

of Lithuanian basketball fandom is indeed a noteworthy and multi-layered phenomenon, but the interpretation of it remains a job of the future researchers.

“The Storytelling Human” is not only an eye-catching title for an academic study on folklore, but also a fairly accurate metaphor for the volume itself. The authors do not attempt at creating complex theoretical frameworks or universal interpretative models, but rather tell stories of different genres and practices of Lithuanian folklore in a humane and engaging manner. The volume is not a sophisticated scholarly jigsaw puzzle where pieces stick neatly to each other; it is more of a huge wooden chest with all sorts of curiosities, each of which deserves hours of close examination. Much like the folklore itself, “The Storytelling Human” poses more questions than it gives answers – and, hopefully, these questions would lie at the foundation of further volumes dedicated to Lithuanian vernacular culture.

Anastasiya Fiadotava

References

- Davies, Christie 2011. *Jokes and Targets*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
 Kuipers, Giseline 2006. *Good Humor, Bad Taste: A Sociology of the Joke*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
 Oring, Elliott 2016. *Joking Asides: The Theory, Analysis, and Aesthetics of Humor*. Logan: Utah State University Press.

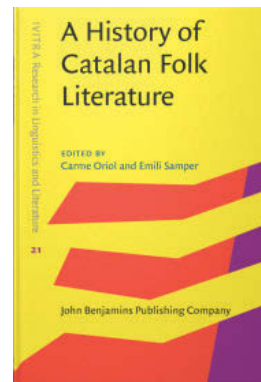
A MULTINATIONAL HISTORY OF CATALAN FOLK STUDIES

Carme Oriol, Emili Samper (eds.). *A History of Catalan Folk Literature*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2019. 273 pp.

This welcome volume provides an overview of the activity of folklorists in Catalan-speaking areas from the onset of Romanticism until today. Catalonia proper is the focus of a third of the book, while the Balearic Islands, together with the Valencian Country and El Carxe take up a further third. The final third of the book covers the Aragonese Strip, Andorra, Northern Catalonia (in France) and L’Alguer (in Sardinia). A useful map on page xv shows these contiguous areas. The work concludes with a valuable twenty-page bibliography and a triple-columned index. Altogether, four modern states are featured in the book:

Spain, Andorra, France, and Italy. Curated by folklorists Oriol and Samper from the University of Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona, this work, with its multinational coverage, is also very much a multi-authored work, with fully 15 people involved in its writing. It represents a fluently translated English version of the Catalan original, *Història de la literatura popular catalana* (2017).

Not so much a history of folk literature (we do not find citations from songs or stories in the work) as a historiography of folk literature, the book introduces us to a series of interesting folklorists. Among some of the most remarkable people are foreign-born students of Catalan folklore, such as Sara Llorens i Carreras (born in Buenos Aires in 1881) and Archduke Ludwig Salvator of Austria (born in Florence in 1847). Alan Lomax, who



spent time in Mallorca and Ibiza in search of traditional music during the Franco era, is also mentioned, as is Walter Anderson, who worked collaboratively with the foremost mid-century Catalan folklorist, Joan Amades i Gelats (pp. 57–58). The interaction of dictionary-making and folklore-documentation is also hinted at by remarks such as those noting Antoni Maria Alcover i Sureda’s “articles and other writings on folk literature and folklore ... published in the *Bolletí del Diccionari de la Llengua Catalana*” (p. 112) and references to Francesc Bonafè i Barceló’s unpublished dictionary of Majorcan dialect, folklore and place names (p. 134).

There is also interesting institutional history traced here as well. Following on from the formation of the Folklore Society in London in 1878, and the Andalusian Folklore Society’s foundation in 1881, a Catalan body dealing with folklore emerged in 1885. Intriguingly, this was not an autonomous society, but the folklore section of the Catalan Excursions Association. The section published a series of scholarly books between 1884 and 1910. The phenomenon of excursionism and excursionist associations is one that has analogues in other countries during this period from English field clubs to Bavarian Alpine societies, and it might be interesting to dedicate a conference to comparative (and contrastive) excursionism in Europe and its relation to folklore. One writer with excursionist connections, Cels Gomis i Mestre, was well aware of folklore research elsewhere in Europe. His books on plants and animals in popular sayings, customs and beliefs were inspired, we are told, by Paul Sébillot’s *Traditions et superstitions de la Haute-Bretagne*. And Sébillot, in turn, returned the compliment by referring to Gomis’s work in some of his own later research.

Catalan folkloristics went through many twists and turns over the subsequent years through the post-World War I period, the Spanish Civil War, the Franco era, and on to the modern period, and the book covers these developments too. Interestingly, following a period (1978–1989) that saw the resumption of folkloristic activities, the period of renewal in folklore studies in Catalonia was 1990–1999, according to Oriol’s account (pp. 77–84). This is precisely the same period that saw the renewal of folklore studies in the Baltic states in the opposite corner of Europe. One important intellectual element in both of these renewals was the reception of the works of 1970s American folklorists such as Ben-Amos, Dorson, and Dundes. Another parallel is that the newly released enthusiasm of the 1990s benefited, in both cases, from governmental financial support. In fact, there is yet another parallel as well, in that both areas swiftly adopted the internet for archival purposes, as well as for the dissemination of research.

The book as a whole is a serious piece of work; indeed, a little leavening might have been provided by a few revealing or characteristic anecdotes about the personalities involved. It is also perhaps a pity that we do not have photographs in the book of some of these pioneer folklorists. Then again, such images are easily locatable online, and would no doubt have added to the cost of the book.

But what we now have is a description of the development of folklore studies in a particularly interesting area of Europe, available in English, which is full of details of folklorists who will be unknown to many of us. As such, it is an achievement that opens doors for those far from the Catalan countries to a vast quantity of research. It might also serve as a useful model for those compiling histories of folkloristics in other settings. And, finally, it should also be stated that one of the most heartening aspects of this history is that so much of the period it covers is recent – a sign of the present vitality of folklore studies in this area.

Jonathan Roper