

## REVIEWS

### AMERICAN FOLKSONG SCHOLARSHIP, ARCHIE'S ARMIES OF THE NIGHT, AND ONLY A MINER: A NOTE

Only a Miner. Studies in Recorded Coal-Mining Songs, by Archie Green. Pp. xiv - 504. Illustrations, bibliography, photographs, interview data, index, discographies, check lists, appendices. Musical transcriptions by Judith McCulloh. Chicago, Urbana, London: University of Illinois Press, 1972. \$12.50.

by Howard Wight Marshall.

The long-awaited appearance of Archie Green's Only a Miner is nothing short of a major publishing event for students of American folk song -- no, check that, for students of American culture. For what Green has produced is what should prove to be a model study for anyone vitally concerned not only with a given body of topical and traditional folk song material, but with the vast socio-cultural matrix in which that bit of folk song operates, and which it represents. Only a Miner is the culmination of many years of diligent research, field collecting, and writing, and the book embodies a convincing argument for the serious, scholarly investigation of recorded hillbilly tradition -- the sort of exemplary and powerful study which will open the way for other students to undertake similar work. And that result, the proof that studying modern folk song problems is worthwhile and satisfying, is to me the most important message in Green's book.

While students of Anglo-American tradition have in recent years been slow to recognize the value of such studies, Archie Green and comrades (Wilgus, Earle, Jabbour, Hickerson, et al.) have been laying siege on oldhat ballad scholarship and obsolescent attitudes, with the result that a fresh generation of folklorists is turning the scholarship in a new direction. In terms of American folk song, that means investigation of repertoire, discographic "journeys," artist biographies, single song complexes, etc. -- relevant to the recording industry and its impact and interchange with genuine folk tradition. One may ask, are Coon Creek Girls 78s folklore? Is Blind Alfred Reed folklore? Merle Travis? Is Vernon Dalhart's 1925 recording on Okeh of "The Dream of the Miner's Child" folklore? Is, for heaven's sake, Mike Seeger folklore? Is Spiro Agnew folklore? For Archie's armies, if you have to ask, leave the union hall. The answer is, of course, that some of it is, and some of it isn't. The point is that books like Green's will have the very beneficial influence of coaxing fogey ballad scholars into seeing that commercial hillbilly tradition needs to be studied in order to gain the depth and perspective necessary to understanding the totality of Anglo-American tradition.

Whatever kind of "book review" this was to be, it got away. Only a Miner appears as the cornerstone in the University of Illinois Press's "Music in American Life" series. Its appeal is both to professional academics and to amateurs; scholars note the early chapters, others push on to the fascinating case studies. Reading through the book is a virtual trip into mining culture, as Green has carefully selected and arranged countless rare illustrations -- photographs, handbills, art, LP record covers -- to show all the physical context and manifestations of the hard business of mining coal. Also, there are lead sheets, record labels, etc. of the

recordings. Green, the ex-ship's carpenter, has built for us a complete vessel, deck and keel. This book has to be purchased by every person at all interested in hillbilly tradition and current directions in folklore scholarship, and it will fuel the fires of many students attempting to deal with commercial recorded folk song in future dissertations and studies. The proof that Green's magnificent Only a Miner will indeed widen contemporary and future folklorists' scope and understanding is strikingly clear: Richard Dorson likes it very much.

Love in Twelfth-Century France, by John C. Moore.

Pp. 171. Nine illustrations, notes, bibliographical note, index, map of France in the twelfth century.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972. Paperback, \$2.25.

Reviewed by Helen Gilbert

"The poverty of the English language seems to impose an impossible burden upon one little, four-letter 'Anglo-Saxon' word -- a word of a kind usually noted for precision if not for delicacy" (from the Introduction). Of all the words in that category that folklorists deal with, their materials most often have a thematic relationship to this one, in one or another of its meanings. The word is "love," and John C. Moore has performed a useful service by distilling a great deal of Western thought and writing on the subject into a small, perceptive, well-organized and well-researched book that is a pleasure to read.

The present-day confusion about just what is meant by "love" comes from the use of the word in multiple strands of our culture: the Christian emphasis on charity, interpreted from the Bible by medieval churchmen; the romantic tradition of courtly love, extolled by the troubadours of Provence; the simple acceptance of sex when you can get it without too much trouble, exemplified by the fabliaux; and the philosophical idea of love as a natural response to virtue, discussed by Plato and subsequent philosophers who wrote "footnotes to Plato." The author's choice of twelfth-century France as the focus for delineating all these strands does not result, as might be expected, in a narrow view of interest only to specialists. Quite the contrary, it is the wise choice of this time and place that makes the book a valuable contribution to specific understanding rather than just another abstract discussion of an abstract term.

It was during the twelfth century, and in France, that Abelard, burned by his desire for Heloise, wrote passionately of the love of God, and Bernard of Clairvaux treated each verse of the Song of Songs as the allegorical expression of Christ's love for his bride the Church. The chapters on the legacy of the past and on the monasteries are the strongest in the book, providing an objective, integrated summary of the Christian view of love, which is still relevant insofar as our culture is influenced by its Christian heritage. Several of the sources used are available only in Latin.

It was during the twelfth century in France also, of course, that the troubadours of Provence began singing their paeans to idealized courtly love that have had so profound an effect on Western literature and sex roles ever since. The chapter on the courts and the love poets is dis-