here, while the idea of their belonging to us, of any human exerting property rights over these remote giants, is downright ridiculous.

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Cultural Legacy in Canadian Folklore

JEANNE HENRY

Bluenose Ghosts, Helen Creighton. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1957 (1976), 280 pp. $4.95 paper.
Folklore of Canada, Edith Fowke. McClelland and Stewart 1976, 349 pp. $10.00 cloth.
Strange Tales of Canada, Louise Darios. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1965. 162 pp. $6.95 cloth.

Folklore is frequently the only tangible legacy of a culture now gone, or at least so changed as to be scarcely recognizable for what it was. Even this endowment might well not have survived were it not for the efforts of nineteenth century collectors and their successors who continue the storytelling tradition (albeit in print) through numerous collections and retellings of folklore.

There are, though, some doubts being expressed as to whether folklore really has any future in our scientific and technical epoch. It would be easy to believe that we have become too sophisticated to enjoy the record of peasant experiences, much of which is rough edged, repetitive, haphazard, unself-conscious and predictable. But if that is so, folklore would not be such a prevalent topic in the spring and autumn releases from numerous publishers, a prevalence which suggests a popular readership of both children and adults. Nor would psychologists, sociologists and historians continue to look so closely at folklore, attempting to find in it insights into our traditions and our national psyche.

Perhaps each age—ours more than others—needs to retell the tales, the myths, ballads, riddles, legends, superstitions of its tribe for its own generation. In a rootless age, folk literature provides a satisfying connection to our forebears, giving us and our children a living experience of who they were and what they believed. In a country with a

tenuous sense of nationhood there is in folklore some basis for national identity. In his introduction to *Canadian Myths and Legends,* Michael Nowlan writes that "during the last two or three decades we have, through our writers, been attempting to discover our roots as Canadians and to trace and interpret the directions of our growth".[1] Part of this direction comes from the record of traditions past, part from the record of traditions that continue to live today, although in a somewhat altered form from their original.

If we are to learn from and enjoy the kaleidoscope of recorded folklore we must judge these modern records on the scholarly care which guarantees their authenticity and on the flavor they retain of the oral tradition in which all folklore is rooted. Both are necessary if the spirit and meaning of folk literature is to be communicated to a new generation.

It is possible to have written records of folk traditions at *either* of these two polarities of authenticity and artistry and it is also possible to have folklore that ideally balances both. Obviously the end result depends upon the intention or motive in the first place: one can index the motifs, authenticate the detail, classify the characters, group according to type or theme, and analyze according to plot or style. This would be a scholarly endeavour with no attempt at intimacy or intention to have the material reflect its oral tradition. Or one can recreate the authentic story-teller's voice, never for a moment allowing the reader to lose sight of the land and the people for whom these tales were as much a part of daily life as the television fantasies of our own time, and to whose beliefs and life styles they stand as more than memory.

Edith Fowke's *Folklore of Canada* is that ideal and happy balance of scholarship and artistry. She is responsible for the collection of the tales, their arrangement, tale type and motif numbers (from Aarne Thompson's *The Types of the Folktale* and Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature*) as well as the very insightful introductions to each tale and their scholarly sources, notes and references. She is *not* responsible in the same way for the style of the selections. Indeed she deliberately makes no attempt at any unified style. Her prime concern is that the style of each tale, ballad, riddle, etc., retain the flavor of the land and the distinct people it comes from. This does not make the selections more difficult for young or adult readers, only more interesting in their variety. In that sense she has done a superb job of editing the enormous number of varied entries.

The material for the anthology is drawn from authentic sources (carefully documented) which she says represent genuine folk traditions. Some items are translated—she avoids the clumsiness of a

literal version—and some are exactly according to the original sources. Regardless, they all bring one close to the oral aspect of the tale.

The aim of this anthology is "to present a representative cross-section of the various kinds of folklore found in Canada". Priority is given to what has been composed or adapted within Canada. Because there is no attempt to show that Canadian folklore matches or falls short of European folklore, and because she looks at the roots of our traditions found in both the indigenous cultures of the Inuit and Indian as well as in the mosaic of diverse immigrant cultures, Fowke makes a notable contribution to the idea of a Canadian identity.

The arrangement of entries is by ethnic origin: Native Peoples, Canadiens, Anglo-Canadians, and the Canadian Mosaic. The first section includes tales from each of the major groups of Native Peoples: Inuit, West, Plains, Central and Eastern Indians. Amongst the choices included are creation myths, tribal customs, and wonder tales. There is an immediacy to the stories and indeed some sound strangely modern. The Inuit tale of Sedna, the sea goddess, exists in many versions. This one, regrettably, is not one of the most beautiful or complete variants available and constitutes one of the few weak spots in the book. The Ojibwa story of "The Shaking Tent", on the other hand, is both awesome and intriguing.

The French Canadian section is next and is a delightful mixture of tales from and sketches of rural Quebec. Obviously Marius Barbeau is credited and his account of his own means of collecting folk information, contained in this anthology, is a history of storytelling in itself. His recollections of the great storyteller, Louis L'Aveugle, is like an introduction to a traditional troubadour. The last portion of the material in this section is an entertaining look at the early development of French Canadian foodways, their origins in Northwest France and the Canadian environment that eventually moulded them. These folk foodways are not nostalgic memories, but are vital and present in the culture today.

The largest portion of the material in Fowke's collection comes from the Anglo-Canadians. While extensive collections exist of both French Canadian and Native material, little collecting and research has been done with the folk traditions in Canada of the peoples from the British Isles: Irish, Welsh, Scots and English. This varied and entertaining section including ballads, superstitions, Newfie jokes, tall tales, western monster tales, urban tales, and a subsection designated as "folkways" does much to right the balance. An essay on *Winter in a Lumbercamp*, from this latter category when coupled with William Kurelek's *Lumberjack*, for instance, makes a most complete picture of

a Canadian way of life that is indeed gone, at least in the state portrayed.

Canadian Mosiac ends the book, stressing the increasing multiculturalism of our country. This section illustrates some of the traditions that have been preserved, adapted or created in this country by the German, Jewish, Icelandic and Ukrainian peoples, chosen by Fowke because they are either the largest immigrant group or have been here the longest. The selections are entertaining and lively, portraying the significant role these immigrant groups have played in our cultural heritage. One feels the warmth and humor of many of these tales, but obvious also is the often harsh reality of life from which such stories and imaginings were both reflection and escape. In examining and recording the folk history of our native people, the achievements of our pioneers and our own society, Edith Fowke has consciously lent her efforts to creating a mythology which traces our origins and the development of our spiritual roots. This anthology is a scholarly and entertaining representation of our nation's diverse folk traditions; its triumph is that it is also a delight to read aloud, the first test of its respect for an oral heritage.

Bluenose Ghosts by Helen Creighton, regrettably, is not in the same class as Fowke's book. To be fair, it is not intended to do the same things. It is a collection of home-grown Nova Scotia ghost stories, including a rich stock of hair-raising accounts of phantom ships, buried treasure, haunted houses, supernatural incidents and ghosts of every nature.

The topics are interesting enough, but the presentation is, quite frankly, tedious; a kind of endless catalogue of briefly recounted experiences. In the first chapter, for instance, on Forerunners, each single paragraph is a new example of these warnings. While the examples are interesting, they cry out for more elaboration, continuity or follow up. Such experiences are serious and seldom simple but that does not negate the fact that their form, as given in *Bluenose Ghosts*, might be altered from a brief verbatim account to an appealing coherent narrative. Indeed, it could be stated that a prime aim of any retelling is to construct a clear and straightforward narrative from what may be a confused and scattered collection of fragments overlaid with the accretions of age. This is a technical matter and depends for its success on the skill of the writer.

Bluenose Ghosts is essentially a collection of source material, basically more concerned with the illustration of various mysterious and macabre tales than with the construction of a satisfying narrative. This is valuable in itself, but not quite forceful enough if demanding juvenile readers are to be added to its audience. The book is a worthwhile

addition to anyone's stock of strange stories, for the material has the feeling of sincerity but one must be aware of its form and its limitations.

The form in which this collection of supernatural beliefs and tales of strange phenonema is presented might more logically have appealed in the 1800's, when stories of "popular antiquities" abounded, rather than today when folklore is a more recognized academic discipline. Folklorists today want extensive information concerning our traditions: the degree and prevalence of beliefs as well as details about the informants and the collecting circumstances. Some of this valuable data could have been given in appendices, notes or fuller introductory comments without deterring the average reader.

Helen Creighton has been collecting the songs and stories of Nova Scotia for many years and has discovered countless tales of the supernatural. Most of her material has been acquired for the National Museum and the Library of Congress; *Bluenose Ghosts* was really her first volume directed toward the general public. This paperback reprint, without revision of her 1958 material, reminds us that she did perform a valuable service since the information became readily available for those interested and set down in one volume so many stories which have their roots in German, Irish, Scottish and Negro lore. Today, though, the material of the book waits for the scholar to index its motifs or for the storyteller to make it into a satisfying narrative for children or adults. Regardless of the somewhat choppy and disjointed nature of the book, a tone is established and communicates itself through the rhythms of simple people's speech and the feeling of tradition, unencumbered by folksiness.

Louise Darios' *Strange Tales of Canada* is terrific—meaning very specifically that it can excite terror. The tales are either baffling, entertaining, constructive or frightening, depending on what the reader brings to them. They are drawn from all parts of Canada and include tales of love, shipwreck, witches and death, often accompanied by an element of humor.

Darios' stories stretch and explore the imagination to a point which is not always comfortable. At the moment fantasy is rather fashionable; perhaps it is so because we prefer the elves of the otherworld to the full-blooded ogres of the subconscious. But what Darios has exposed us to is the fascination of the terror of those ogres.

The method she uses to present her tales is a kind of unsophisticated eclecticism which, like Creighton's, would not satisfy modern folklorists. But essentially, she is a storyteller, a shaper of material extant in a tradition, a saying, a belief or even a news item.

The imaginative reconstruction of events, the development of personalities, the expansion of historical context, the clarification of meaning and the tying of all this into a strong narrative are achieved in a simple, straightforward style. She simply tells fascinating stories.

And what out of these books is for children? Essentially, everything. All are readable by and, in varying degrees, entertaining for children. They would all contribute to a Canadian child's sense of his country's traditions.

[1] Nowlan, Michael, *Canadian Myths and Legends,* (Series title: *Themes in Canadian Literature*), Macmillan, Toronto, 1977, p. 1.

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Worth Its Weight

WILLIAM GODDARD

Macdonald His Life and World, P. B. Waite. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975. 224 pp. $12.95 cloth.

"Dear Charlie," Macdonald wrote to one of his young cabinet ministers who wanted something unreasonable, "skin your own skunks." Undoubtedly Professor Waite should have taken this criticism to McGraw-Hill when they told him to limit his knowledge and talents to 45,000 words. This is the chief crime that has been perpetrated on the unsuspecting reader, and as far as I am concerned, it is a heinous one.

The scope of this work is indeed enterprising. Within a short two hundred pages, we are given not only an entertaining and enlightening social and political history of Canada between 1840 and 1891, but also, a remarkably shrewd and perceptive portrait of Canada's first prime minister. Each and every chapter offers new and exotic tidbits for the hungry reader, ranging from samples of Lampman's poetry to the state of Chief Justice Wallbridge's teeth (an unusual patronage problem), to coal mining in the Maritimes, to the history of our "Bluenoses", to bootlegging in the North-West Territories, to ranching in Southern Alberta, to the problems of child labour in the 1880's, to the temperance issue, to the French-Canada mentality, to government