

are not mere formula-spewing hackers; they are artists, molding traditional materials into unique shapes.

Rosenberg has done us a service in updating this work, but I cannot help saying that he has not done us the service he might have. More than once, Rosenberg bemoans the limitations of the written word in transmitting the feel of the spoken word; "We murder to transcribe: (131; see also 62,162). But aside from breaking lines at pauses or breaths, Rosenberg makes no effort to improve the faulty medium. He writes

This same Jesus  
That was carried off in the wilderness (89)

when he might have written

This SA-A-AME Je-e-sus  
That was carried OFF in the WILDerness.

(Of course this emphasis is simply from my imagination.) No one can fault Rosenberg for transcribing as he did for the 1970 edition, but Dennis Tedlock's innovations in transcription (1972) should not have gone unremarked. I wish that Rosenberg had gone to the considerable trouble to re-transcribe the sermons using a system like Tedlock's. It is possible that the tapes are no longer good enough to allow this, or perhaps Rosenberg simply did not have the time (it *would* be a formidable undertaking), but to my mind such a re-transcription would have been the greatest contribution the revised edition could make.

Even with the limitations in transcription, the sermon texts are extremely valuable as primary data, and the analysis is thoughtful and insightful. It seems, with this revised edition and the publication of Gerald L. Davis' *I Got the Word in Me and I Can Sing It, You Know* (1985) and Elaine J. Lawless' *Handmaidens of the Lord* (1988), the study of folk preaching may be entering a golden age.

Wylie, Jonathan. **The Faroe Islands: Interpretations of History.** Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987. Pp. 257, appendix, bibliography. N.p.

Reviewed by Sean Galvin

The title of this work, *The Faroe Islands: Interpretations of History*, is an understatement. The subject matter undertaken by Wylie is very much more than history. Folklore, social history, economics, anthropology, and political science are just a few of the disciplines which the author skillfully employs to reconstruct the social and cultural changes that have taken place in this little windswept North Atlantic community midway between Norway and Iceland.

From the very first pages of the Introduction, aptly titled *Terra Incognita*, the reader is drawn into a Faroese worldview that is at once strange but at the same time all too familiar. Wylie presents a first-person account of how he was drawn deeper and deeper into the cultural anthropological study of this society, first as a neophyte graduate student, and later, as a trained professional fieldworker. He chose the Faroes because "Faroese society is both small enough and complex enough to combine features of tribal and rural societies, on the one hand, and nation-states, on the other" (p. 3). His aim, he says, is to provide a descriptive historical account "of how a people's life is organized and how its distinctiveness is defined through the use of such sources as folktales, parliamentary records, tourist writings, poetry, old newspapers, and data on land tenure. How, he asks, "does a group articulate its own identity, and how is it understood by others?" (p. 4)

To answer this complex question, Wylie situates the reader high above the islands as he masterfully integrates the development of Faroese culture from the pre-Christian Viking era to the turn of the twentieth century in relation to events in Denmark, the place the Faroese have traditionally seen as both harsh colonial master and as benevolent friend and source of inspiration. This paradox is most carefully drawn in the social, political, and cultural arena, and this is where Wylie excels. In his interpolation of historical events crucial to the understanding of two symbiotically related culture groups who are also very different in needs and future goals, the author returns time and again to the notion that Scandinavians generally emphasize achieving consensus, that they strive to avoid conflict. And for the Faroese, conflict lay in the "language question," the establishment of the Faroese language as a legitimate culture index of identity and of national pride.

In Part One, "Norse Settlement to Danish Monopoly," Wylie sketches the crucial development of trade, commercial and religious influences on the islands from the Viking settlement through their Norse administration to the establishment of Danish administration and religion by the time of the Reformation (1535-1540). The Faroese were first managed through individuals appointed by the good will of the King of Denmark; later, the Royal Danish Monopoly was established to control the trade, and ultimately, the administration of the islands. Within this framework, Wylie shows how the Faroese language (actually, West Norse at that time) slowly receded into a vernacular dialect, while Danish assumed its place as the ritual, formal register of Faroese. That is, Danish was used in church, law, politics and in communication with the outside world, but Faroese retained its importance in lore and legend, in ballads and in folktales, especially during the evening gatherings called *kvöldsetur*, which took place

especially in the long, dark, stormy winter evenings, when the day's work was done, [when] families and hired hands would gather in the kitchen to card, spin, knit, and do other indoor chores. (41)

Wylie concludes the first part with the chapter "17th-Century Society in Legend," wherein he employs a combination of oral history, documentary evidence and legends to show how the Faroese reconcile the difference between the outer appearance that the Faroese are part of the Danish kingdom and the inner reality that the Faroese are indeed non-Danes. By relying on such institutions as *kvöldseta*, lore transmitted through informal oral channels allowed the Faroese to avoid conflict by keeping the Danish language as their formal language register, and by doing so, helped preserve the egalitarian composition of their society.

Part Two, "Toward a National Culture in an Odd Danish Province," sets the stage for Wylie to present the formative influences of the Romantic Nationalist movement on the Faroese as they struggled to assert the legitimacy of the Faroese language. The language movement, and a people's right to have a national language, was an outgrowth of the Herderian sentiment which began on the Continent and came to the Faroese through the medium of such a person as Svend Grundtvig, a fervent nationalist and member of the Danish intelligentsia. This movement was promoted by the Faroese provincial elite who were educated in Copenhagen but later returned to Faroe to lead their government in its first bid for Home Rule. Wylie takes great pains to trace the development of this *cause celebre* to show how the Faroese language enthusiasts did not wish to replace the Danish language completely; they simply wanted Faroese to occupy the newly formed formal registers such as education (in Faroese) and in the culturally constructed revival of their ballads and folktales as tokens of "Faroese-ness." In short, the Faroese assertion of the legitimacy of their language, call it cultural separatism if you will, was manifested by the promotion of

linguistic, literary and historical traditions, shared by the population as a whole as well as respected elsewhere in Scandinavia; and they were espoused in such a way as to provide a sense of cultural continuity through a period of continuing socioeconomic change. (184)

Not all Faroese were in favor of the ascendancy of the Faroese language, Wylie points out, and the Faroese later developed political parties based on the polemical differences related to dependency on Denmark and things Danish, and the ultimate assertion of a Faroese identity within the framework of Danish administration, law and religion.

Although he concludes with the political era (1890-1920), Wylie summarizes the developments from 1920 to the present in a short chapter, "Specters and Illusions: The World Abroad and the World at Home." Here, Wylie recapitulates the themes he has stressed since he was a graduate student in search of a dissertation topic: cooperation, individualism, and egalitarianism; those forces which are integral to the survival of a culture and a people he has adopted as his own, a people for whom he has rendered a great service by presenting his interpretation of their history—the history of the Faroe Islands.