

novelist's reputation is a good summary of the criticism of Trollope's work during his lifetime and in the century since his death, although the final section on the modern reassessment is insufficiently specific.

The material in the book is for the most part well chosen and organized, but there are some significant lapses. A few arguments are superficial and unsubstantiated. On the subject of realism, MacDonald comments: "Shakespeare . . . and most writers before the nineteenth century depicted extremes of high life (kings, nobles) or low life (clowns, rustics), the former being the subject of tragedy, and the latter of comedy. By the nineteenth century, novelists had begun to focus more on the middle ranges of society" (16). This ignores the importance of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Austen in the development of realism. Elsewhere, MacDonald asserts that during the early 1860s Trollope began to write novels with a darker view, but she fails to say why. The study also has some major omissions. It is understandable that the author should ignore the early Irish novels; however, one may query why the short chapter entitled "Love and Money" contains no discussion of Trollope's criticism of materialism and of his most rapacious, manhunting antiheroine, Arabella Trefoil, in *The American Senator* (1877).

This is a brief but satisfactory overview of Trollope's work. The book could be a valuable introduction for undergraduates, and it also offers some helpful material for specialists who may be familiar with only a part of Trollope's work.

Bernard Binlin Dadié

*THE BLACK CLOTH: A COLLECTION OF AFRICAN FOLK TALES*

Trans. Karen C. Hatch

Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987. Pp. 140 \$8.95

Reviewed by Gerald Moore

The appearance of Bernard Dadié's *le Pagne Noir* in 1955 was an important event in the development of African narrative prose. Alongside the rise of the African novel in those same years came successive attempts by literary artists to give new life to traditional folk narrative, adapting it to a new type of market (that for printed books) and a more miscellaneous readership. Many of that invisible readership would be quite unaware of the sort of conditions in which these tales were originally performed, rather than merely told, in an atmosphere warmed with music, handclapping, laughter, dancing, and singing. The task of the prose narrator, faced with the silent page, was, then, not just to retell the stories in bare form, stripped of all their beauties, as many of the early collectors had done. It was to find new ways of embellishing and enriching his narrative, which might serve as equivalents for the oral art of the original performers.

Birago Diop had preceded Dadié in this attempt, with his celebrated *les Contes d'Amadou Koumba* of 1947. But Diop had concentrated on the tales of a single oral artist of known identity and location, and was generally more

faithful to his originals for that reason. Dadié felt free to develop his stories in his own way, and even to invent some new ones. He dispensed with the opening and closing formulas which are almost invariably found in the storytelling of particular cultures. He also eliminated many of the choral responses which would be contributed by the audience in a live session, but he did keep many of the songs, in their original Nzima language, and the onomatopoeic effects, such as Tortoise walking: *Clouk! clak!* or Kakou Ananzè sharpening his matchet before the terrified squirrel: *Kochio! kochio!*.

That redoubtable trickster ("when they thought they had him by the arm they had hold of only one leg") figures in most of the stories, overreaching himself as usual and actually being outwitted by Iguana-son in one episode. Karen Hatch's welcome translation preserves most of the felicities of Dadié's descriptive style. Here is the opening of "The Yam Field": "The field stretched as far as the eye could see. And it belonged to Kakou Ananzè. The yam shoots gracefully twined round their supporting stakes and sprawled lazily over the ground like fat women in a king's harem. . ."; and here is a passage from the story of the stepchild who is sent to replace the broken pitcher—the *Mother Holle* motif found also in the Grimm brothers' stories: "Tufts of grass, like travellers looking for asylum in a village at evening, latched onto some reeds whose heads were in the water . . . A kingfisher, on the watch, scarcely beat his wings. The small fry navigated in squadrons; shellfish dragged along their thick, spiny bodies and staggered about as though they were burdened with a cross. A spider sat poised on a leaf and floated with the current. . ."

In the thirty years since this collection first appeared, great strides have been made in the faithful recording, filming, transcription, and comparative analysis of traditional tales, in Africa and elsewhere. But that process is primarily academic in aim and impact, though the results may occasionally inspire the work of a poet, as Kofi Awoonor was inspired by some lines from *The Myth of the Bagre* and J.P. Clark by *The Ozidi Saga*. But the task set themselves by Birago Diop and Bernard Dadié, or by Daniel Fagunwa and Amos Tutuola for that matter, was very different. It was the search for a new channel of literary art, adapted to the times, through which the great riches of the African narrative imagination could continue to flow.

James G. Watson

*WILLIAM FAULKNER: LETTERS AND FICTIONS*

Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987. Pp. 214, \$22.50

Reviewed by Sally Wolff

With William Faulkner's own admonition firmly in mind that "people who will open and read another's private and personal letters . . . deserve exactly what they get," James G. Watson undertakes in *William Faulkner: Letters and Fictions* a profitable comparison of Faulkner's own personal and public correspondence with the fictional letters that occur in his stories and novels. Faulkner's letters are not a promising resource for those who seek a clear por-