunately, the thirty-five pages of notes, while providing useful commentary and documentation, are difficult to navigate because they lack page-specific headers.

Kearney Guigné's strength most certainly lies in her skills as a researcher. While the reading is occasionally tedious, one cannot help but marvel at her extensive interviews with Peacock and his associates, her familiarity with Peacock's audio and visual records, and even her detailed descriptions of some of his fieldwork sessions. While Kearney Guigné faults Peacock for having only a passing interest in the singers he recorded, she herself interviews many of them, providing responses to her own questions concerning the social history of the songs and singers Peacock recorded. Kearney Guigné diplomatically concludes that Peacock "served as a vital link for others to conduct additional research" (p. 159).

Because Kearney Guigné offers her readers a wealth of descriptive detail in an accessible writing style, this work will be of interest to folklorists, ethnomusicologists, social historians, Newfoundland studies scholars, cultural tourism policy-makers, and those generally interested in the politics of culture.

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Kate Story, *Blasted*. St. John's, Newfoundland: Killick Press, 2008. 360 pp., CAN 21.95 (paperback); ISBN 978-1-897174-31-9.

STEEPED IN NEWFOUNDLAND mythology and lore, Kate Story's first novel, *Blasted*, transcends the category of regional literature. If the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* defines "blast" as "an infection, wound or physical injury attributed to the