

BOOK NOTES

Ives, Edward D. *Joe Scott, The Woodsman-Songmaker*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979. 473 pp.

Thomas, Philip J. *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*. Saanichton, B.C.: Hancock House, 1979. 176 pp.

Hopkins, Anthony. *Songs from the Front and Rear: Canadian Servicemen's Songs of the Second World War*. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1979. 192 pp.

MacEachern, Ron, ed. *Songs and Stories from Deep Cove Cape Breton As Remembered by Amby Thomas*. Sydney: College of Cape Breton Press, 1979. 49 pp.

The past year has seen the publication of four noteworthy books dealing with Canadian folk music. The titles listed above represent an interesting contrast in subject, treatment, and style, and in size range from the massive first volume to the last pamphlet-size collection.

The first and most significant is Edward D. Ives' third booklength study of a lumberwoods singer-songwriter. The dustjacket terms Joe Scott a Maine lumberman and balladeer but his story belongs as much to Canada as to Maine: he was born and grew up in New Brunswick, and is buried there, although he spent most of his adult life in Maine. His songs circulated equally on both sides of the border, and half the people Professor Ives interviewed about him were Canadians. But of course any argument about boundaries is irrelevant where woodsmen are concerned: they went where the work was and made no distinction between Maine and New Brunswick, or between Michigan and Ontario. Some Canadian songs were first collected in the States, and some American songs were better known in Canadian camps than in their native land.

As Professor Ives tells it, this book is the culmination of a quest that extended over eighteen years, from his first hearing of Joe Scott when he was searching for information about Larry Gorman. It is also a culmination of Ives' documentary style in dealing with a singer-composer, for here he has drawn upon the knowledge and understanding gained in his earlier studies of Larry Gorman and Lawrence Doyle. This is not only a scholarly and detailed account of a lumberwoods poet, but also a fascinating study of the processes of song composition and of their oral traditions. As Dr. Ives puts it, he set out "to recreate Joe's life as completely as possible not only for its own sake but also as the matrix out of which his songs grew. Then I have taken each of his songs and tried to show first of all how he went about creating it and then what happened to it in all of its sixty or more years in oral tradition. Finally I have described the nature of that tradition itself" (p. xiv).

He also emphasizes that he wanted to show what these songs meant to Joe, "which means seeing them in the context of his life," and what they meant to the men and women who sang them, "which means seeing them in the context of the tradition that carried them on," and thirdly, "I would like to show what the whole thing has meant to me, which means seeing it in the context of my life." The result is much the richest and most fascinating of his books.

The second book, Philip J. Thomas's long-awaited *Songs of the Pacific Northwest*, is of particular interest because it is the first sizeable collection of Canadian songs from anywhere west of Ontario. Both Ives' and Thomas's books are as much social history as song collections, but where Ives built his directly around the life and songs of one gifted songmaker, Thomas has searched

archives and collected widely to find songs that illustrate certain incidents in British Columbia's history. As he puts it, "This book of songs attempts to bring to life something of the history of British Columbia and its people." Two-fifths of the songs came from printed sources; the rest were collected orally from singers in many parts of the province. The songs from print were set to popular nineteenth-century tunes; when no tune was indicated Mr. Thomas composed his own tune for them. The songs are grouped into ten sections arranged chronologically, and each is accompanied by a detailed historical note which often is longer than the song. Interesting historical photographs illustrate the texts, and full references and a bibliography appear at the end.

The third book, Anthony Hopkins' *Songs from the Front and Rear*, is likely to have much the largest sale, for, as the advertising warns, these are not songs for children. Like children's songs, bawdy songs are still current in oral tradition, but it is only recently that collectors have been able to publish unbowdlerized versions. Professor Hopkins has given us an extensive sampling of Canadian servicemen's songs, most of them bawdy, although a few well known milder ones dilute the mixture: items like "I've Got Sixpence," "Knees Up, Mother Brown," and "Lili Marlene" were also popular on the home front. While all the songs were known to Canadian servicemen in the Second World War, most of them were also current among British and American troops, and many date from earlier wars: for example, "Bless Them All" and "I Don't Want No More of Army Life." Others are not specifically servicemen's songs: titles like "The Bastard King of England" "Christopher Columbo," and "The Ball of Kerriemuir" are aired in many types of gatherings, including rugby fans and university students. Only a few can be claimed as specifically Canadian: notably "The North Atlantic Squadron" and "Glenwhorple's Highlanders."

Professor Hopkins' book would have been more valuable if he had given the exact sources of his versions and had included comparative references. I also regret that some of his versions are not the best: for example, his final line in the well-known limerick about virgin sturgeon reads "That's why caviare is my dish," while the more appropriate ending is "That's why caviare is a very rare dish." A more serious flaw is his version of "The D-Day Dodgers" which lacks Hamish Henderson's moving final stanza:

Look around the mountains, in the mud and rain —
You'll find the scattered crosses — (there's some which have no name).
Heartbreak and toil and suffering gone,
The boys beneath them slumber on.
These are the D-Day Dodgers who'll stay in Italy.

The last and smallest of the books salutes a traditional Cape Breton singer and story teller, Amby Thomas. It includes some widespread ballads such as "A Gay Spanish Maid" and "The Jam on Gary's Rock," and some less familiar local titles like "Percy Morris" and "The Moncton Tragedy," interspersed with Amby's accounts of when he heard them. His is an interesting repertoire, but it is too bad that Ron MacEachern did not add some editorial notes indicating the usual titles and comparative references for the songs found in other collections.

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