

**Victor Cari FRIESEN, *The Windmill Turning: Nursery Rhymes, Maxims, and other Expressions of Western Canadian Mennonites* (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1988, Pp. 137)**

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performed on her radio programme and at the Miramichi Festival, it is unlikely that Ives would have found a tradition so well preserved. Ives seems to think it a good thing that Manny created "a folksong renaissance, not only for the young urbanites with their guitars and dulcimers, but for those local folk who still had the old tradition within them" (p. 11). But surely the down side of her approach is reflected in the fact that all of Ives' singers, those that survive, are now quite old. What Manny created was not a revival so much as the brief rekindling of a dying tradition. These comments aside, *Folksongs of New Brunswick* is a highly significant collection which is especially valuable because of its deeply humanistic approach.

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Victor Carl FRIESEN, *The Windmill Turning: Nursery Rhymes, Maxims, and other Expressions of Western Canadian Mennonites* (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1988, Pp. 137)

As the number of people who can speak or understand Low German, also called *Plautdietsch*, in Canada declines, more literature is appearing and reappearing in this language. *The Windmill Turning* stands alongside such impressive achievements as the collected writings of the most prolific and creative writer in *Plautdietsch*, Arnold Dyck. The "miniature gems" in this book — as Al Reimer calls them in the introduction — are well worth preserving.

First a confession: I am partial to this material, for it was part of my earliest life. My father sang many of the songs in Friesen's collection (some as lullabies), recited the rhymes and used the terms of endearment and rebuke on me when I was a child, as he did to each of my fourteen siblings. One wonders how many do that today; I do not recall doing so for my children (certainly not in *Plautdietsch*!). Instead I read to them or told them stories. Many of my father's nursery rhymes and lullabies were recorded in 1975 and are now in the National Archives of Canada. Friesen appears not to know them, at least there is no evidence that he used them. One of the weaknesses of this book is that it does not alert the reader to the preservation of such materials in the archives in Ottawa and at the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies. Indeed, Friesen's sole source of materials seems to be his mother, who is still alive. Nevertheless,

if this book is really the first publication of this material, Friesen deserves high praise.

The book begins with a helpful, informative introduction, which places this rich collection of folkloric material into its historical setting. Much information about the history of the Mennonites and their coming to Canada is provided. Friesen does not distinguish between lullabies and other songs, but rather deals with "Nursery Rhymes and Games" as well as riddles, jokes and tongue-twisters and various categories of maxims.

In addition, he presents a good sampling of maxims and peculiarities of the *Plautdietsch*, and the appendices on grammar and usage, as well as the dictionary, enhance its value. The chapter on "One-word characterizations" is also very helpful, although it is not clear why these particular examples were chosen and others, like "schossel" (=naive) or "schnoddachicke!" (=snotty-chicket), omitted. A singular putdown in my early years was to describe an action as "oschuldig" (literally "innocent", but also meaning "dumb"). Perhaps they were omitted because the author (in contrast to the reviewer) was never called such derogatory terms! There is a baffling bit of sexism when the derogatory term, "haulftan", becomes "one with a chip on *her* shoulder" in translation (p. 115). The original does not suggest a feminine subject.

The book could have been edited more carefully, unless the intention was to expose us to examples of what happens when people who grow up with *Plautdietsch* become professors. Problems include grammar, spelling, unclear references, errors in historical dates and some solecisms.

In conclusion, this is a book which, from my own perspective, merits publication because it brings back to memory the rich folkloric treasury of a small but dynamic and energetic ethnic group. However, the book's value is more extensive, since its material is now available not only to members of Friesen's own people, but also to academics who wish to do comparative work.

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