

Second Hoeing. By Hope Williams Sykes. Introduction by Timothy J. Kloberdanz. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press (A Bison Book), 1982 (1935). Pp. xvii+309. Cloth \$21.50, Paper \$7.50.

Reviewed by Timothy H. Evans

Occasionally, a novelist appears whose works are of considerable interest to the ethnographer: examples include Zora Neale Hurston, Chinua Achebe or Rudolfo Anaya. To this list we can add Hope Williams Sykes, whose important and authoritative novel about German-Russian immigrants in Colorado, first published in 1935, has recently been reprinted with an excellent introduction by Timothy Kloberdanz. **Second Hoeing**, although a critical success in its day, was almost completely forgotten for forty years. Its reprinting is an important event in a number of fields, including American literature, the folklife and ethnography of the Great Plains, and especially the history and ethnography of German-Russians in America.

The German-Russians were a group of German peasants who emigrated to the Russian steppes around the lower Volga River during the years 1764-67. Between the 1870s and the First World War, many of them migrated to the New World. Although their settlements ranged from Canada to Argentina, a large number of them settled in the United States, primarily in the sugar beet-growing areas of the Great Plains.

Second Hoeing is set in the 1920s and '30s, among the sugar beet farms east of "Valley City," a pseudonym for Fort Collins, Colorado. It follows eight years (ages 16 to 24) in the life of Hannah Schreissmiller, the American-born daughter (one of twelve children) of German-Russian immigrants. The novel opens as the Schreissmiller family leaves their shack in the agricultural laborers' community to rent a seizable sugar beet farm. As we follow the maturing of Hannah, we are introduced to a host of well-realized characters, and come to know and appreciate the daily lives of her family and community.

Hannah labors in the beet fields from the age of six, and continues to work very hard (as do most of her acquaintances) under the eye of her tyrannical father. (The publication of **Second Hoeing** was instrumental in get-

ting child labor laws passed in the United States.) In spite of all adversity, the Schreissmiller family ultimately does very well, prospering more than many of their Anglo neighbors. Hannah is caught up in her responsibility to her family, the need for continual hard work, and the traditional culture of German-Russians (with its strong work ethic). This conflicts with her desire for education and for assimilation and acceptance into mainstream American culture.

These characterizations could not have been so powerful and authentic without the author's considerable knowledge of and respect for the German-Russian people of Colorado. In the introduction, Kloberdanz describes how Sykes grew up on a farm in Kansas, just across the border from Colorado. He describes her fieldwork techniques as she collected data on folklife and ethnography from the German-Russians near Fort Collins. Sykes was a school-teacher in the agricultural laborers' community and had many German-Russian students. She interviewed a large number of German-Russians, visited their homes, and attended their ceremonies and social gatherings. From this body of ethnographic data, she created the rich background for the story of **Second Hoeing**.

Kloberdanz has gathered this biographical information from Sykes' correspondence and her family. It is apparently the first time that any biographical material on Sykes has been published. It would be interesting to know what happened to her field notes and ethnographic data. Do they still exist? If so, are they available to scholars? Kloberdanz does not address this point.

Sykes continually provides ethnographic detail in the course of her story: farming tools and techniques; descriptions of shawls, coverlets, canes, and other items of material culture; preparations of soups, sausages, cakes and other traditional foods; folk medicine and weather lore; religious beliefs; baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals; proverbs; items of worldview; and many other examples of German-Russian folklife. Best of all are the descriptions of family life, sex roles, life cycle ceremonies and the annual cycles of planting, cultivating and harvesting sugar beets. These are the themes which underlie the novel, and which tie the German-Russian people intimate-

ly to their natural environment, the American Great Plains. Along with the natural cycles come the natural catastrophes, which occur unexpectedly but continually: a farmer is struck by lightning, hundreds of lambs die in a blizzard.

The German-Russians in Colorado were not, of course, an autonomous, static "folk group." They lived among Anglo-Americans and interacted with them. Sykes' characters experienced bigotry and economic exploitation. They also succeeded economically, studied for and passed their citizenship exams, were assimilated into mainstream American culture, and, in some cases, intermarried with Anglos.

Kloberdanz provides an interesting discussion of the negative reception which **Second Hoeing** had among the German-Russians themselves. The apparent reason was that the characters had faults as well as virtues. Some of them were lazy, dirty or dishonest, three traits which predominated in negative stereotypes of this group (and of virtually every other American minority group). Sykes does not, however, see these attributes as being more prevalent among German-Russians than among any other group.

This is a potential problem for any folklorist or ethnographer who directs his publications to the group he is studying. If he publishes the intimate secrets of his informants, if he shows the negative as well as the positive side of their character, he risks offending them; but if he suppresses this aspect of his data, he is being dishonest and a poor scholar. He can solve this problem by directing his papers only to other academics, but then he is exploiting his informants. The scholar of human culture has a responsibility to make his data accessible to those from whom he has collected it. This is, perhaps, an irresolvable dilemma. It is noteworthy that, in the years since its publication, **Second Hoeing** has become much more widely accepted in the German-Russian community, and is now a source of ethnic pride.

One criticism which can be made of Sykes' novel is the broken English dialogue. It is awkward to read, and as Kloberdanz points out, is not authentic. It resembles the comical, stereotyped dialogue which many authors attribute to the Pennsylvania Germans. Much of this dialogue would actually have been in German. Sykes puts it in English as a service to her readers, but she could more effectively have put it into everyday English.

The importance to folklorists of novels such as **Second Hoeing** is not only the possible extraction of ethnographic data, but also the novels themselves as artistic units. Particular items and patterns of culture may characterize certain groups, but their use is ultimately by individuals. Sykes shows superbly how German-Russian folklife both shapes and is shaped by individual personalities. **Second Hoeing**, important both as fiction and ethnography, can help to remind folklorists that there is a humanistic as well as a scientific side to their discipline.

Love and Power in the Peasant Family: Rural France in the Nineteenth Century. By Martine Segalen. Translated by Sarah Matthews. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. Pp. viii + 206. Illustration, , bibliography, index. Cloth, \$21.00.

Reviewed by Regina Bendix

In a time when folklorists prefer to study folklore performance and its context, one wonders what to make of old, text-centered collections that still fill the shelves of folklore libraries. A folklore item or text today is considered incomplete without an accurate recording of the context, and old collections seem to be used mostly for annotation. Martine Segalen, a French scholar who might best be termed an historical ethnologist, would not agree with this orientation. She wants to use the records and collections of 19th century folklorists to examine the husband-wife relationship in pre-industrial rural France. Her data consists of the writings of various folklorists, their correspondences, regional proverb collections and the results of rural architecture surveys. These are supported by statistical and demographic studies. Her book grew out of an exhibit entitled **Mari et femme dans la France rurale traditionnelle** at the Musée national des arts et traditions populaire in Paris.

Today, there are many stereotypes of the 19th century rural family, especially the cliché of the rural patriarchal order. Segalen asserts that little is known about the nature of relationships within the rural household which would support such a view. Her research leads her to pro-