

A Database of Traditional Drama in Newfoundland: Text, Context and Performance

This database of traditional drama in Newfoundland, and its texts, contexts, performances, and social functions is the culmination of some ten years of research. It presents a comprehensive overview of all the material on the subject collected in the field and deposited in the MUN Folklore and Language Archive. This is compared with manuscript and printed records of the plays in their historical context, providing a unique resource for all those with an academic or a general interest in the topic. The texts are accompanied by an analytical commentary on the numerous versions of the plays. The core of the database is the transcriptions of taperecordings from the period 1964-73, which demonstrate the extraordinary survival of the plays up to the early twentieth century.

The material is presented by locality, indicating the distribution of the plays in the province, and shedding light on the processes of transmission from their origin in Britain and Ireland. The taperecordings are transcribed verbatim, to preserve the essential vigour, rhetoric, and immediacy of living vernacular speech. The survival of these plays, together with a wealth of firsthand, eyewitness accounts of their performance, invests them with particular importance in this field of research. The database marks a significant further stage in the longstanding and ongoing research into mummering traditions in the province inaugurated by the Departments of English and Folklore at MUN in the 1960s. It will provide access to a wealth of primary source data, and set the plays in their international context. It will also consolidate the reputation of Memorial University as a nucleus for the provision of information in this subject area.