

THE GALE RESEARCH REPRINT PROJECT

Could traditional tales of a dream-inspired peddler finding his fortune at London Bridge point up facts about the political and social antagonism between 4th century Romans and Celts? The question implies a distinctly interdisciplinary approach to history and folklore, but was in fact the taking-off point for a study¹ begun by British folklorist George Laurence Gomme in the 1890's and published in 1908. Sixty years later, Dr. Ellen Stekert of Detroit's Wayne State University is heading a team investigating the relationship of folklore and stereotypes in city life to such problems as the genesis of riots in the ghetto. The recent phenomenal growth of interest in folklore has been abetted by a concomitant effort on the part of some publishers to reprint pioneering and classic works in the field. The most ambitious of such programs to date has been carried out by the Gale Research Company, a 13-year-old Detroit publishing firm that specializes in reference books.

The company's reprint program began around 1964 in response to library demands for new, hard-wearing copies of old titles, long out of print but still sought after, in bibliography, social history, and literature. But when books such as Brand's Observations on Popular Antiquities and Thisleton-Dyer's British Popular Customs began showing up in the firm's social history series, a decision was made to inaugurate a catalogue devoted solely to folklore and such related fields as mythology, ballads and chapbooks, exegeses of folk and fairy tales, and children's lore and literature. Frederick Ruffner, president of Gale, called in as an adviser Leslie Shepard, British writer on folklore subjects, bibliographer, and author of The Broad-side Ballad: A Study in Origins and History². In establishing criteria for selecting titles for reprinting, Shepard used Stith Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk Literature as a starting point. It was decided to restore key titles in this and Haywood's Bibliography of North American Folklore and Folksong. For children's lore, the authority was Haviland's Children's Literature: A Guide to Reference Sources. A citation by the experts ranks with the intrinsic importance of a book, the demand for it as a scarce title, and its relevance to present-day studies as a factor in the company's decision on whether or not to reissue it.

A few of the books already back in print are Bell's Early Ballads, the Henderson edition of Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, Sabine-Gould's Strange Survivals, Clouston's Popular Tales and Fictions, and Marian Roalfe Cox's Introduction to Folklore. Also coming off the presses under the company's new Singing Tree Press imprint are a number of chapbooks and ballad collections, including Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances and Broad-sides. The later, out of print for sixty years, remains the comprehensive catalogue of its kind with over 2,450 items. Ruffner and Shepard have also announced the 13-volume Gentleman's Library, a classified collection of articles from The Gentleman's Magazine of 1731 to 1868 on archeology, folklore, archaic language, and social history, edited by Gomme; Charles Leland's Algonquin Legends of New England; William Butler Yeats' Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry; and Thomas Keightley's The Fairy Mythology. In some instances the Gale reprints are provided with a new introduction and bibliographical notes. One obscure but notable author brought to light in this was John Ashton, a 19th-century scholar who used newspaper and magazine accounts as a basis for chronicles evoking the mood of street and social life in the eras of Queen Anne, William IV, and Victoria.

The books are reproduced by Gale in facsimile by offset lithography, a process which retains the format and interesting appearance of the original pages but allows "blow-ups" and margin expansion for increased readability. Much effort is often necessary to obtain the original. Shepard, in fact, spends most of his time at the company's London office which is literally a stone's throw from the British Museum where he researches volumes which in the United States could be studied only by catalogue entry. A good number of hours, however, are spent poking around second-hand bookstores; it was in one of these that Shepard found a copy of the third edition of Percy's Reliques--with a manuscript note by a previous owner who had discovered and loved the Folio Manuscript before it was found by Bishop Percy. Bio-bibliographical notes on this find were incorporated in a new introduction to the Singing Tree Press reissue of this major work, due to be published in early 1969. Since the inception of the reprint program, the company has welcomed suggestions from librarians and scholars in the field on titles that deserve republication; this, especially in view of plans to expand greatly the folklore and social history catalogue. The object of developing the program, according to Ruffner and Shepard, is to make easily available to researchers all the much sought key works in those fields.

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dependent on the availability of faculty and an apparent lack of severe personality conflicts. While it did not surprise us that these students, the best of their respective departments, do not feel the hardships of an over-worked faculty with too little time and less patience, we could not help but wonder how the other students of the departments fared. Unfortunately, only Tom Burns and Jay Anderson, the representative from the University of Pennsylvania, seemed to have polled student opinion to support their presentations.

Toward the end of the questioning from the floor, it was Ellen Stekert who so accurately pinpointed that which is needed to create and maintain workable lines of communication between faculty and students. She said the present situation of relations based on personality is not sufficient for the task, what is needed is a formal structure which can withstand the pressures of conflict. To us it seems that if the students of Indiana and Pennsylvania pursue their initial efforts, they may have the inside track.

The Editors

STOP IMPOSING YOUR ORDER ON MY REALITY! -- A folk