

life," and his insistence on interpreting minorities *chiefly* within the flow of some mainstream, stand in Brahministic contrast to the volume's erstwhile stress on pluralism and populism.

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Stories on a String: The Brazilian Literatura de Cordel. By Candace Slater. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. Pp. xvii + 313, acknowledgments, preface, appendices, bibliography, index, photographs. \$30.00)

This is a delightful book, both for the inherent grace and appeal of the materials and for the author's sensitive and engaging treatment of them. The "stories on a string," variously known as *literature de cordel* or *folhetos*, are a form of Brazilian popular poetry associated most intimately with the arid frontier of the northeast. Today they are cherished by the national working class as a moving rendition of the common people's worldview and by artists and intellectuals as the true voice of the popular muse. As in previous decades, *folhetos* are still printed in cheap editions and hawked by their authors in fairs and markets throughout much of Brazil. Slater claims (though a case could be made here for the *corrido* of greater Mexico) that these stories in verse comprise "the world's richest and most varied heirs to a centuries-old ballad and chapbook tradition once embracing most of Europe" (p. xiii).

The early chapters of the book locate the *cordel* tradition within this broad context of European-derived popular narrative, and more specifically, within the context of modern Brazilian history. Slater's hand is sure and steady here: the coverage is comprehensive, but fresh and incisive rather than pedantic. Tangential matters are confined to the footnotes, and numerous bibliographic references (especially strong on Brazilian sources) beckon the reader into further explorations. Brazilian *cordel* is popular literature with intimate folk roots. Slater demonstrates the impact on *cordel* of the poet-improvisers known as *cantadores* and *repentistas*, the wandering troubadours of the Brazilian northeast. *Cordel* remains a spur to oral performance, by the author who "sings" (or intones) his verses to audiences gathered at fairs and markets, and by his clientele who gather together for readings among family and friends.

The *literatura de cordel*, neither precisely folk nor elite, took form with the advance of mass literacy and the spread of accessible printing technology in the Brazilian northeast during the last century or so. The history of *cordel* thus encloses one fascinating chapter in the centralization of modern Brazilian culture, as popular poetry was mass-produced in the emerging urban centers and then redistributed to a largely rural audience. Most recently, *cordel* has been "discovered" by the nation's educated elite, and has thereby precipitated a lively discussion of the virtues and vices of cultural revivalism. Slater deftly brings out the counterpoint between the development and evolution of *cordel* and the modernization of Brazil.

The scope of *cordel* literature is vast indeed. As Slater points out, in this tradition "real-life outlaws and contemporary politicians rub shoulders with mermaids and medieval kings" (p. 18). Yet this parade of *cordel* personages marches within a small series of basic plot structures. Slater proposes a neo-Proppian structural model of *cordel* plots, with the following six phases: (1) *pact*, a state of social harmony existing at the outset; (2) a *test*, amounting to a trial of the social order itself; (3) a *response*, which may be either a right one or a wrong one; (4) a *counter-response*, which often leads into a series of back-and-forth actions by the main participants; (5) a *judgment*, which rewards and punishes appropriately; and (6) a *reaffirmation* of the initial pact. The basic formula generates distinctive plot structures, depending on two additional variables:

whether or not a divine actor enters the story, and whether or not the initial response at phase 3 is a correct one. The discussion of the literary qualities of *cordel* is confined to the exposition of this model. Unfortunately, nothing is said about the texture of poetic language or of the poetic grammar operative in the *cordel* tradition.

The middle chapters of the book present three *folhetos* selected for more extensive commentary: *The King, the Dove, and the Sparrowhawk*, by José de Souza Campos, a retelling of the traditional Buddhist tale, encountered by the author in a Brazilian almanac; *The Monstrous Kidnapping of Serginho*, by Apolonio Alves dos Santos, based on a murder case receiving wide publicity in Brazil; and *Tereza Batista*, by Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante, a reworking of the celebrated novel by Jorge Amado, *Tereza Batista, Home from the Wars*. For each of these Slater provides the entire text in Portuguese, a line-by-line English translation, and a commentary tracing the transformation of source material into the finished *folheto*. These case studies ground the reader in the *cordel* ambience and demonstrate the vitality and versatility of the *cordel* tradition.

The book closes with an examination of the attitudes held by poets and their readers toward the *cordel* literature. This is accomplished in a singularly pleasing fashion, through the weaving together of interview material into a smooth-flowing exposition. Slater handles interview quotes and quips as well as she apparently handled the interviews themselves. The comments of readers and poets alike are pithy and insightful. Here are a few samples:

(from the authors:)

In the countryside, the pickings are usually meagre, but you know, I still like to sing for those farmers who will walk five miles in the rain to hear you. They don't have the money to buy bread, and somehow they still find a few coins for the poet . . . I feel I have to sing much better for them than for the professor who can't tell one verse from another and will applaud no matter what. [pp. 182-183]

Me, I write for the Christs. Do you know what a Christ is? It is someone who works for another person . . . the only reason I don't talk more about his sufferings is that the others, the bosses, would kill me if I did. [p. 183]

(from the readers:)

I grew up in the countryside, and we learned a lot of *folhetos* by heart just listening to them over and over again when there was nothing else to do. Those old stories remind me of all those long hot mornings with a deep blue sky above us, and so, I like to hear them because they remind me of where I was born. [p. 191]

Poetry doesn't deceive anyone. It says something that everyone knows very well isn't true. The fellow who sells those remedies which he claims will cure an incurable disease is a liar, but the poet doesn't make anyone sick; in fact, he makes people feel better. [p. 202]

The people in magazines are like the people you see on television. You can't expect that you will ever see them again. But the people in the *folhetos* are easier to remember. It's as if you'd known them for a long time, understand? [p. 193]

Candace Slater's *Stories on a String* is an invaluable resource for the student of Brazilian folklore and for those interested in contemporary popular narrative. Moreover, as a fascinating excursion into the making of a modern nation, Brazil, and into the mechanics of a craft of the imagination, it should be well-received by folklorists of all bents and persuasions. The com-

bination of a lively commentary, well-chosen texts, thorough bibliographic resources, and excellent supplementary photographs, makes this volume a most attractive package indeed.

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Old Jewish Folk Music: The Collections and Writings of Moshe Beregovski. Edited and translated by Mark Slobin. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982. Publications of the American Folklore Society, n.s. vol. 6. Pp. xvi + 579, preface, notes on translation and transliteration, introduction, appendices, indices. \$35.00 hard cover; \$14.95 soft cover)

To say that the appearance of this volume of selected works of Yiddish ethnomusicologist Moshe Beregovski (1892–1961) is both long overdue and unquestionably invaluable is an understatement. Beregovski has unfortunately been given none of the credit for his groundbreaking musicological efforts as have other lesser luminaries such as A. Z. Idelsohn. This may well have to do with the political perspective from which Beregovski wrote. As director and founder of the music section of the Jewish Culture League in Kiev and later as head of the ethnomusicological section of the Institute of Jewish Proletarian Culture of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, he undertook his musicological analysis from a Marxist perspective and found little favor among other Jewish musicologists. In fact, Slobin reproduces a recent parry and thrust interchange between two musicologists concerning Beregovski's presumed originality of research which reads more like a Talmudic hairsplitting session than enlightening, serious scholarship.

Even a cursory examination of these selected works of Moshe Beregovski shows him to have been a methodical, meticulous musicologist, a collector and scholar who carefully noted the varied influences upon the materials he culled from his informants. The fact that Beregovski was working within the political framework of the Stalinist regime and was a political by-product of the hope of the recent revolution there should not diminish the value of the working class orientation he brought to his writing. In fact, it is because of this proletarian perspective—and not the “chosen people” angle that earlier musicologists utilized—that we are able to see in his area studies the true socio-musical influences that affected Jews and gentiles. To apply the unfair advantage of historical hindsight to Beregovski's work simply to defame his Marxist analysis by pointing out that the system within which he labored would ultimately help destroy his work, his people, and himself is wrong.

Beregovski's writings are like the music he wrote about: pungent, biting, heartfelt, and undeniably close to the source. He truly loved the music and the people who carried it. With the optimism of the historic event he lived through, he felt that the promise the revolution held out to all citizens of the Russias was extended to the Jews also. That this was not the case is another of the many tragedies that Beregovski, unfortunately, lived to witness.

The scope of the materials presented in this volume is satisfyingly wide. Worker's songs, songs of war, songs of home life, love songs, and *klezmer* (instrumental) music are all represented. We are offered not only Beregovski's painstakingly accurate musical transcriptions but also his Russified Yiddish transliterations (these being a bit tricky to follow for those of us used to the Romanized YIVO transliterations). Beregovski's choice of songs and their variants points out his interest in regional variations and underscores his penchant for accurate detail.

Perhaps the most heartbreaking inclusion in this anthology is his monograph on instrumen-