

Roots of a Region: Southern Folk Culture. By John A. Burrison. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. Pp. v+236, contents, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-1-934110-21-8, pbk.)

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Volume 32, numéro 2, 2010

Tourisme culturel
Cultural Tourism

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1006319ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1006319ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)

1708-0401 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Clare, C. (2010). Compte rendu de [Roots of a Region: Southern Folk Culture. By John A. Burrison. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. Pp. v+236, contents, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-1-934110-21-8, pbk.)]. *Ethnologies*, 32(2), 310–312. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1006319ar>

Roots of a Region: Southern Folk Culture. By John A. Burrison. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. Pp. v+236, contents, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 978-1-934110-21-8, pbk.)

Roots of a Region is a comprehensive book that scratches the surface of numerous folk traditions in the Southern United States. Describing these traditions, Burrison works to identify this region that is so intriguing and conceptualized, yet also difficult to define and isolate. Nevertheless, this book offers a valuable glimpse into the region and would benefit anyone interested in the Southern United States. Burrison's writing style is accessible and provides the reader with wonderful descriptions and basic folklore theories without letting jargon hinder his goal. It is very much written from on the ground experience in the South and because of that, it would be a beneficial example of how to study folklore in any introductory folklore course.

The book begins with Burrison's personal folklore journey: his childhood encounter with Leadbelly, his introduction to folklore at Pennsylvania State University, and his experiences studying folklore at the graduate level at the University of Pennsylvania. After school he was given a job in the English Department at Georgia State University to develop an undergraduate folklore curriculum. Being given this task and moving to the South after spending his whole life in the Northeastern United States, Burrison began to take note of his surroundings, using the North as a point of comparison. With the help of his students, he began to pull out what he found to be the most defining characteristics of the South.

In this book's first chapter, Burrison broadly discusses the region in question by looking at its history and "fuzzy boundaries" (23) as well as the characteristics often associated with its people, their way of life, and their beliefs. The following chapter shifts to an attempt to define the region based on a series of folklore genres. Beginning with material culture and the basic necessities of life, Burrison explains how practical tools for living (such as food, homes, textiles) have come to give the South its current regional identity. He then moves to oral forms and folk beliefs that also give the region its unique character, all leading to the conclusion that the South is "A Region of Retentions" (79) by demonstrating continuity with the past. Chapter three allows Burrison to actually discuss the historical roots of some of the South's defining characteristics by explaining the indigenous and international influences

on the region and way of life. Part of what makes the South so unique are the African traditions that have played a major role in shaping numerous southern traditions, from song and dance to pottery and clothing.

After completing these generalizations Burrison moves to the specific. His experience with studying folk pottery in the South becomes clear in the fourth chapter as he delves into the genre, particularly focused on jugs as they have developed in the South and discussing all of their possible origins. Burrison stays specific with the next chapter which focuses on Georgia as a representative state of the southern region. This chapter, though meant to encompass all of Georgia, focuses most of its attention on one particular ballad singer, and in no way gives a sense of what it means to be from Georgia or what is specifically Georgian about the way of life of the people in that state. By way of conclusion, the reader is confronted with a lament of losing an old way of life and dying traditions. However, Burrison remains hopeful that the urbanization of the South and the introduction of new immigrant groups will not mean the end of southern folklore and traditions, but rather a changing of them which will still allow for the retention of the old.

On top of all the useful information, Burrison's book is full of photographs that aid those not familiar with particular southern folklore (e.g., a juggling board) and provide examples of items from different areas of the world which demonstrate possible origins (e.g., jugs). Nearly every page of text is accompanied by a black and white photograph and the center of the book has an eight page spread of color plates. For the genres where images are not as useful, he includes the texts of stories, songs, jokes, and even musical notations.

Although Burrison never actually defines his theoretical framework, he synthesizes his analysis periodically throughout his book and explains how the plantation system, Civil War, agrarian living, and isolation of families and farms were influential factors in the development of a southern identity. He blames modernization and industrialization for the loss of many of the southern traditions, yet he also explains that traditions wax and wane; they seem to die out only to resurface again in revivals or institutionalized folklore programs. In this case, folklore exists as a choice against modernization and mass culture (176). While I do agree that it is a choice, I do not think that the two are intrinsically opposed to one another. It is important to remember that traditions

must change in order to survive, which he suggests throughout the text yet never explicitly states.

Through the lens of folklore, Burrison has created a useful handbook for any student of the South. Although his book in many ways leaves the reader wanting more – by way of details, examples, synthesis, and theory – it provides a most useful set of endnotes which tells the interested reader exactly where to go to find more information on a particular topic, often referring to the most canonical and foundational texts. Not only that, the author also provides a section entitled “Books On Southern Folk Culture” which divides the books by genre and demonstrates the extensive research that went into compiling this particular book. Although many could criticize Burrison for failing to provide an in-depth look at any one aspect of the Southern United States, he is clear that that is not the point. His goal was to put his finger on the pulse of the region and define it, by way of his years of experience studying it, as best he could. And for those who do want more in-depth analysis, he points them in the right direction.

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Cimetières. Patrimoine pour les vivants. Dirigé par Jean Simard et François Brault. (Québec, Éditions GID, 2008, Pp. 451. ISBN 978-2-922668-41-4)

Ce livre, paru sous la direction de Jean Simard, avec la collaboration du photographe François Brault, est une anthologie de témoignages sur un patrimoine qui permet aux vivants de rendre hommage à leurs ancêtres disparus. Véritables laboratoires ethnographiques, les cimetières sont présentés comme étant le reflet de la société à laquelle ils appartiennent. Ils fournissent des informations sur la généalogie et la structure sociale de la communauté. Dans sa présentation, Jean Simard évoque les problèmes que connaissent les cimetières aujourd’hui et pose la question de leur avenir étant donné le déclin des pratiques et coutumes traditionnelles. À travers ce recueil de quatre chapitres réalisé avec l’apport d’une équipe pluridisciplinaire de onze spécialistes, les différentes facettes que revêtent ces lieux de mémoire ont été mises à découvert. De plus, avec le support de la photographie, l’analyse des diverses thématiques découlant de cette étude paraît être plus évidente