

BOOK REVIEWS

de Carvalho-Neto, Paulo. The Concept of Folklore. trans. Jacques M. P. Wilson. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971. 152 pp., Foreword by Américo Paredes, Translator's Note, appendix, bibliography, index. \$7.95.

A statement that an awareness of theories and methods on the international folklore scene is essential for the serious student of the field should arouse no dissent. Numerous international folklore conferences, volumes dedicated to folklore research throughout the world, and series of publications presenting texts of and notes on particular genres from various countries and culture areas testify to the concern of the folklore establishment with creating and solidifying relationships among folklorists everywhere. Despite these efforts, however, a significant gap exists. Students in folklore programs and related disciplines in the United States are required to master a reading proficiency in some foreign languages in order, in part, to facilitate their own entry into the realm of folkloric foreign policy. These languages are almost always German, the Scandinavian languages, Russian, and French. The other Romance languages -- particularly Spanish and Portuguese -- are usually neglected, except by specialists in areas where these languages are spoken. The result is that folklore students in the United States may often be unaware of the vitality of folklore studies in the southern part of their own hemisphere.

The University of Miami Press' publication of Jacques M. P. Wilson's translation of Paulo de Carvalho-Neto's The Concept of Folklore is a major step toward correcting this situation. First published in Montevideo in 1956, this treatise by "Brazil's leading folklorist" came out in a second Spanish edition in Mexico in 1965. The volume is the first of several works by Carvalho that the University of Miami Press announces to be in preparation and is a good introduction to the theoretical basis of folklore research in South America.

Carvalho can never be accused of equivocation. The first paragraph of his introduction states -- in italics:

Folklore, a branch of cultural anthropology, is the scientific study of the cultural acts of any people. These acts are characterized principally by being anonymous and noninstitutionalized, and eventually by being ancient, functional, and prelogical. The objective of Folklore is to discover the rules governing the formation, organization, and metamorphosis of these cultural acts for the benefit of mankind. (p. 15.)

He spends most of his book explaining his assertions, point by point.

That folklore is a kind of cultural act is acceptable without reservation. This aspect of Carvalho's concept of folklore can be passed over with a mention of the Brazilian's immense debt to Durkheim in regard to definitions of culture. The characteristics which Carvalho uses to distinguish folklore from other manifestations of culture need more extensive treatment. The primary characteristics, being anonymous and noninstitutional-

ized, and secondary characteristics, being ancient, functional, and pre-logical, of the folkloric act may be contrasted with standard North American conceptions as embodied in the five adjectives which Jan Harold Brunvand uses to describe folklore in The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1968): oral, traditional, variable, anonymous, and formularized (p. 4).

Anonymity should be reckoned in terms of the folk, according to Carvalho. Even though the scholar may recognize the identity of the creator of a piece, the piece can be considered folkloric if the transmitter does not know that identity. When creator and transmitter are the same, the act is not folkloric, but may represent some early stage in the development of folklore. Since almost every transmitter adds material of his own, Carvalho contends that every folkloric act contains something of the non-folkloric. Noninstitutionalized transmission, the other primary characteristic of folklore, is separated from the institutionalized by its not being organized, directed, or arranged in graduated degrees of difficulty. Carvalho proposes to substitute "transmission" for the term "tradition" because of the popular, romantic connotations of the latter. However, when traced back to their Latin roots, the words are virtually synonymous (transmission = trans - mittere, to send across; tradition = trans - dare, to give across). The first secondary characteristic, the idea that folklore must be ancient, is linked to the Tylolean theory of survivals, but Carvalho notes that the charter of the Brazilian Folklore Congress considered contemporary folklore, which could not pass the test of antiquity, fair game for research. While citing survivalist theories, he includes function as another secondary characteristic of the folkloric act. In doing so, Carvalho delineates nascent, living, dying, and dead folklore and recognizes that material which is not functioning belongs in the third and fourth categories. Durkheim is cited here as a precursor of the functional schools of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. The prelogical nature of folklore, the final point in the definition, is treated at some length. Tracing ideas about the "ascientific mentality" through Tylor and Théodule Robit, Carvalho arrives at a conception derived primarily from Lévy-Bruhl and Freus -- that is, the folkloric act is prelogical because it contains more affective and motor elements than cognitive elements, is not analyzed by the transmitter, and is accepted on faith rather than through understanding. He enters the realm of applied knowledge when he suggests that the role of folklore in education is to eradicate some of the prelogical features from the folk mind.

Carvalho next treats Folklore (the science is distinguished from the material by the upper case initial) and enumerates five stages which a researcher must follow in conducting his investigations: observation, compilation, criticism, classification, and interpretation. Folklore (upper case) is a branch of cultural anthropology and is so closely interrelated with ethnography and ethnology that the boundaries of the three disciplines are difficult to determine. Folklore (lower case) is not synonymous with fashion or "aesthetic projection" (artistic reworking, "folklore inventado," (fakelore)). Carvalho finishes his book with a schematic diagram of a course for folklore studies, a brief discussion of the ways folklore genres have been classified, and a biographical sketch of Thoms. An appendix lists a number of general folklore studies which appeared in Latin America between 1939 and 1968.

The North American folklorist -- especially one leaning toward the humanities -- can find much with which to argue in Carvalho's concept of folklore and Folklore, but theories developed to serve one cultural situation often cannot be transferred totally to another. The South Americans still have a rural peasantry with which to work, and many of their theories and methods are inapplicable to folklore problems in the United States. The point is that Carvalho's work is now available to readers of English and should enhance their understanding of international folklore research. It is hoped that the University of Miami Press' effort will be emulated and that other significant folklore works -- in all languages -- will be translated.

Bill Clements
Folklore Institute
Indiana University

Bruce A. Rosenberg. The Art of the American Folk Preacher. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 265. \$8.50. TB 40

Bruce A. Rosenberg's book, The Art of the American Folk Preacher, is a scholarly investigation of the American folk preacher's oral art. It is based on Rosenberg's extensive collection, classification, and analysis of folk sermons and the preachers who created them. In the book this material is arranged into two major sections. Section one affords the reader a look at the church out of which these sermons have come, the process by which these sermons are made, as well as their structure, theme, and content. Rosenberg also deals with the similarity of the oral creative processes used by Albert Lord's epic singer and the folk preachers that he recorded. In addition to noting a formulaic quality in both the epic poem and the folk sermon, Rosenberg explodes Lord's contention that formal education will destroy the oral artist's ability to compose.

Lord argued that illiteracy was one of the essential requisites of the oral singer: 'there seem to be two things that all our singers have in common: illiteracy and the desire to attain proficiency in singing epic poetry...it is the first, namely their illiteracy, which determines the particular form that their composition takes, and which thus distinguishes them from the literary poet.'⁷ In the American tradition literacy is not a factor in sermon; and though the few singers whom Lord interviewed could not write a poem as fluently as they could recite the same piece, further interviews might have uncovered other men who could. (p. 114)

The second major section is composed of transcribed texts of sermons collected by Rosenberg. Chapter notes and a five-page index conclude the book.

Though The Art of the American Folk Preacher will be a meaningful addition to any folklorist's library, it does have one major weakness: It does not take into account the influence of West African oral art forms on the Afro-American preacher's process of composing his "chant sermons."