

Halpert, Herbert, ed. *A Folklore Sampler from the Maritimes with a Bibliographical Essay on the Folktale in English*. St. John's, Nfld.: Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Publications, 1982. (Available from: The Secretary, Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Nfld. A1C 5S7; or: The Secretary, Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison University, Sackville, N.B. E0A 3C0; \$9.95.)

Herbert Halpert, one of our unassuming and unsung pioneers of North American folkloristic study, describes this compendium of Maritime folklore as the result of an "experiment." As the first holder of the Winthrop Pickard Bell Chair of Maritime Studies at Mount Allison University in 1979-80, Halpert "wanted to collect and display some of the kinds of folklore I was certain could be secured at a Maritime university where Folklore was not part of the academic course offerings" (ix). During his brief tenure he sparked a lively interest among students and staff in collecting various verbal genres of folklore, a selection of which comprises the major part of this 273-page *Folklore Sampler*.

Besides providing an overview of the purpose and content of the book in the Introduction, the editor presents a concise and useful history of folklore scholarship in Canada, encapsulating the work of early collectors, the basic source materials (particularly those dealing with Maritime traditions), the major French- and English-language folklore programmes at Canadian universities, and the important archival collections.

The *Sampler* is divided into five principal genres of collectanea: folk narrative (this chapter concludes with Halpert's excellent research tool, "A Bibliographical Essay on the Folktale in English," which annotates many of the standard reference works and Canadian, American, and British collections found in the extensive folktale bibliography at the end of the book), folk "dites" about weather, proverbial sayings, folk beliefs, and childlore. This last section should be of special interest to students of folksong as it contains the texts of many taunts, teases, action rhymes, parodies, game songs, and the like. Although many of these items are obviously intended to be intoned, chanted, or sung, it is disappointing that no melodies accompany the texts. I suspect that the insertion of Appendix B, "On the Chant Melodies of Children," an excerpt from a somewhat dated article by George Herzog ("Some Primitive Layers in European Folk Music," *Bulletin of the American Musicological Society*, Nos. 9-10 (June 1947), 11-12) represents an attempt to satisfy musicologically-inclined readers. However, it is an inadequate substitute for the actual times.

Halpert admits that, because of the inexperience of some collectors with the standard anthropological techniques for eliciting information, many of the contributions were sub-

mitted without supporting contextual data. This drawback is, to a great extent, obviated by the editor's own detailed commentaries on the individual items in the Notes which follow each chapter. These glosses cite additional variants in other published collections and mention general sources the interested reader should consult.

A short section called "Notes on the Christmas Season" (pp. 203-219), by three writers not of the Mount Allison community, concludes the main portion of the book. The depictions here of "Santa Clawing," "Santa Clausing," "Sanding," and "belsnickling" (all regional Nova Scotian appellations for a custom of house-visiting parallel to the "mumming" tradition of Newfoundland) are particularly noteworthy for their references to music. Martin Lovelace, for example, describes an "elaborate tradition of performances" at The Hawk, Cape Sable Island, which involved "a group of men who played a variety of musical instruments, acted skits, and sang songs which commemorated and satirised the foibles and escapades of community members. The songs were set to popular tunes of the day, particularly those associated with Negro minstrels, such as 'Dixie,' 'Susanna,' and 'Turkey in the Straw.'" Such worthy instruments as a bass drum, triangles, washboards, spoons, and bones heralded the arrival of the performers who, at the end of the season, "held a 'smash-up' of their homemade instruments amid much revelry" (p. 206).

Perhaps the most important aspect of *A Folklore Sampler from the Maritimes* is its ground-breaking approach to folkloristics in education. The fact that students rarely begin folklore studies in earnest until the graduate level is a great hinderance to the development of this discipline. The Fox-fire, Salt, and related projects in the United States have proved extremely beneficial in promoting an active interest in folklore in the public school system at community and regional levels. As yet, however, such programmes have not caught on in Canada. The enthusiasm and results which Dr. Halpert spawned at Mount Allison University indicate an important step in the initiation of younger Canadian minds to be the field of folkloristics. May similar "experiments" be as successful!

David S. Boe

Review

