

such central concepts as tradition and genre. Bausinger's critique of tradition preceded that of Ben-Amos (1971) by a mere two years, and Scharfe's critique of item-centered studies coincided with the shift in focus in American folklore from text to context, and from product to process.

Finally, a word on the bibliography which is, as the editors maintain, a "unique document in itself." With 1279 entries it is both comprehensive and impressive. The bibliography, however, would have been much more accessible and valuable as a research tool if accompanied by a concise, thematic index. In the current form the amassed entries are unwieldy and resemble the *Stoffhuberei* that the editors address in their introduction. Nonetheless, American folklorists will no doubt appreciate the work which has gone into the compilation of the bibliography and the translation of the articles in *German Volkskunde*.

References Cited

Ben-Amos, Dan

1971 Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context. *Journal of American Folklore* 84:3-15.

Greverus, Ina-Maria

1969 Zu einer nostalgisch-retrospektiven Bezugsrichtung der *Volkskunde*. *Hessische Blätter für Volkskunde* 60:11-28.

Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction. Edited by Elliott Oring. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1986. Pp. xiv + 258, 7 figures. \$12.95 paper.

Reviewed by Moira Smith.

Those who have taught introductory folklore classes know well that the perfect introductory

textbook has yet to be written and probably never can be written. The traditional textbook claims to cover everything for the instructor, but one must submit to the tyranny of the author's theoretical and pedagogic biases. On the other hand, an anthology offers a variety of styles and theories but may lack the grounding in basic definitions and explanations which introductory students need.

A third approach is the specially written anthology by a team of folklorists, each of whom introduces his or her special genre or area. This is the approach used in *Folklore and Folklife* and by the present volume. Editor Elliott Oring and his collaborators have, however, improved upon that earlier text by providing numerous examples of folklore in context to balance the presentation of definitions, theories, and previous scholarship. Such a mixture is suitable for the student with no prior knowledge of folkloristics. The examples not only make the text more appealing but also show how theories work in real situations.

The traditional textbook can limit the instructor in that one must follow the text step by step to avoid confusion. According to Oring, this book provides "an alternative to the textbook approach to introductory instruction" (ix). In other words, the book is intended to be used with supplementary readings chosen by the instructor. Moreover, it promises flexibility: chapters can be assigned in any order to meet the needs of different teachers.

To judge by the chapter titles, this book contains yet another survey of the stuff of folklore, genre by genre. The truth is that each chapter also presents important theories and approaches, illustrating them with examples. Thus, Jay Mechling's presentation of "Children's Folklore" introduces the psychological approach as well as the concepts of antithetical folklore and the play frame; F.A. DeCaro not only

describes "Riddles and Proverbs" but also features structuralist analysis, the concept of metaphor, and the relationship between proverbs and worldview.

To illustrate the flexibility which this book offers, we may consider Oring's discussion of "Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Folklore." After defining ethnicity and ways it can be assumed or ascribed, Oring presents foodways as an example of how folklore helps establish ethnicity from both the esoteric and exoteric points of view. An instructor could use this chapter to introduce students to ethnic folklore, foodways in general, folklore and identity, or the concept of folk group.

A strength of this book is that many of the authors have drawn on their own research. For example, Robert McCarl presents several examples of storytelling from his own work with the District of Columbia firefighters as a way of introducing "Occupational Folklore." Simon Bronner introduces material culture studies (broadly defined) in one chapter: he covers gravestones, mailboxes, Pennsylvania Dutch foodways, paper folding, yard art, and on-the-job crafts; but he is at his strongest when discussing chain carving and chain carvers, for there he draws upon his own extensive research.

Because the authors introduce their own specialities, many of them not only review important works by others but also introduce fresh insights of their own. For example, Larry Danielson, in his chapter on "Religious Folklore," goes beyond the usual focus on Catholics and Pentecostals to discuss the folk aspects of Protestant liturgical churches such as Lutherans. His examples of family activities make this area of folklore relevant to every student, not just those who belong to the "folk" religions.

William A. Wilson provides an entertaining discussion on "Documenting Folklore." He

instructs students on how to collect folklore data suitable for an archive, emphasizing the importance of accuracy and the use of quality equipment. He uses examples of real student collections to show the full range of textual and contextual information required. Other contributors also use illustrations from student collections, a technique which cannot fail to encourage beginning students in their own work.

Although it is not made clear whether this book is intended for graduate or undergraduate classes, I find it suitable for freshmen. Barre Toelken's chapter on ballad and folksong and Oring's on folk narrative are particularly suited to undergraduates. Toelken's chapter sets a standard of clear writing which not all the book's contributors reach. Oring's discussion of the concepts of folklore, for example, is too abstract and confusing for the undergraduate who only wants to know "what is folklore?"

This book has done what it set out to do. It offers a flexible set of introductory readings which lend themselves to a variety of uses. Each chapter concludes with a brief bibliographic note which will help instructors find supplementary readings. However, an index of folklore forms and theories or approaches would have been useful. Another minor failing is the omission of such topics as women's folklore, folk belief, and folk medicine. These complaints aside, anyone who seeks a text that covers the basics but also encourages input from the instructor will find this book valuable.