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## COMPTES RENDUS / REVIEWS

**Cinderella in America: A Book of Folk and Fairy Tales.** Compiled and edited by William Bernard McCarthy. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 2007. Pp. xiii+514. Appendices, references, list of credits, tale type index, motif index, index of collectors, index of storytellers, ISBN 978-1-57806-959-0, pbk.)

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McCarthy and Shaw offer us two very different and yet equally timely approaches to presenting tales in the contemporary world. Both books are carefully prepared, well-documented, and both are a joy to read.

Bill McCarthy, who passed away not too long after his *Cinderella in America* was published, sets out on a mission: he wants to make the world aware of the rich tradition of old-world folktales that existed and still exists in North America. These tales, like Cinderella, have been thrust aside and overlooked, yet given the right set of shoes (or the right publication vehicle like this book), they emerge in their full glory to be loved by every reader and prince. American folktales have been overlooked for a number of reasons. Scholars are partly to blame. Many collectors looked to song before they looked for prose, and once the folksong collecting trend had been established, it was hard to break from it and to look for other genres. Thus, even those tales that were collected tended to be published in journals or not published at all, leaving a rich archival store on which to draw. Many scholars were interested in the lore of aboriginals or American blacks. These were unique to American tradition, while groups who carried on a European tradition seemed old hat and were ignored. Some scholars simply

assumed that European immigrants, once they reached the New World, did not have time for tales and did not bother to check and see if they were right. Sometimes the folk themselves chose not to tell tales when collectors came calling. Tales, to them, were for more intimate family settings, and songs were what was to be performed in public and for visitors from academe. But a beautiful and bountiful trove of tales does exist and McCarthy draws on it to produce a thick volume, the first ever publication of this scope. With it he accomplishes his mission and leaves a lasting legacy.

McCarthy begins by setting out the principles that he used in selecting his material. He discusses the types of tales selected and the terminology applied. These are primarily longer narratives to which the terms wonder tale, Märchen, and folk and fairytale have been variously applied. McCarthy chooses tales with a clear American element. These are European tales transformed by life on the North American continent or tales told by people born on this side of the Atlantic. He strives for accuracy in the reproduction of the originals, but compromises on language, claiming that some dialectical features are simply not worth reproducing. He does give Gullah tales in a language close to that of his source and provides a translation into standard English for those who might have hard time with Gullah.

The selected tales are arranged both chronologically and geographically and the first section is called Tales from a New Republic, stories from the first colonies. Here McCarthy gives samples from early almanacs, broadsides, and chapbooks. These are short narratives, probably shortened for publication and often featuring rhyme, with some of the tales being told completely in verse. The next section offers tales that originated in the Iberian peninsula. There are stories from Puerto Rico, one of the first places in the New World settled by Europeans, and tales from the Hispanic Southwest of the United States and from Louisiana. The next set of stories comes from a peculiar group of immigrants to New England. People from Cape Verde off the coast of Africa came to the American Northeast in such numbers that they now outnumber Cape Verdians back home. Yet they kept close ties with their homeland and brought many tales, stories fed and replenished by contacts with the area of origin. French heritage tales are the next group offered and McCarthy selects from stories found in Louisiana, offering both Creole and Cajun tales. Stories from a French community in Missouri are also included. The British tradition is represented by

stories from the American South and African American tales from the rural South and the urban North to which blacks fled. The Gullah tradition mentioned above and found on islands off Georgia and the Carolinas is also in this section, as is a selection of tales from the Appalachian and Ozark Mountains. The tales of other peoples appear in lesser numbers. Under the section "Other People, Other Tales" we find German and Irish stories. Other groups are represented also, though by still fewer tales. Finally there is a section featuring European stories that have been assimilated into the Native American tradition.

Each section begins with an introduction which tells the reader a bit about the group's history and about the history of tale collecting within this group. After the introduction come the texts themselves. Each tale is thoroughly annotated. At the end of each story we find information on its source, including the performer from whom the tale was collected where such information is available. Location and date of collecting and name of collector are given, as is the ATU number. If the tale was previously published, that information is provided also. There is a discussion of the story, noting any peculiar or typical features, and the relationship of the tale published here to other variants. ATU numbers, motif numbers, performers, and collectors also appear in table form.

In addition to providing a sampling that covers all of the United States, McCarthy tries his best to give a sense of what orality is like and how a tradition functions. At the end of the book he presents a story by one particular performer, Betty Carriveau Sherman. He gives her full telling of the story, using capitals and other font features to show emphasis, volume, timber, and other oral features. Pictures illustrate the performance, and biographical information and accounts of other performances by Sherman provide context. In addition to the special unit on Sherman, the British tradition section provides stories from one storytelling family, giving a sense of transmission from generation to generation, and variation within a limited geographical and social space.

Of course the best part is the stories themselves. McCarthy loves folktales and he has selected very good ones. Few tales repeat from one section to the next, and when the same tale type does appear more than once, the differences and group appropriate features are discussed. The sheer volume and breadth of the material is truly impressive. McCarthy succeeds in proving his point about the viability of traditional

folktale in America. This is a book that has it all. It is comprehensive and readable. The scholarly apparatus is good. A specialist can use it, and someone new to folklore can read it just for fun, learning something about the nature of folklore along the way.

Shaw's *Blue Mountains* book is a more of a scholarly work, produced in bilingual format and geared more toward specialists. It is a collection of tales of European origin made with care and with all the proper documentation. The context of McCarthy's work helps us realize what a real treasure and what a rarity this book is. When others were collecting songs, Shaw was working on documenting tales, and he seems to have been an excellent field researcher. He gives an account of working together with tellers, trying to capture and preserve a piece of intangible cultural heritage. I found this to be an excellent description of what the best of fieldwork is like. Working with respondents to preserve folklore is perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of being a folklorist and Shaw describes it well.

While this book adheres to all the principles of careful scholarship, it is by no means dry. It too can be read and enjoyed by just about anyone. Shaw begins his volume by providing background information. We learn about Cape Breton and those of its inhabitants who came from Scotland. The storytelling occasions, we learn, were evening gatherings and most of the narrators were men. Stories provided entertainment and also helped affirm and maintain Gaelic identity. Next comes information on the recording of the tales and on the selection process by which the tales in the current collection were chosen. Shaw's source is his own fieldwork, conducted over a period of some thirty years. This gives his work an immediacy and intimacy that is powerful indeed.

After the introduction we get the stories themselves. These are published on facing pages with the Gaelic on the left and its English translation on the right. The first section is international tales, meaning Märchen or wonder tales, stories much like those published by McCarthy. The next section is stories about robbers and thieves. Many of these are stories of wit where thieves take their victims' goods by employing truly ingenious trickery. Some stories in this section also are wonder tales placed here because their protagonists are thieves or highwaymen. In these, harm befalls the actors, usually the robbers, who are tricked by a female victim and forced to reveal their true nature.

The tall tales section contains stories about improbable situations, such as the tale of a priest who teaches a herring to live on dry land by keeping it out of water for progressively longer periods of time. Tales of the Fiann are narratives about heroes of immense strength, as are stories about Boban Saor. The other historical legends tell about events such as the return of the dead, the accidental summoning of the Devil, and the uncovering of the bones of a murder victim which help reveal the identity of the murderer. Each story is fully annotated, as in McCarthy's book. The only difference is that this information appears at the end of the book rather than following each narrative. Again we get the ATU number, the name of the performer and the date and place of collection. If the story was previously published, as was one of the texts, then publication information is provided. The documentation of each text is followed by a discussion of both typical and unique features. The book concludes with information on the tellers. This includes biographical information and photos.

This is a contemporary collection which reproduces material collected and prepared by its editor and translator, not material collected long ago. As a piece of modern scholarship, it has all the attention to detail and to documentation that one would expect from a thoroughly trained and informed folklorist. I cannot comment on the quality of the translation because I have no knowledge of Gaelic. As for all other aspects of the book, they are well done indeed. My only objection to this book is that it is so slight. Shaw tells us that the collection is hardly comprehensive. He notes that he has at least twice as much material as he publishes here. It is a pity that he did not prepare this additional material for publication. What we have here is good. Having more would be most welcome.

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