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Archie GREEN (ed.), *Songs about Work: Essays in Occupational Culture for Richard A. Reuss*, (Bloomington, Folklore Institute, Indiana University, Special Publications No. 3, 1993, pp. vi + 360, ISBN 1-879407-05-1)

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rites at each station. And, in many of these cases, the ethnographer can report that the movements are symbolic representations of past migrations or of the mythic travels of a great benefactor. The role of paintings, carvings, songs, narratives, dance, and gesture in spiritually recreating such events and in maintaining their benefits is well attested by ethnologists (Eliade 1963:18-19, for example).

This special issue of *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* demonstrates that Sephardic culture is not a museum piece. Rather, it is vibrant and alive. Its rituals, songs, dance and folklore are growing with the times and continuing to provide the strength that a sound culture always receives from such sources. We learn from this volume that folkways should not be treated as static phenomena—that, indeed, they cannot function properly as static phenomena. The invention and reinvention of custom is a continuing and necessary process. It is what keeps a culture alive. Once "heritage" is viewed as an untouchable, unchangeable museum piece, it dies and can no longer be a reliable source of identity and meaning.

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This volume offers fourteen case studies of (mostly) songs that embrace the experience of work, whether in the most unmediated sense (that is, "work songs" such as sea shanties in which rhythm and tempo are as critical to the song's point as topic), or in the somewhat mediated sense ("occupational songs" about work sung—and often made—by workers themselves, as in cowboys' songs of cattle drives, lumbermen's of river drives), or in the highly mediated sense ("labour songs" that more often than not dwell on the relations of production, especially agonistic employer/employee ones, but that are seldom either made or sung widely by labouring people). Of these three categories, the first, work songs,

is only minimally represented, while occupational and labour songs are more or less evenly served. Five of the essays have already been published in a 1991 issue of *Journal of Folklore Research* (Vol. 28, nos. 2-3), but they are well worth reprinting and re-reading, not only for their merit but for the important tradition of inquiry they represent: after all, the study of songs of, for, and about work constitutes almost a genre of anglophone folksong scholarship, dating back to nineteenth-century collections of songs seamen sang in the days of wind-power; continuing on through the more occupational-song- oriented collections from farmworker, cowboy, sailor, and lumberman; through the labour-song preferences of such anthologizers as George Korson in the U.S., A.L. Lloyd in Britain; through the more analytical classics by such academics as John Greenway and Archie Green; to the more revisionist studies, often of emergent forms, of such current scholars as Britain's Michael Pickering. All these sub-traditions still thrive contemporaneously today, as just two recent disparate works by John C. O'Donnell (*"And Now the Fields Are Green"*) and Gerald Porter (*The English Occupational Song*) illustrate.

Songs of working experience have long held appeal for a much wider range of investigators than, say, songs of romance or of comic misadventure, and as this volume reveals, that trend continues. Folklorists, both public and private, librarians, sociologists, political activists, historians—all these voices and more are represented in the book's fourteen essays and five short tributes to Dick Reuss (1940-1986), in whose memory the volume was conceived. The essays, which constitute the body of the book, fall more or less into two groups; members of the first group function chiefly as documentation and chronicle, while those of the second group offer in addition some significant conceptual superstructure that may be generalized and employed elsewhere. Among the first group are two essays on Joe Hill, early IWW activist and later cult figure. Lori Elaine Taylor's "Joe Hill Incorporated: We Own Our Past" illustrates how the famous Wobbly has been fashioned into a leitmotif permeating much of American popular culture since his death in 1915, while Sam Richards's "The Joe Hill Legend in Britain" explores the popularity across the Atlantic of the 1936 song, "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night," over the thirty-odd years since its composition. Another IWW activist, though too young to have been a colleague of Joe Hill's, is the subject of Richard Ellington's "Fellow Worker Guy Askew: A Reminiscence," which presents a portrait of its subject (1896-1991) based for the most part on letters he wrote to the author between 1956 and 1966 recalling his early union experiences but also commenting freely on more topical events. Similar is "John L. Hancock: 'There Is Still Mean Things Happening,' " by Rebecca B. Schroeder and Donald M. Lance, which recounts the history of an African-American tenant farmer from Arkansas (1904-1992) who made poems and songs championing union membership and collective labour action, mostly under the aegis of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union.

Archie Green's "Woody's Oil Songs" tells the history of two little-known Woody Guthrie songs, "Boomtown Bill" and "Keep That Oil a-Rolling." Both were commissioned by the Oil Workers International Union in 1942 while Guthrie was with the Almanac Singers. Both songs were published and recorded, but failed to gain any serious life in popular consciousness, even among Guthrie aficionados. Green also prints for the first time another Guthrie composition, "Boomtown Gallyhouse," a non-occupational- oriented song containing much that is traditional in the way of style and motif. A similar goal—the presentation of little-known or newly discovered material—motivates "Farm, Forest, and Factory: Songs of Midwestern Labor," by James P. Leary and Richard March. This essay is one of my personal favourites in the volume; the title is a bit misleading (many of the songs are not about work experiences, though they may be about the experiences of working people), but that doesn't affect the material's legitimacy or interest. Old World songs of immigrant midwesterners—Czech, Polish, Irish—in the native tongue are given, as well as ditties composed in the New World. There are dialect songs, usually with Scandinavian referents, and even a macaronic piece (Polish and English), "The Bricklayer's Song." Traditional motifs and story-types abound—the rustic's visit to town, for instance ("Ay Ban a Svede from Nort' Dakota").

Two final essays that fit into this chiefly descriptive and topical group are Jeff Ferrell's "The Brotherhood of Timber Workers and the Culture of Conflict" and John Cowley's "Shack Bullies and Levee Contractors: Bluesmen as Ethnographers." The former tells of the timberworker union's attempts between 1910 and 1914 to disseminate its message by way of labour newspapers and pamphlets, primarily in poetry, tales, and cartoons. The latter surveys African-American folksongs from the thirties and forties for references to Black male working conditions. According to Cowley, the songs provide insiders' documentation of Mississippi River levee building camps, particularly in the 1920s and particularly on the topics of the contractor (the labourers' actual employer) and the "shack bully"—that is, a fellow worker empowered by bosses to keep dissatisfied and potentially disruptive workers in line (generic kin to the "building tenders" of the pre-1970s Texas state prisons).

The remaining essays constitute a fairly distinct category in that they put their data into some classificatory, analytical, explanatory, or interpretive frame of more general applicability. Norm Cohen constructs a scheme for classifying Anglo-American and African-American work songs (that is, the first type sketched in this review's opening paragraph). Three of six categories (domestic songs, agricultural and pastoral songs, and street cries) are reasonably discrete, but the three others (sea shanties, African-American gang worksongs, and songs and chants of direction) so overlap each other that I'm not sure the classification would be as useful to other researchers as Cohen intends ("Worksongs: A Demonstration Collection of Examples"). Brenda McCallum's "The Gospel of

Black Unionism" brings us back to "labour song," showing how African-American union activities on the one hand and gospel group singing on the other merged in 1930s Birmingham, Alabama, to produce a sacred/secular synthesis of song texts, tunes, and singing style exhibiting great rhetorical power and affect. Michael Heisley's "Truth in Folksong" is the only piece in *Songs About Work* on Hispanic lore of occupational experience. Its subject is corridista-cum-farmworker Pablo Saludado of California and three songs in his performance repertoire, two on specific strikes, the third on the United Farm Workers' longtime leader, Cesar Chavez. Heisley's thrust is of the "folksong and the individual" sort: he reveals the several levels and domains of meaning the songs hold for the performer himself rather than for his community as a consensual body with shared norms.

A foregrounding of the individual also informs Neil V. Rosenberg's " 'An Icy Mountain Brook': Revival, Aesthetics, and the 'Coal Creek March.' " Rosenberg explores how the five-string banjo instrumental piece, "Coal Creek March," often accompanied in performance by a narrative account of a labour dispute putatively connected with the composition, was repeatedly reconstructed by both folk and revival musicians. A personal musical aesthetic pervaded each reconstruction, regardless of whether each "bearer of tradition's" primary motive was more or less objective (to "educate") or subjective (to "entertain"). According to Rosenberg, his case study illustrates a more general movement common to folk music performers, devotees, and scholars over the last thirty-odd years toward centering attention on a performer rather than on an idealised text, on the moment of performance rather than on the item's tradition.

The matter of ethnography of folksong performance is most clearly and thoroughly addressed in "The Southern Textile Song Tradition Reconsidered," by Doug DeNatale and Glenn Hinson. The material is the kind which, I suspect, would be of significant interest to a wide range of folklorists: songs sung by millworkers on the topic of their own work. This is "occupational song" in its purest sense, and DeNatale and Hinson contextualise the performance of such songs in the communities of the singers and audiences, Southern U.S. Piedmont-range communities of the 1920s and 1930s. Because of the micro-level of analysis, we are given a more sensitive, certainly far more concrete picture here of the nature and role of folksong-in-society than we can find anywhere else in the book; song in the mill towns and hamlets of the southern textile region did not fit into the us-versus-them model of labour songs' confrontational ethic (what I called in *English Folk Poetry* a "positive feedback" model of social relationships) but required subtle negotiation, conciliatory touches of humour, deflection of antagonisms, notions of differential rather than antithetical interests (a "negative feedback" conception). In the authors' words, a "code of indirection" governed the rhetoric of local song treating working conditions, labour/management relations, and images of self and other. And understandably so, for in these small industrial communities occupational identity was just one of several social

personae attached to individuals; they were also kinfolk, neighbours, participants in the same Fourth of July picnic, perhaps teammates in pickup baseball games.

Finally we have John Minton's "'The Waterman Train Wreck': Tracking a Folksong in Deep East Texas." Like many of the items in "Farm, Forest, and Factory," "Wreck" is not a song of labouring experience in any meaningful sense. The text's generic lineage is clear: it's a native Anglo-American ballad of the broadside type, with some influence from the blues ballad, on the general topic, so ubiquitous in Anglo-American narrative song, of "tragedies and disasters." Minton tells a rich, lucid, engrossing tale of the fieldwork that recovered several versions of the song, hitherto unknown to academics (the event it memorialises took place in 1910 or 1911, and its composition almost certainly dates from the same year); discusses the song's various "lives"—in oral performance, in handwritten ballet, on homemade cassettes; and contextualises its semantic within Southern folksong tradition, world view, and working-class experience. This is an enthralling essay, my personal favourite of the more theoretical group, just as Leary and March's "Farm, Factory, and Forest" stands out for me amongst the more descriptive and narrative pieces.

As readers of this journal may be aware, a festschrift, however laudable the motives behind its conception, can present a truly formidable task to its compiler. It takes a hard- working editor of unusually clear vision and firm purpose to fashion an example of the genre that is not just equal to (or even, as is often the case, less than) the sum of its parts. Fortunately Archie Green is such a person, and so in *Songs About Work* we have a well- integrated collection of essays, despite the diversity of disciplines represented in the inventory of contributors. I should alert the prospective reader, however, to one possible downside to a single unifying hand, and that is the absence of theoretical perspectives which may not fit the editor's own. In the case of *Songs About Work*, the lack of any significant post-modernist sensibility in the mind-sets of the various contributors, while it may not unduly concern the American community of folksong scholars, will sit less comfortably with our international colleagues. In the more history-oriented essays we encounter little of the language and concepts of radical current culture theory in general, while the textual analyses show virtually no links with approaches that problematise long- established, "monologic" forms. Still, readers who do not begrudge time spent on a volume in which words like "silenced" and "subaltern," or "totalising" and "transgressive," or "decentre" and even "discourse" simply never appear, will find *Songs About Work* a worthy member of the extended and by now almost ancient family of scholarship on songs of labouring experience.

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