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Jack in Two Worlds: Contemporary North American Tales and Their Tellers. Edited by William Bernard McCarthy. (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994. P. xlvi, photos + 290, ISBN 0-8078-2135-7 cloth, 0-8708-4443-8 pbk.)

"Once bitten, folklorists and storytellers alike find it hard to resist the Jack Tale," writes William McCarthy at the beginning of this excellent collection of tales and essays (p. ix). As one who has been bitten, I can testify to the truth of his words. I can think of few activities which I would not quickly put aside if someone were to come to the door asking, "Would you like to hear a story about Jack?" The many tales of this dauntless everyman (or men) making his way through the world with only his courage, wit, and luck — often accompanied with a strong dose of humour — rarely fail to delight. Jack fans will be more than satisfied with the tales in this book. The title, "Jack in Two Worlds", refers to the telling of Jack tales[1] among North Carolina families and to storytelling revival audiences. The book, which grew out of an American Folklore Society Panel in 1987, contains eight tales, each told by a different storyteller. Four of these tellers are representatives of the Beech Mountain storytelling tradition from which Richard Chase collected stories for his popular book *The Jack Tales* (1943). Two of these Appalachian tellers, Marshall Ward and Maud Gentry Long, are among Chase's original sources. The other "four storytellers [are] progressively further removed from Beech Mountain and the Appalachian oral tradition" (p. x). All eight have participated as performers in the storytelling revival.

Each story is preceded by an essay introducing the storyteller and providing much information about the texture and context of the recorded performance, using the teller's own words to comment on his or her art and its stylistic development. In their essays, the folklorists Joseph Daniel Sobol, Carl Lindahl, Cheryl Oxford, Bill Ellis, William Bernard McCarthy, Kenneth A. Thigpen, and Kay Stone (with Stewart Cameron) provide valuable information concerning the styles of the individual tellers and about how they use innovation within folk traditions. Unfortunately, Oxford's essay is of poorer quality than the rest, displaying some of the worst aspects of graduate student writing, i.e.,

1. Unlike the writers of *Jack in Two Worlds*, I do not capitalise the word "tales" in "Jack Tales." Using the term "Jack Tales," implies that these stories are a distinct genre — a questionnable concept — and overemphasizes the importance of Richard Chase's book, *The Jack Tales*, and of the "Beech Mountain tradition" in the transmission of these widespread tales. I am referring simply to folktales with a hero named "Jack."

using pretentious language — surely *mouth* is a better term than "oral orifice" (p. 63) — and indulging in a self-conscious and often irrelevant use of theory. Her attempt to relate Jack's sharing of food with an old man to the idea of feasting in *Rabelais and His World* by Bakhtin is particularly forced (p. 63). Also, Oxford interprets this tale according to a conservative and reductionist Freudian doctrine without explaining why she rejects the many other systems of interpreting symbols. Still, her essay provides a great deal of relevant information about Marshall Ward, his storytelling, and his relationship with Richard Chase.

Three other essays — "Jacks: The Name, The Tales, the American Tradition" by Carl Lindahl, "The Teller and the Tale: Storytelling on Beech Mountain" by W. F. H. Nicolaisen, and "The Tellers and the Tales: Revivalist Storytelling" by Ruth Stotter and William McCarthy — provide a framework for understanding the broader contexts in which the stories and their tellers exist. These essays provide important data about the historical and social settings of the storytelling traditions highlighted in this book. Lindahl examines differences between European and American traditions and explains how Chase radically altered his texts. Although this essay is of value to any student of folktales, it has some flaws. Lindahl exaggerates Chase's role in creating "Jack" as a "national folk hero" (p. xxiii). Two brief quotes which Lindahl cites on p. xxiii are virtually the only arguments which Chase made for the uniqueness of Jack's American character in "The Jack Tales". Chase then qualified his comments by including a lengthy footnote quoting Martha Warren Beck which firmly establishes Jack as part of a European tale cycle (Chase, p. xii). If some Americans have made a national hero of Jack, this is due to other influences besides Chase. Also, in his criticism of Chase's revisions of tales, Lindahl fails to address Chase's statement that he was writing — at least in part — for children (Chase, p. xi). This point does not nullify Lindahl's arguments but should nonetheless be discussed in any critique of Chase's methodology. Readers will appreciate Lindahl's explanation of how Chase altered oral texts. Still, we should keep in mind that Chase was writing in 1943 and not judge his work according to contemporary standards.

Particularly grating to Canadian readers is the fact that Lindahl purports to discuss "North American Jacks" (p. xvii) and the "British-American oral art" (p. xx) but does not make a single reference to the folktales of Canada. This sort of chauvinism has the same effect as a chronic ache. A person can sometimes ignore it but it tends to make one cranky and irritable over time. Lindahl ignores Newfoundland's rich tradition of Jack tales as well as

francophone Canada's celebration of Jack's French counterpart, *Ti-Jean*. The omission of Canadian material is puzzling, considering that William McCarthy thanks Herbert Halpert, an expert on Jack tales in Canada, "for his careful critique of an early draft of Carl Lindahl's introduction" (p. xi). Halpert and John Widdowson include a great many Jack tales in their *Folktales of Newfoundland* (1996), a work which they began in the 1960s.

An essay on a Canadian storyteller, the late Stewart Cameron, at the end of a book about storytelling in the United States further reflects this cultural chauvinism. No attempt is made by the book's writers to place Cameron or the Canadian storytelling revival outside the American context already established. There is a great deal of overlap between the storytelling revivals in the two countries, but this book treats Canada as nothing more than an appendage of the U.S.A. However, Kay Stone's essay on Cameron does provide a very good examination of the complexities of storytelling even though Stone does not discuss one of the most obvious aspects of Cameron's performance style — his use of an imitation Scots accent and dialect (Scottish words and phrases are evident throughout Stone's transcription of his tale). This type of affectation is unusual in Canadian storytelling-revival circles in which most performers — unlike their American peers — avoid developing obvious stage personas.

The nationalistic slant of the writers of *Jack in Two Worlds* sometimes interferes with their scholarship. Many of the writers seem obsessed with the "Beech Mountain tradition" despite Lindahl's criticism of the concept of Chase's Jack as an American hero. This obsession sometimes leads them to ask the wrong questions about the tales and their tellers. For instance, Stotter and McCarthy question how changes made by revivalist storytellers are affecting the character of this Appalachian folk hero but do not indicate whether this regional tradition is, in fact, the source of these tales for the majority of the revivalists. Numerous Jack tales have been published in collections not connected with the Appalachian region. Furthermore, Stotter and McCarthy's emphasis on performance and on a particular culture de-emphasizes the cross-cultural appeal of Jack tales.

Finally, at the risk of being branded a heretic by other folklorists, I must question the value of the transcription style used for most of these tales. The texts are written in an ethnopoetic variation developed by Elizabeth Fine in 1984; i.e., they are written as verse, based on the timing of the teller's speech, rather than in the usual prose format. Proponents of this type of approach

argue that it is important to note every false start and obvious error in storytellers' speech so that we can truly understand what the performers mean. Is it not equally important, therefore, that we get unedited texts from scholars — complete with typos and spelling errors — so that others can understand what we are really saying? This style of transcription is important in a certain linguistic approach to understanding oral speech, but the reader has to be assured of the scientific accuracy of transcriptions if they are to be useful for linguistic analysis. Inconsistencies in the transcriptions in this book show that the methodology used is anything but scientific.

Although one goal of such an approach is to show the reader that a tale is not a fixed text, it does, in fact, present a particular performance as a fixed text. One storyteller to whom I explained this transcription style commented, "But a story is alive, it changes in every telling. You can't capture it in one performance like that." Joseph Daniel Sobol and Kay Stone, both storytellers themselves, seem unconvinced of the value of documenting performances in Fine's style. Stone's transcription of Cameron's story is in prose. Sobol uses verse for Donald Davis's tale but comments:

> We had talked for years about collaborating on a book of oral transcriptions of these stories. There would have been faithful documentation of the live performance context but, ironically, they would have been less faithful to the actual intended content of the tales — the leisurely converse of reader and book (p. 211).

Having heard Ray Hicks tell tales on tape, I found that the verbatim transcription of one of his tales in this book gave me little if any feeling for a Ray Hicks performance — perhaps less than would a more edited text. There must be a happy medium between Chase's rewriting of folktales and this transcription style which often turns a dynamic performance into a stiff and awkward written text.

In spite of these criticisms, this collection of essays and tales enriches our understanding of folklore through its examination of traditional and revivalist storytelling and the complex relations between the two. *Jack in Two Worlds* is an important book for any student of folktale and storytelling and would make a useful supplementary text in a course on oral narrative.

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Folklore, Literature, and Cultural Theory: Collected Essays. By Cathy Lynn Preston, editor. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1995. P. xi + 256, ISBN 0-8240-7271-5.)

In his article "Re-presentations of (Im)moral Behavior in the Middle English Non-Cycle Play *Mankind*," Michael J. Preston states "I attempt to re-situate *Mankind* so that it might be better understood over all...My methodology is eclectic" (p. 215). The project of textual re-situation and eclecticism in methodology defines the essays presented in *Folklore, Literature, and Cultural Theory: Collected Essays* edited by Cathy Lynn Preston. The thirteen essays presented in this volume represent a diversity of voice, scholarship, and discipline, and their aim is to "attempt to extend and, in some cases, to rethink current discussions of cultural production" (p. ix). The project of "[establishing] a cross-disciplinary dialogue between folklore and literature and among folklorists, literary scholars, and cultural theorists" (p. ix), and the resulting "somewhat eclectic nature of the collection" (p. xiii), bear witness to the important contribution folklorists offer in the discussion of cultural theory. Yet, as folklorists are all too keenly aware, the folkloristic voice is often a faint one in the ever-widening discussion of cultural representation. Preston asserts that "appropriation is a *mutual* (emphasis hers) process," and calls for a "counter-move" and "[reclamation] of folklore as an important site of contestation in the production and re-production of culture" (p. x). Most important, Preston urges the centralization of the political voice of folklore.

As such, the essays in this anthology represent a wide array of emergent voices that are often omitted from cultural guest lists, marginalized as they are by the colonization of thought and language of which we are all, as players in