

by the excellent investigative skills and compact organization of the scholarly Cochran. But may I suggest that while this biography certainly is the definitive work on Vance Randolph to date, the complement to this volume which would delve into the inner world of Randolph--his impulses, motives, fears, loves..., is still to be written. Hopefully for us, Bob Cochran has this on the agenda.

**On a Slow Train Through Arkansaw.** By Thomas W. Jackson. Edited by W. K. McNeil. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1985. Pp. xi + 137. Preface, introduction, notes.

Reviewed by Norma Oritz

**On a Slow Train Through Arkansaw**, originally published in 1903, is an interesting book in its own right, but what makes this latest edition a must for anyone interested in the popular culture of the early nineteen-hundreds are the enlightening preface, introduction, and annotations by the folklorist-in-residence at the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View, Arkansaw\*, W. K. McNeil. Placing this book in the context of popular history, McNeil says that it "offers a glimpse into the popular culture and popular attitudes of the past. It is a source of historical insight that is all the more valuable because it was intended not as a historical document but as a compilation of material designed to appeal to the masses."

The materials used by Jackson in this jest book came from both the popular tradition of minstrelsy and vaudeville, and folk traditions, as well. Although an uneducated brakeman himself, Jackson was a skillful joke teller adept at getting much of his material from crew members and passengers. He used an interesting method of pre-testing jokes: If the conductor

laughed at the joke, Jackson had his wife write it down; if it was not successful in the retelling, it was not included in his book.

In 1903 a series of events converged, making it an advantageous time for the publishing of what turned out to be the most popular jest book ever. The book used as context and scenario the existing stereotypes of slow trains throughout the country, but especially in Arkansaw and the Arkansaw depicted in various ballads and cowboy songs. In addition, increasing train travel was accompanied by a demand for cheap reading material, and the public was ready for a small, easy-to-read, and entertaining joke book. Jackson had trainbutchers hawk copies of his book at newsstands, instead of selling his twenty-five cent book through mail orders. And what a success it was, this compendium of tradition! Included were jokes, riddles, conundrums, spelling acts, malaprops, tales, traditional anecdotes, traditional ballads rewritten for humorous effects, and parodied popular songs.

Because of their American focus, McNeil has chosen to use the tale type and motif numbers from Ernest W. Baughman's *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America* rather than the standard index by Stith Thompson, a tack well taken. Although there may be some who object to the racial and ethnic slurs in this jest book, the value of this book is in the the source material that it provides for students of folklore, social history, anthropology, and popular culture. W. K. McNeil answers any objections by dedicating *On a Slow Train Through Arkansaw* to Vance Randolph, who collected all kinds of folklore, including the "unprintable" kind. The dedication reads, "To the memory of Vance Randolph, who would have understood why this was done."

\*The reviewer wished to use this spelling of Arkansas, to dispel any notion that the word is misspelled in the title. This earlier

spelling was originally used to encourage the correct pronunciation of the state's name.

**Brothers in Clay: The Story of Georgia Folk Pottery.** By John A Burrison. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983. Pp. xviii + 326. Notes, bibliography, checklist and index of Georgia folk potters, general index, photographs (both b-w and color), maps, geneologies of potters. \$35.00 cloth.

**The Traditional Pottery of Alabama.** By E. Henry Willett and Joey Brackner. Montgomery, Alabama: The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, 1983. Pp. 70. Bibliography, photographs (both b-w and color), checklist of the exhibition. Exhibition catalog.

Reviewed by John B. Wolford.

The study of material culture and folklife is in the process of redefining itself, reconciling past trends and emphases with new ones. Historically, folklife was oriented toward the past and long-established traditions; oral or unwritten transmission and rural context were prerequisites for the careful scrutiny of objects and forms. At present, folklife has turned to more recent theories and approaches borrowed from folklore as well as from other fields--performance theory, contextual studies, behavioralism, and phenomenology have all appeared in recent research. A tension exists within the field of folklife studies between conservative and dynamic research interests, and the debates promise to result in exciting new scholarship. The two publications on Southern folk pottery reviewed here are an example of the synthesis of past- and present-orientation in folklife studies today.

When Southern folk pottery is mentioned, one