

serves as a unifying force. It links the warlike past with the present. It crosses borders and it fights for justice. It rejuvenates tradition and disciplines the mind and body. The author has given an excellent account of this martial art with due interpretations. It is well known that art of any kind, if properly propagated and performed, will work wonders especially in regards to cultural transmission and unity, the requisites of the world at large.

The video versions also available by Martha Ashton-Sikora, Robert P. Sikora, Tsuchi Jihir, and Erik de Maaker add more weight to this book. The photographs accompanying the articles and appended at the end of this volume are useful and of high quality.

In general, the papers in this series are highly informative and interesting. Though many of them are introductory and written in a narrative style, they will help readers to understand different cultural heritages. The editor has taken much care in achieving this end.

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DÉGH, LINDA. *Narratives in Society: A Performer-Centered Study of Narration*.

FF Communications CXI, No. 255. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1995. 401 pages. Notes, bibliography. Cloth n.p., ISBN 951-41-0748-9.

Narratives in Society is “a narrator-centered approach to narrative performance” (7). The emphasis in the book is on the importance of the narrator-centered approach of Gyula Ortutay and the Budapest School in the study of folklore. In the twenty essays in this four-part book, the author tries to “test his [Ortutay’s] assumptions, and to answer some of the questions he had raised” (16), as well as call “attention to the performer in the act of performance” in order to help reorientate folklore (29).

The first part “makes the case for narrator-orientation” (7). Storytellers, especially the prominent ones, “are the most reliable custodians of tradition and represent public opinion and taste” (35). They “can best express ‘forbidden’ ideas while avoiding social censorship by performing under the protection of the socially acceptable rite of storytelling” (37), and can exhibit “factual knowledge, creative imagination, the gift of formulating and structuring the intricate webs of episodes into an enrapturing story, and sensitivity to adapt to audience expectation” (38). As storytellers they enjoy the freedom “to express personality within the rigid limits the genre imposes and society enforces” (39). They also have the freedom to “make an aesthetic decision in choosing the pieces, building the structure of the tale with the approval of the community and connect the tale world with the real world” (40-41). In the process the storyteller becomes “not only a personality but the condensed community” (45).

By way of implication the author says that the genesis and function of the tale can be approximated by the study of storytellers (46); examining the storyteller helps us generate ideas for the study of transmission, modification, and restoration of the tale (137), and therefore a systematic field recording of tales in the natural setting of storytellers during a prolonged period of time is a precondition (36).

Storytelling as such consists of the life history of the tale, the transmission process such as “which powers are at work to create, maintain, and vary tales; and what do tales mean to those who create, maintain, and listen to them” (55), and so forth. Citing various methods for the study of tales in Europe and North America, the author chooses the “Märchenbiologie”

method, adopted from Gyula Ortutay, because this method is “helpful in discerning the goal and meaning of narratives in modern society, as well as their sociocultural functions and their traditional and innovative elements of content and form” (61).

Storytelling is not the same among men and women; women storytellers “develop genre such as *märchen* and ghost stories” (64) for children up to a certain age, and “develop specifically feminine repertoire to serve their female audiences” (63), such as tales of heroines, anecdotes, and autobiographical episodes. On the much debated genre of personal experience narrative, the author calls it “a social act” because “the choice of words, phrasology, stylistic turns, emphasis... follow the local etiquette, fitting the referential framework shaped by tradition” (75). The narrator experience is, therefore, within the existing and folkloristically sanctioned system of social convention (78).

The author calls for “attention to the multimedia variants in the background of emergent texts” for which “comparative and contrastive analysis of its predecessors in any possible manifestation” is a must (89). She does this by focusing the discussion on legend tellers, who usually keep to themselves, and who are initiated into one area of extraordinary knowledge through one crucial experience. Their legends are told as truth and the belief in them is shaped and transmitted in modern times by different means of communication.

In part two the author “presents the viewpoint, philosophy, and ideology of narrators as mirrored in their narrated tales or expressed in other ways: their lives, action, and thinking” (7). Citing examples of *märchen*, the author makes the following points: *märchen* express the worldview of the community towards the real and the unreal; if the life situations do not change the *märchen* will continue to exist; even if the life situations change men and women “who reached maturity in the old system were unable to change their *Weltanschauung*, religious belief system, and tale ideology” (97); if *märchen* would be subject to rationalism they would still “not ‘die out’ without a trace” (101), rather they would continue to be told and transmitted through various means of communication. These points all indicate the “cultural-historical relationships between folktales and society” (98) and that the relationship between folktales and society should be a concern for folklore studies.

Another aspect of the worldview of a community is the magic that tales and legends generate in public in different ways. While the tale takes the listener to a world of magic and the listener “returns enriched by feelings of fulfillment, poetic gratification, and catharsis,” the legend makes one believe in “incredible truths, masters we do not know, phenomena we cannot understand, and laws whose validity we cannot sustain” (124). Whether they are tales or legends, the narratives have a magical power on both the narrator and the audience.

If, as the author says, the “worldview is not an abstraction but part of an active and persuasive elaboration of the traditional material, the framing of the folklore text by its ad hoc formulator, who fits into the cultural-conceptual system of its audience” (135), then the concept in folklore studies needs to be addressed not by borrowing from other disciplines, but by building on the folkloristic tradition.

Dégh defines positive and negative legends, and secondary positive legend in order to “make a clear distinction between, on one hand, positive and negative belief, and, on the other, nonbelief based on positive or negative cognizance” (156). The author says that scientific cognition in antilegends, coming from occult sciences and parapsychology and the like, cannot explain the truth or otherwise of legends; instead, the truth of legends consists in the sustaining folk faith that gives the truth to legends. For, “what was born as a legend, within the ‘legend climate,’ what was transmitted as legend and received as legend, or, in other words, what travelled through the legend conduit in society, stays as legend even if its content turns out to be true” (161).

Part three “discusses the intricacies and dynamics of tale transmission” (7). Combing

through various hypotheses and positions held by various schools on folklore studies, the author discusses mainly the objections to Walter Anderson's definition and adds her own comments. Finding many methods on transmission insufficient, the author suggests a multi-conduit system that still needs to be established and tested.

Could there be a difference between folklore in urban and rural settings? The answer is no, because tales are internalized in urban life too. Legends abound in urban areas as much as in rural areas. The author supports this with examples from North America and claims that

It is not the urban or rural location that characterizes folklore or accounts for its viability or demise. Folklore is as unstable as other cultural expressions, subject to ideological transformation through the ages. Some genres succumb, some barely change or change radically, and others bear new fruits within its traditional conventions assisted by modern technical reportability. (225)

A functional perspective to the definition of legend is said to provide a common platform for investigating the intricate relationships of the form, content, and expressions of the legends that can be used to overcome the difficulty of constructing categories, groups, and subgroups for organizing legend materials from around the world. Hence the author chooses to treat the legend formed on the basis of living belief that has a social background and constant mental disposition.

While examining the role played by communicative means in the dissemination and shaping of folklore, especially the legend types, the author uses the ostensive actions (e.g., Halloween pranks, seeing apparitions, etc.) that are not only believed but also lived, as means of legend telling. Its relevance for folklorists is that "the study of interplay between legend and pertinent reality will reveal rules about the recent enhancement of the role of folklore in society. It might help to investigate "why people are inclined and able to transmit legends so often by ostensive and, in many cases, deviant actions" (262).

Unlike in the past, today folklore is "defined as the product of people taking advantage of a variety of available auditory and visual media in order to bring oral and literary tradition into synthesis in communicating relevant messages" (264). There exists a "complex relationship of oral and written folk tradition in the light of our recognition that orality is just one of the means of tale transmission" (265). The Grimm tales are such a merger of oral and literary tradition, and are "a source for both told and written *märchen*, influential in reinvigorating oral tradition, in creating regional variables, and in general adaptation and spread of the genre in the modern world" (266). The Grimm tales in the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* are influential today in folklore primarily because they are retold to, and transmitted orally among, the illiterate. Thus the author concludes that "the folklorization of the Grimm tales appears as strong evidence of the persistence of the folktale" (282).

The fourth part consists of five case studies from the modern industrial world that illustrate the author's "analytical approach based on intensive field ethnography" and that "substantiate underlying theoretical presumptions" (7). The main point of each case study can be summarized briefly as follows:

1. In the first case study there is a symbiosis between telling of jokes and legend telling. In the example of a tale with a male joker and a female legend teller Dégh shows that in spite of "objection, rebuttal, banter, mockery on his part; embarrassment, astonishment, forgiveness, alleviation, hearty laughter on her part" (294) there was "the capability of turning their happy, successful marriage also into the creative, successful symbiosis of their narrative art" (305).

2. The second case study gives an example of two narrators exchanging by telephone stories about experiences in their life concerning the Old and the New World. The stories indicate that “the creative individual can overcome unfavorable conditions, can survive and find ... means of expressions” (324).
3. The third case study shows how the jokes of an Irishman can help folklorists to discover the social context and the personality of the performer in a multiethnic urban environment and to learn about the significance of narration in any society.
4. The fourth case study shows that “legends are transmitted through a conduit composed of people of shared interest, distinct from those for other kinds of folklore expressions” (342). Conduits can emerge during daily life conversation in which “the broader social and cultural and the closer intertextual contexts, along with the speakers’ personalities and relationships to one another... reveal how legends emerge as the conduit is activated” (356).
5. The fifth case study shows that future formulation of a legend is influenced by the interaction of oral and nonoral communications (e.g., TV, newspapers, etc.), and in this way the process of legend conduit is established.

The book makes three important methodological points: 1) the performance by a specific narrator is the first step “towards a multidimensional folktale study”; 2) the “community repertoire composed of the materials of practicing bearers of tradition” should be determined by an interactional and intergenerational relationship; 3) the “comparative study of specific and general tendencies of dissemination will lead to concerns of origin, as well as variability, innovation, stabilization, oicotypification and so forth” (8).

Overall the book consists of essays that are rich in theory and grounded in fieldwork. It challenges many existing theoretical approaches to folklore studies, reads like a personal biography of folklore-oriented experience, and is a treasure of resource materials on the origin, development, and future of folklore studies.

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SIENKEWICZ, THOMAS J. *World Mythology: An Annotated Guide to Collections and Anthologies*. Magill Bibliographies. Landham MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996. ix + 469 pages. Indexes. Hardcover US\$49.50; ISBN 0-8108-3154-6.

A passage of Plato (*Republic*, 394) may serve as a keynote for introducing Thomas Sienkewicz’s valuable bibliography: “There is one kind of poetry and tale-telling [*mythologia*] which works wholly through imitation, as you remarked, tragedy and comedy; and another which employs the recital of the poet himself...; and there is again that which employs both, in epic poetry and in many other places.”¹

Time has proved how significant the idea of mythology as tale-telling is. The ancient, even pre-Platonic, opposition between Myth(os) (i.e., fictitious speech), and Logos (i.e., rational discourse) has always created difficulties. Even knowledge and information concerning the natural sciences tend to sound like science fiction whenever verbal, instead of numerical, language is used.² Mythology in the sense of the scientific study of myths is no exception: with the passage of time, scholarly knowledge about mythology itself becomes