

**Book Reviews**

Michael Brown and Mat Tait, *The Heading Dog Who Split in Half: Legends and Tall Tales from New Zealand* (Nelson: Potton and Burton, 2015). Paperback with black and white illustrations, ISBN 9781927213575. NZD \$39.99.



This handsome and refreshing volume, published with the support of CreativeNZ (which is linked to the Arts Council of New Zealand) presents a collection of seven New Zealand tales in the format of 'graphic' short stories. Each tale being illustrated and presented as a cartoon. 'Some [of the tales] have roots in ancient Māori, European, or transnational traditions, but have been altered [through oral tradition] for new contexts and settings, made meaningful for new generations, and become "of New Zealand"' (p. 7).

The high quality of the offering's artwork subtly captures a range of distinctly New Zealand motifs, contributing greatly to the cultural authenticity of the text. There are a range of

both indigenous and settler-society art-motifs which are combined to shape a visual representation of the nation's bi-cultural stance. The authors note this choice, to present the tales through a 'graphic' folktale book, or 'comic', as representing: 'an especially apt way to bring these stories to life' (p. 7), and they surely succeed in achieving that purpose.

Touches of regional flavor are also provided through the artistic variations between the presentation of southern tales, such as 'The Legend of Tunnel Beach', and their northern counterparts, such as 'The Phantom Canoe'. In this

way, Tait supports Brown's text, and allows unfamiliar readers a richer glimpse of New Zealand's often geographically-linked cultural variations.

The selected tales also present a good cross section of contemporary indigenous, New Zealand European and more generalized, or hybrid, New Zealand lore. Brown's use of language, in crafting each tale, skillfully attaches folk-feel to the stories. In combining his words with Tait's illustrations, Brown has been successful in capturing the essence of these legends and tall tales.

In addition to illustrated tales, readers are provided with a range of useful supporting material, including: a compelling 'Introduction' that locates the work within folkloric traditions and scholarship—including the work of Stith Thompson, a sound bibliography for further reading (noting the works of key New Zealand folklorists like: Frank Fyfe, Phil Garland and Gordon Ell) and well-referenced explanatory notes about each of the tales. Of those supporting features, the explanatory notes are real 'gems' for folklorists, either well-versed or newly arrived to New Zealand-lore, and follow the earlier analytical traditions of Frank Fyfe's long discontinued journal, *The Maoriland: Journal of the New Zealand Folklore Society*.

New Zealand tall tales and folklore are often an underrepresented group within both Kiwiana and more serious publications. This volume sits squarely within that gap, making a valid contribution to the range of texts that are presently available—while also leaving room for, and beckoning, further contributions. As the writers note, 'as if to prove how easy it is to trip over folktales in New Zealand, we researched one legend totally from scratch' after discovering it in 2013—so we may well see further contributions toward filling that gap from Brown and Tait.

In all, *The Heading Dog Who Split in Half* is a compelling volume that deserves a place on the shelves of southern folklorists and in many public libraries. Due to both the high presentation standards and well researched text it would be a sound and introductory component to unpacking the critical study of New Zealand lore for those new to folkloristics, while still maintaining the interest of readers who are intimately familiar with the topic. The volume is strongly recommended.

A. Asbjørn Jøn

H.P. Lovecraft, *The New Annotated H.P. Lovecraft*, edited by Leslie S. Klinger (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014). 852pp. Hardcover, ISBN 0871404532, 9780871404534. USD \$39.95

The pages of folklore journals are often graced by discussions of the twentieth century's great mediaevalist and applied mythologist, J.R.R. Tolkien, yet sadly, less treatment is afforded to the master of the weird tale and nameless horror, H.P. Lovecraft. Lovecraft's prose tapped into deeply symbolic themes, generating strong responses from his readers and capturing their imaginations.