

***Les croix de chemin: au-delà du signe.*** Par Paul Carpentier  
(Ottawa, Centre canadien d'études sur la culture traditionnelle,  
Musées nationaux du Canada, 1981. Collection Mercure, dossier  
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Benoît Lacroix

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difference: Mr. Bethke found that "traditional folksongs and folksinging have been much less durable than yarns and storytelling in the North Country" (p. 55). My experience was the opposite: I found many singers but few storytellers. This may have been partly because I was asking for songs, but if storytelling had been as common in Ontario as in the Adirondacks, I would have come across many more tales than I did. I believe the difference is that in the Adirondacks the woodsmen lived in the area where they worked while in Ontario most of the shantyboys went up to the woods in the fall and came out in the spring. Mr. Bethke emphasizes the high value placed upon talk in his area: "Appreciation of the spoken word brings people together in the foothills... Visiting is a small-group phenomenon... Visiting usually involves a mixture of information, exchange, gossip, and what amounts to talk for the sake of talk" (p. 140). Thus the woodsmen of this account form a community while in Ontario the shantyboys came from diverse communities and hence did not share the social visits that produced the great varieties of oral narratives that Mr. Bethke documents.

The narratives are both factual and fictional, including reminiscences about life in the bush (the work, the food, the weather, and the contrast between old and modern times), humorous anecdotes, numbskull jokes, local-hero yarns, and tall tales: above all, tall tales. As Bethke writes: "The Big Woods is a testing ground, big in its geographical expanse, the challenges it presents, and its role in shaping male experience. It is little wonder that woodsmen love to tell 'big stories' ('lies,' 'tall tales') about events in those Big Woods. Through hyperbole the yarns transform recognizable situations and encounters into larger than life confrontations, ones commensurate with the Big Woods as a heroic plane of action" (p. 40).

This is an excellent book. It is well written and it presents a wealth of

folklore in human terms. As Bethke notes, "Throughout the volume I stress the fusion of past and present lore with persons, places, and folk performances" (p. x), and he does that without recourse to jargon and with an obvious fondness for his informants. All in all, a nice piece of work.

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#### **Les croix de chemin: au-delà du signe**

*Par Paul Carpentier*

*(Ottawa, Centre canadien d'études sur la culture traditionnelle, Musées nationaux du Canada, 1981.*

*Collection Mercure, dossier no 39. 484 p., ill.*

L'intérêt principal de cette étude réside dans sa partie documentaire: des milliers d'informateurs "qui m'ont ouvert la porte, leur mémoire et leur cœur"; les régions du Québec, entièrement visitées; deux mille huit cent soixante-trois croix de chemin formellement analysées. Le matériau est des plus significatifs, même si le fait de ne pas pouvoir tenir compte des calvaires risquait d'en diminuer la signification fondamentale. Il s'agit d'une coutume de toutes les religions de vouloir se ménager des espaces sacrés, d'y laisser des "monuments" au passage, autant pour se souvenir que pour apprivoiser ou même posséder (la croix de Jacques Cartier à Gaspé en 1534) des lieux. Ajoutons à ces mythes plus universels la peur des carrefours et la spécificité chrétienne qui consiste à valoriser la croix comme signe distinctif et tout aussi souvent décoratif.

P.C. range ses croix selon des motivations plus connues: les croix

commémoratives, les croix votives et les croix possessoires. Les coutumes (pp. 98-103) qui se rattachent à ces lieux bénits varient. La tendance est de s'y réunir autant par intérêt que par reconnaissance.

Bref, cette étude d'ethnographie québécoise rendra beaucoup de service grâce à une "analyse formelle" d'une précision exemplaire (pp. 130-383). Tous ceux qu'interroge la persistance des lieux sacrés dans une civilisation qui ne les appelle guère trouveront, dans ce livre abondamment illustré, d'heureux dessins qui déjà appellent un au-delà du signe qui se nomme *l'espace sacré*, la *sacralité de la nature* et la *religion cosmique* (Eliade). A l'abondante bibliographie du début, ajouter peut-être: *Le monde des symboles*, dans la collection Zodiaque, pp. 365-372; le *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, II, pp. 2569 ss, sur les sens des dévotions à la croix.

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**C'était la plus jolie des filles:  
Répertoire des chansons d'Angéline  
Paradis Fraser**

Recueilli et présenté par Donald  
Deschênes  
(Montréal, Les Quinze Editeurs, 1982. 240  
pages, musique)

Donald Deschênes' book is an example of the fairly new trend among anthropologists and ethnomusicologists to explore the repertoire of one individual. The bulk of the work is a beautifully presented selection of 90 songs, chosen from among the 165 which constitute Deschênes's taped collection.

A short biography of Mme. Fraser, an analysis of the repertoire, as well as concordances, glossary and a bibliography, complete the volume.

"C'était la plus jolie des filles" is an attractive book on many accounts. Throughout the book, the text is a delight to read: lucid, well written, at times positively lyrical, it conveys the author's unmistakable respect and affection for his informant and her songs. This sympathy is no accident. Deschênes was born in the very village —now closed— where Mme. Fraser lived, and he spent considerable time working in a senior citizens' community centre of the area. Himself a performer of traditional music, Deschênes has presented his collection in a way that is both accessible and scholarly. The transcriptions of music and text are set out in a clear, logical fashion which makes the songs easy to sing and to study. The typeface, as well as the musical calligraphy by Manon Gaudreault, also contributes to the collection's attractiveness, but in the matter of illustrations I would have preferred more of Charlotte Cormier's photographs and fewer of Louis Tremblay's imaginative but curiously lifeless drawings.

Because the book is above all a collection, it is perhaps unfair to quibble about the length of the introductory sections. Nevertheless, I did feel let down by the brevity of the discussion of Mme. Fraser's life, the relation of her repertoire and style to that of other singers, and her own perception of her rôle. For me, the six pages devoted to her biography and ideas provide just enough information to make one wish for more.

As well, there are several minor inconsistencies in the selection and presentation of the songs. These 90 examples were chosen from among 165, but aside from the rejection of most of the "composed" songs — which is not adequately justified — the only criteria of selection offered are value judgments: "beauty" and "originality" are not defined. Especially when the repertoire