

Harriet NE, with Gloria L. CRONIN, illustrations by Terry REFFELL, *Tales of Molokai: The Voice of Harriet Ne*, (La'ie, Hawai'i, Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1992, 171 p., preface, introduction, map, glossary, and index, ISBN 0-939154- 50-1)

Kay Stone

Volume 15, Number 2, 1993

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1083215ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1083215ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (print)

1708-0401 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Stone, K. (1993). Review of [Harriet NE, with Gloria L. CRONIN, illustrations by Terry REFFELL, *Tales of Molokai: The Voice of Harriet Ne*, (La'ie, Hawai'i, Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1992, 171 p., preface, introduction, map, glossary, and index, ISBN 0-939154- 50-1)]. *Ethnologies*, 15(2), 201–202.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1083215ar>

selective. The result is a reference work which is pleasantly sloppy — tending to be fuzzy at its outer edges in terms of which non-reference works it cites, while being quite rigorous in its core material.

Essential to Steinfirst's approach are good bibliographical essays which preface every section of the work. These essays outline important studies which supplement the actual list of bibliographical references. Thus, there are many more works mentioned than the 2,554 items numbered in the bibliography. In addition, Steinfirst annotates each bibliographical citation as extensively as necessary, giving the reader a good idea of the essentials of each citation. Reading through the volumes, then (and this is an excellent browser's reference book), is like reading an extended essay on folklore scholarship.

In constructing her bibliography, Steinfirst follows the genre classification of the Folklore Section of the MLA International Bibliography, although she wisely diverges from this system when it suits the specific demands of her work. Almost all of her citations are works written in English, but she adds works in other languages, when she thinks they are important in understanding a genre or sub-genre; she directs the reader, for the most part, to books, but will include even very small journal articles where appropriate; her cut-off date is 1987, but she includes works written as recently as 1991, when she has learned of them. This is why I see this bibliography as pleasantly sloppy — as humanistic, in fact.

Fangs blunted and feathers smoothed, I can do no more than recommend this book to every folklorist's reference collection. For both the folklore graduate student and the seasoned professional, this bibliography should be a first source before embarking upon any new folkloristic endeavour.

Michael TAFT
Saskatoon

Harriet NE, with Gloria L. CRONIN, illustrations by Terry REFFELL, *Tales of Molokai: The Voice of Harriet Ne*, (La'ie, Hawai'i, Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1992, 171 p., preface, introduction, map, glossary, and index, ISBN 0-939154-50-1)

The 44 stories in this collection are rich in literary, historical, and mythological content. They were gathered between the years of 1981 and 1988 by Gloria Cronin, folklore collector from Brigham Young University (Provo). The storyteller, Harriet Ayau Ne, was a Chinese-Hawaiian who managed to maintain traditions of her ethnic heritage as well as her Christian upbringing. In

her introduction, Cronin comments that she hopes this collection “will provide an insight into the mind and heart of a remarkable and gracious woman — modern-day *kuma hula* [hula master] tale-teller, historian, kupuna [elder], Christian minister, and friend to young and old, Hawaiian and visitor” (xv).

The stories, often complex in plot, are told with elegant simplicity. They do not read like tape transcriptions, nor like literary reworkings. While this is not a scholarly collection with comparative notes or relevant bibliography, Ne’s own comments, in the oral history interview and interwoven through the narratives, are invaluable.

The narratives are arranged in five sections. Tales of the Beginning includes sacred origin myths; Tales of Naming and Tales of Long Ago contain accounts of legendary events; Tales of the North Coast feature wondrous tales connected to various sites in northern Molokai, while Tales of My Own Molokai have the added feature of Harriet Ne’s personal reminiscences. Many of these narratives end with variations of the statement “and I myself have seen it”.

Cronin attempts to explain her categories by describing Ne’s own sense of genre (though unfortunately we do not have Ne’s own words on this):

Her myths usually are based on some fact set in the remote past, depict a different world, and feature non-human characters and a narrative comparable to scripture. Her legends are frequently narrated as fact, set in the more recent past, depict the world of today, combine the sacred and secular, use human characters, and function like history. The most prevalent category, her folktales, can be taken as either fact or fiction, weave across all time zones and places, are usually secular, include human and nonhuman characters, and function more like literature (xii).

She also observes that some of the narratives “repeatedly reveal situations in which the supernatural tradition becomes actualized and influences human behavior. As such they become the context and often the sources of the teller’s values” (xii).

The three-part opening to the book includes Cronin’s introduction to the storyteller and to the island of Molokai, with the final section given over to Harriet Ne’s own remarks as expressed in an interview between Cronin and Ne. These sections, while too brief and not analytic, do provide some essential background for the wealth of tales included in the collection.

Kay STONE
University of Winnipeg
Winnipeg, Manitoba
