

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Schwarzbaum, Haim.** Studies in Jewish and World Folklore; Walter de Gruyter and Company, Berlin, 1968; Supplement-Serie zu Fabula, Reihe B: Untersuchungen Band 3. Pp. viii+603; preface, introduction, bibliography; Appendix I: Some Recent Works on Jewish Folk Narrative Lore; Appendix II: Some Recent Contributions to the Study of Other Genres of Jewish Folklore; addenda, table of tale types, table of narrative motifs, index, corrections and additions. \$35.00.

As a champion of the truly international study of the folktale, Schwarzbaum breathes new life into the Indianist theory of the origin and diffusion of the folktale and the tradition of exhaustive annotation which is still the chief means of corroborating this thesis. Working at a considerable advantage over his nineteenth century predecessors, Schwarzbaum can draw upon collections and indices for which Theodor Benfey and Reinhold Köhler would have paid a king's ransom. Organizing his work on principles similar to the Bolte-Polivka Ammerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm, Schwarzbaum provides detailed comparative notes which connect Jewish folk narratives with the international stock of folktales. He treats Hebrew, Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish and Judeo-Arabic folk literature as one complex and retrieves hundreds of folktales embedded in inaccessible Yiddish and Hebrew publications. These comparative notes are intended to serve as basic material for a future comprehensive motif index to Jewish folk literature.

Schwarzbaum's major task is to provide annotations for approximately 440 of the 540 tales which appear in the Yiddish collection Maaselech un Mesholim / Tales and Parables 7 compiled by Naftoli Gross and published in New York in 1955 by Aber Press, Incorporated (37 East 18th Street, New York City 3). During the ten years which directly preceded his death, Gross ran a Jewish folktale column in The Forward, a daily Yiddish newspaper in New York, in which he printed stories from literary sources, folktales which he had recorded or remembered, and folktales submitted by readers in America, Canada and other countries. In 1955 he published some of these tales in the form of a book, Maaselech un Mesholim, one of the largest collections of folktales to appear in Yiddish to date.

Gross grouped his tales into thirty somewhat overlapping categories, according to subject matter. Twenty-four of these categories are based upon the protagonists of the tales and include stories about a virtual epic catalogue of humanity: kings, rabbis, hassidic mentors, Biblical heroes, itinerant preachers, cantors, yeshiva students, litigants and merchants, craftsmen, coachmen, wealthy misers, atheists, pranksters, village Jews and innkeepers, soldiers, gentile squires, Jews and gentiles, apostates, lunatics, clergymen, writers and labor leaders. The remaining six categories include stories of the hereafter, tall tales, stories of ingenious tricks, fables and animal tales, social themes and American-Jewish folktales. Instead of indicating the informant of each tale, Gross gave a general list of informants at the end of the book, together with an alphabetical list of localities mentioned in the tales. Since the storytellers sent him their tales in writing, he could not describe the raconteurs nor their art of narration. Gross provided little more than the bare text.

There are approximately one hundred stories in the Gross collection which

Schwarzbaum does not consider. He has "only attempted a close dissection of those stories which are of particular importance for the international study of the folktale, shedding fresh light on various issues of folklore scholarship" (p.67). This statement does not explain why he includes tale no. 252 about the Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph for which only a plot outline is given because "no parallels (1) of this story are known to me" (p.221); nor why he omits such tales as no. 42, "The Beauty of the Prince" (Gross, p. 61) which utilizes Motif K1775: Insult repeated as a harmless remark, and no. 255, "How Former Russian Soldiers Understood their Duties" (Gross, p. 244), which conforms to Aa-Th 1696: "What Should I have Said (Done)?" Both these tales are widely distributed in Europe and the Near and Far East and are presumably of interest to the international study of folktales.

Nor are these particular omissions explained by footnote 73: "On the otherhand, those Gross stories which do not belong to folklore at all, have, of course been omitted altogether" (p. 95). This is the first and only suggestion that the Gross collection contains stories which are not folktales. There is no indication of how Schwarzbaum differentiates folktales from other stories or what the nature of these other stories is. When we turn directly to Gross' own introduction to Maaselech un Mesholim we learn that:

Many of the tales in this book are not folktales. I have, however, written them in the taste and spirit of the Yiddish folktale. They are usually built on an incident in a shtetl, on a clever brainstorm.

Present in this book are a number of tales from the folklore of other nations which I have retold. They are however all in the spirit of our own folktales and fit into the collection.

Present are tales which I have heard in various versions.... but I give variations only in a few cases.

Generally I have tried to avoid tales of which similar examples already appear in other collections (Gross, p. 13, my translation)

An examination of the stories in the Gross collection reveals that Schwarzbaum omits reminiscences of incidents in shtetl life which bear traces of a literary hand; some legends about great men; some tales often in the form of a parable within a story about a clever decision or interpretation made by a rabbi; several traditional folktales; and two tales featuring the favorite wags, Ephraim Greidiger and Hershele Ostropoler. More problematic is the fact that the texts which Schwarzbaum annotates are taken from a collector who openly admits that he creates tales and rewrites non-Jewish tales in the spirit of the Yiddish folktale without himself ever indicating which tales fall into this category. For this reason, the reader would have appreciated some discussion of the composition of the Gross collection; the basis for designating any tales as Jewish or non-Jewish; and the criteria used by Schwarzbaum to determine which tales from the Gross collection to include in his study and which to exclude.

The notes for any one tale vary in length from one line to thirty-four pages. A typical note contains a plot summary and where possible, type and motif numbers. The plot and motifs of the tale are compared with variants which are also summarized. The exact name of the motif and type

is not always provided. What starts out as a note to tale no. 309, "The Two Brothers and the Shlimmazel" (a shlimmazel is a personification of misfortune) turns into a thirty-four page essay on the vast subject of world folklore connected with notions of luck. Schwarzbaum's aim is to show that there exists a vast wealth of stories about luck. He organizes the material according to two basic themes: first, a mortal cannot change his bad luck; second, a human being counteracts his destiny. The second theme is further subdivided: charity thwarts fate; the efficacy of prayer and supplication; fate is tricked by a change of name; a change of place frustrates fate; and fate is tricked by human shrewdness. Under each subdivision he compares tales, proverbs customs and beliefs. By examining tales from the point of view of their treatment of luck, he is able to suggest affinities between the tales that are obscured by the Aarne-Thompson classification.

In addition to the annotation of the Gross collection, the book includes a lengthy and heavily footnoted introductory chapter in which the collection and study of Jewish folklore is surveyed. Most of the discussion consists of plot summaries, annotations and types and motif numbers for seven tales from Leo Weiner's Yiddish folktale collection; approximately twenty of the Elijah tales collected by Shmuel Lehman; several stories from the Ma'aseh-Buch; and fourteen stories from the repertoire of Jefat Schwili, a recently discovered Yeminite story teller now living in Israel. Each page is replete with valuable bibliographical references and comments. The names of thirty-one important scholars of Jewish folklore are listed in one paragraph and their works catalogued in a series of cumbersome notes because "this is not the proper place" to discuss the works of these scholars (p. 14). Nowhere in the densely printed pages that follow is space found for the desperately needed discussion of the history of Jewish folklore scholarship.

The possibilities of the notes as a literary form are fully explored in the footnote miscellany which constitutes the second chapter. These notes to the introduction contain quotations, type indices and bibliographic guides to an astounding number of subjects. The basic materials for an essay on the Jewish predilection for the witty tale are provided in note 60, where it becomes apparent that even the scholarship on Jewish humor is infused with the stereotypes held by the folk themselves: not only are the Jews able to laugh after two thousand years of oppression but they also consider themselves experts on the subject of humor. Ask a Jew and he will tell you: "A joke is something at which gentiles laugh but about which the Jew says, 'I have already heard it.'"

The problem of the Jew in the folklore of the gentile and the gentile in Jewish folklore is briefly discussed and a comprehensive bibliography on the subject of the Jew in literature and folklore is cited (pp. 64-65, 441-443). According to Schwarzbaum, when the Jew appears as the protagonist of a gentile tale, his Jewishness is often not essential, although sometimes, a distinctive and unflattering stereotype of the Jew does appear. Thus, many variants of tales about Jews can be found where the Jew is not the protagonist. The folkloristic ancestor of Shylöck (Ae-Th 890: A Pound of Flesh) is not a Jew. It is extremely easy to give an international tale a distinctly Jewish character by including the peculiarities of Jewish custom and language.

Jewish folklore, like the folklore of India, abounds in ancient materials and has been enriched by both oral and literary traditions. The literary printed collections of Jewish folktales are often based upon Scripture, the Talmudic-Midrashic literature, and medieval Hebrew manuscripts (p. 443), and share many motifs and tale types with the stories circulating in oral tradition. The enormous value placed upon study, the respect for the written word and the relatively high degree of literacy in the Jewish community have promoted a continuous interaction of written and oral traditions.

The scope and detail of Schwarzbaum's unrelenting annotation provides a convincing argument for his thesis that the Jewish storyteller has played a vital rôle in the diffusion of tales from East to West. Many of the notes reveal that Eastern European Jewish folklore is more closely related to Near Eastern sources than to European ones. "While difusing the oral tales from area to area, or while putting them into writing, the disseminated material got a definitely Judaized garb, which has influenced the Medieval and Modern repertory of European Narrators and Preachers" (Schwarzbaum quotes Dov Noy, p. 474).

Arguing that many Chinese tales reached us through Buddhist channels, greatly influencing Eastern and European folklore, Schwarzbaum in note 77, shows that Eberhard's Typen chineisicher Volksmärchen can be adapted to the Aarne-Thompson type index. He then provides the appropriate Aa-Th type numbers for Eberhard's tales and points to numerous non-oriental parallels. But examination of the 1961 edition of the Type Index reveals that Eberhard's tales were already included.

The necessity for examining the corpus of Jewish folktales when annotating the tales of any culture is again affirmed in note 81, where Schwarzbaum adduces a profusion of variants of "Colored Man, Jew, and White Man," a Negro tale in Richard Dorson's Negro Folktales in Michigan (pp. 77-78).

Pointing to a need for comparison of the Ashkenazic and Oriental Jewish tale traditions, Schwarzbaum, in note 63, provides a tale type index for Y. L. Cahan's pioneering collection of Yiddish folktales, Yidische Folksmayses (New York, 1931, 1940) and a classification by genre of the 169 tales told by the renowned Yeminite raconteur, Jefet Schwili, in the collection edited by Dov Noy, Jefet Schwili Erzahlt (Berlin, 1963). About forty percent of the Cahan collection consists of magic and supernatural tales (Types 300-749), whereas the largest single category in Jefet Schwili's repertoire is the witty tale.

Through the book, reference is made to the many tasks, far reaching in their implications, which await the folklorist. We need an English translation of the rare and only printed book which appeared as a result of the famous First Jewish Ethnographic Expedition organized by Sh. J. Anski in 1912-1914 in Eastern Europe. Dos Yiddishe Etnografishe Program (Petersberg, 1915) contains rules for folklore collectors and 2087 Questions dealing with beliefs and customs connected with the life cycle, constituting in themselves a guide to Jewish folklore [one would imagine not unlike The Handbook of Irish Folklore] (p.7). A translation into a European language of Sehok Le-Israel [Joke for Israel] (Ramat Gan, Israel, 1958) by the late Ephraim Davidson would be invaluable to the

study of modern jokelore. This book represents the new Hebrew folklore (p. 482) and contains 1600 Israeli jokes. Equally inaccessible is Giza Frenkel's survey in Polish of Hebrew ethnology, folklore, and ethnographic museums in Israel (p. 376) in which all the relevant scholarly achievements and publications are enumerated (Ethnografia Polska, V, Polish Academy of Sciences, 1961, (pp. 292-304)). For the sake of international scholarship and especially in the study of the origin and development of the Christian saint legend, we need a translation of all the tales about the prophet Elijah, one of the most popular figures in Jewish folklore (p. 14).

In order to facilitate comparison, both broader and more consistent type indices are necessary. Most folklorists will agree that the Arne\* Thompson Types of the Folktale should be radically expanded to include modern international jokelore (p. 67). Most important, we need a comprehensive motif and type index which would include the folktales of all Jewish groups in all periods of history (p. 408). As a start in that direction, a type index of recent collections of Yiddish folktales would be welcomed (p. 15).

There exists no comprehensive corpus of Moslem legends translated from the original sources and annotated by a folklorist (p. 392). Nor do we have a complete body of Jewish proverbs which covers all periods in Jewish history and all Jewish groups. Schwarzbaum suggests that these proverbs be organized according to Warren Roberts' system of proverb classification (JAF/1952/ 65:172-175) (p. 418). Similarly, a comprehensive work on Jewish riddles from oral tradition which utilizes Taylor's classification of riddles (Studies in Cheremis Folklore, 1952, (pp. 170-213) would be valuable (p. 423).

An exhaustive study of medieval Jewish folktales and folklife has not yet been made. Nor is there an analysis of the relationship of folklore and literature in the works of Samuel Joseph Agnon, a contemporary Hebrew author (p. 406-7). A Bibliography and study of folklore materials created by Jews under the Nazi regime in Europe (p. 422) and studies of the lore connected with the acculturation of immigrant groups in Israel (p. 440) are also needed.

The two Appendices are bibliographic essays concerning recent studies of Jewish folktales, folksong, folk music, folk dance, folk belief, folk art and material culture. References to dissertations, forthcoming works, museum catalogues, pamphlets, book reviews and conferences in a multitude of languages, make these Appendices invaluable for future scholarship.

This book combines the strengths and energies of the great nineteenth century folklorists with some of their weaknesses. Despite the plea for a truly international study of the folktale, there is almost no mention of aboriginal tale traditions. Nor is there any recognition of obscenity in Jewish lore. On a single occasion, we are told, "By the way, this version contains a rather obscene Yiddish pun which is irrelevant in connection with the theme discussed here" (p. 193). There exists a rich and fullblooded tradition of obscenity in Jewish lore which seldom seems to make its way into scholarly circles, with the exception of some of the dialect jokes collected and published by Richard Dorson. No study has yet considered the many commercial recordings of Jewish entertainers

who delight their listeners with endless streams of jokes, some obscene, in English and Yiddish.

In a book whose average page contains more than twenty bibliographic references, a strong editorial hand is needed to delete the abundant and indiscriminate capitalization of words which are not part of titles. The editor might also have restrained the lavish uncritical praise which is bestowed on all but a few of the hundreds of scholars mentioned. Most confusing is the chaotic arrangement of the material in a welter of footnotes and uncoordinated note-like paragraphs, which somehow manage nonetheless to be readable and amusing. With the help of the giant index, the reader may venture to retrace his steps to some valuable citation buried in a paragraph already dark with titles.

Studies in Jewish and World Folklore is an indispensable bibliographic tool and learned guide to the comparative study of the folktale. Despite the difficulties in navigation, this book contains an ocean of valuable information gathered with extraordinary care and enthusiasm by an erudite scholar.

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#### Footnotes

1. In August, 1968, I collected a variant of this story (no. 252) from Mrs. Rivka Kirshenblatt, who is almost 70. She heard the story in Apt, Poland, where she was born. In the early 1930's she came to settle in Toronto, Canada. In her variant, the two Jews ask the man at the gate of the Emperor Franz Josef's palace if he would show them the Emperor's famous wealth. After paying their guide, they discover that he is the Emperor himself. The Emperor thanks them because this is the first money he has honestly earned.

Bell, Robert. Early Ballads Illustrative of History, Traditions and Customs; Also Ballads and Songs of the Peasantry of England Taken Down from Oral Recitation and Transcribed from Private Manuscripts, Rare Broad-sides, and Scarce Publications; George Bell and Sons, London, 1877. Pp. viii+472. Reissued by Singing Tree Press, Detroit, 1968. \$16.50.

A major problem of Anglo-American folksong scholarship is the lack of national folksong archives to which all collectors contribute their findings. Consequently English and American Folksong scholarship has always---more than in other countries---been very dependent on the work of individual scholars who managed to find the money and the publisher for their collections. That this situation still persists is shown by the fact that more and more of the older collections have been re-issues during the last years---and have been sold, obviously. Beside the collections of Child, Percy, D'Urfey, and others, Robert Bell's is certainly a minor collection. It has, however, its distinctive merits. Among the ballads he prints in the first part, originally the first volume of his collection, are a number of very rare pieces which he saved from oblivion, namely his variants of "Earl Brand" and the "Death of Queen Jane." Robert Bell was mainly a scholar and antiquarian, so most of his songs are taken