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Pekka Hakamies and Anneli Honko, eds., *Theoretical Milestones: Selected Writings of Lauri Honko (Folklore Fellows' Communications 304)*

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Matti Kamppinen and Pekka Hakamies, *The Theory of Culture of Folklorist Lauri Honko, 1932–2002: The Ecology of Tradition*

Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013. ix–xi, 115 pages. \$139.95 (hardcover). ISBN 978077345437 (hardcover).

These two volumes complement each other. The first is an anthology of Lauri Honko's scholarly articles, while the second is a critical evaluation of his folklore theory. Lauri Honko (1932–2002) was a prominent Finnish and international folklore scholar in the second half of the twentieth century. He was Professor of Folklore and Religious Studies at Turku University (1961–96), Director of the Nordic Institute of Folklore (NIF; 1972–2002), President of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR; 1974–89), and a prolific folklore scholar, whose research extended from Karelia, Finland to Karnataka on the west coast of southern India. His scholarly accomplishments have already been celebrated (Hultkranz 1991; Kvideland 1992), and Pekka Hakamies, Anneli Honko, and Matti Kamppinen subject them to critical analysis.

Lauri Honko represents the Nordic paradigm of folklore scholarship at its best. His work is both rooted in its cultural and scholarly traditions and influenced by internationally formulated theories and methods. It is possible to observe that the formative foundations of Finnish folklore scholarship were laid by Elias Lönnrot (1802–84), who recorded oral singers in Karelia and fashioned their poems into the *Kalevala*, inspiring a nation and its scholars with a major epic of Homeric dimensions (Hautala 1969; Richmond 1961; Wilson 1976).

Later in the nineteenth century, Julius L. Krohn (1835–88) and his son Kaarle L. Krohn (1863–1933) proposed the historic-geographic method in folklore scholarship (Krohn 1971). When their method reigned high in folklore studies, Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878–1952) grounded globally floating narratives into regional, geographically bounded cultures, traditions, and languages by proposing the concept of “oicotype” in the study of folktales (Bringéus 2009; Sydow 1934, 1948a, 1948b). He observed that folktales are not only globally dispersed from country to country but also rooted in particular regions and traditions. It is this tension between the global and the regional that captivated Lauri Honko, who conceived of “the ecology of tradition,” a scholarly and intellectual offshoot of the ecology of culture associated with Julian Steward (1955, 30–42), as his fundamental theoretical framework.

By introducing into folkloristics the idea of an ecology of tradition, Honko accomplished three goals. First, this concept offered folklore studies a scientific basis similar to the natural and biological sciences. Methodologically, such an approach enabled folklorists to formulate hypotheses, gaining knowledge by their falsifiability and subjecting them therefore to falsification (Popper 1968, 472), rather than just seeking their verification or limiting themselves to descriptive ethnographies of folklore. As Kamppinen and Hakamies report, Honko employed this method pedagogically, often frustrating his students. Second, the concern with the ecology of tradition enabled folklorists to transform their comparative method of textual analysis to interpretive ethnographies of verbal art. Third, Honko conceived the ecology of tradition as also being “tradition as ecology,” extending thereby the concept of nature to the spiritual human environment.

Kamppinen and Hakamies concentrate on key terms in Honko’s theoretical writings, such as function, system, genre, process, and the safeguarding of folklore. All of them frequently occur in current scholarly folklore discourse and in Honko’s theoretical writings. The two volumes do not necessarily present them in parallel order, yet, in most cases, *Theoretical Milestones* provides the primary texts upon which Kamppinen and Hakamies analyze Honko’s theory of the ecology of tradition. At the same time, they also demonstrate the roots of Honko’s scholarship in the “ecology of Nordic folklore scholarship,” or the so-called Nordic folklore paradigm, in which historic-geographic diffusion of themes, motifs, and types was a primary scholarly issue. Therefore, while the primary key terms in Honko’s theoretical writings have broad ranges of meanings, he often narrowed their focus, addressing the issues of the relations between universal or abstract themes and ideas, and their local representations.

Functionalism is a basic concept in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and psychology (Edgar and Sedgwick 1999; Levin 2018). Anthropological scholarship (Malinowski 1944; Kuper 1977) influenced folklorists, and they have integrated functionalism into folklore theory as well (Abrahams 1971; Bascom 1954; Oring 1976). Succinctly, Janet Levin proposes that functionalism in the philosophy of mind is “the doctrine that what makes something a mental state of a particular type does not depend on its internal constitution, but rather on the way it functions, or the role it plays, in the system of which it is a part” (Levin 2018). Such a summation is applicable to anthropology as well as to folklore. Honko considers functionalism within the framework of the ecology of tradition and the Nordic folklore paradigm. Therefore, he inverts the functional relations, rather than considering the effects of the parts on the system. He thus conceptualized the effects of the system on the parts, distinguishing four forms of adaptations: milieu-morphological adaptation, tradition-morphological adaptation, functional adaptation, and ecotype and eco-typification.

Significantly, he switches from an itemized to a systemic approach to folklore. System theory is hardly new in the sciences, either natural or social (Chen and Stroup 1993), or in literary criticism. Robert Redfield (1897–1958) applied it to anthropology and Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) delineated specific systems in society and culture such as religion, ideology, commonsense, and art (1973a, 1973b, 1983a, 1983b). Lauri Honko drew upon system theory in his dissertation, considering health delivery as a cultural system (Honko 1959). He later presented his doctoral research and method in an article (1982) that unfortunately Hakamies and Anneli Honko did not include in the *Theoretical Milestones* volume. Perhaps they were aware of previous scholarship

concerning the principles of system theory and therefore considered it not to be one of Honko's original theoretical milestones. Kamppinen and Hakamies present his application of system theory as consistent with his ecology of tradition, constructing theoretical models, such as ideal type, and then testing them pragmatically.

The concept of ideal type appears most prominently in Honko's theory of folklore genres (1968, 1989). In folkloristics, the concept of genre was caught in a tangle of evolutionary cognition, thematic distinctions, and structural-morphological analysis (Bascom 1965; Dundes 1964; Jolles 1958, 2017). Honko proposed to rescue the concept by turning to Weberian sociological methodology, considering genre's ideal types, a concept that has become the center of significant philosophical and sociological scholarship (see Hekman 1983a, 1983b; Hempel 1965; Pepper 1963). Unwittingly, I involved myself in the debate and proposed to let the respective ethnic groups themselves and their languages have the last word (Ben-Amos 1969, 1976, 1992).

For the record, let me note that Honko invited me to participate in a conference about the textualization of the epic that took place in Turku in 1996. Before the conference began, we had the opportunity to have some social moments, sitting along the banks of the Aurajoki river that flows through Turku. We debated our respective positions without convincing each other and neither of us had modified our respective concepts of folklore genres. Kamppinen and Hakamies adequately present the differences in our positions (2013, 46–50), and probably had they joined us at that time, we would have had a much shorter debate. They propose to consider Honko's use of the ideal type concept to be analogous to a "prototype," whereas I understand it to be a Weberian scientific concept, constructed for analytical purposes (Ben-Amos 1992). As such, I would have argued the consideration of genres as ideal types obscures their position in folkloric discourse, eliminating any anomalies or deviations from the constructed model, in any cultural generic system, for the sake of a logical scientific model.

As Thomas Kuhn (1922–96) convincingly argued, however, it would prevent the possibility of any scientific revolution and accurate knowledge of reality (Kuhn 1962). After all, the goal of scientific knowledge is to explore reality, not to improve it. Yet obviously, with better knowledge, it is possible to improve reality when and where it is necessary to do so. Such an improvement is an application, not an exploration of knowledge. The initial steps in the development of folklore as a domain for scientific exploration followed principles of classification modeled after the taxonomic model of Carl Linnaeus (1707–78), which he created for the natural world. Such were the scholarly enterprises of Johann Georg von Hahn (1811–69), Aanti Aarne (1867–1925), and Stith Thompson (1885–1976). Each constructed a classification system that proposed order in folklore.

Fundamental as it is, reality itself is processual, and scientific studies explore processes in physical, biological, social, artistic, and spiritual domains. Honko indeed proposed to study the folklore process (Hakamies and Honko 2013, 29–54), in which he identified two stages from "the first life of folklore" in the folklore community, to "the definition of the status of folklore in the modern world." In this way he handed folklore to UNESCO, transforming it into Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) that monumentalizes folklore, preserving it behind glass cabinets of museums, and transforming it from a performance in community to a national and international symbol of the past.

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