

BOOK REVIEWS

Australian Folksongs of the Land and Its People. Compiled by the Folklore Council of Australia. Pp. xii +188, index, illustrations. Kilmore, Victoria, Australia: Lowden Publishing Company, 1974. No price given, cloth.

Reviewed by James P. Leary

More than a dozen collections of Australian songs and ballads, as well as two indices and a handful of booklength studies, have been published. Unfortunately, none have measured up to scholarly standards; this volume is no exception. Ostensibly printed for the group-sings of enthusiastic folkies, it disregards any mention of historical, contextual, or comparative data. Likewise, there are no musical transcriptions; instead we are presented with directives useful only to those who already know a song. For example:

"The Stockmen of Australia"
Key: G Mood: Lively
Tune: The Irishmen

Despite such irritations, the texts are quite interesting.

While not all of the songs derive from oral tradition, many do. The adept reader will immediately note the absence of Child Ballads and the preponderance of songs related to English and Irish Broadside verse ("The Billy-Goat Overland" is from "The Lincolnshire Poacher"; "The Bullockies Ball" is "Finnigan's Wake" transformed), late 19th-century Kiplingesque balladry ("Flash Jack From Gundagai"), and songs of the American West ("The Dying Bagman" and "The Dying Stockman" strongly resemble "The Dying Cowboy"; "The Cockies of Bungaree" is one with "The State of Arkansas"). Additionally, the influence of rebellious, male outback workers on Australian tradition is accurately set forth in the following song categories: Convicts, Miners, Bullock Drivers, Swagmen, Drovers, Shearers and Bushrangers.

However, those seeking an introduction to Australia's folksong tradition would be better off consulting either Russel Ward's Penguin Book of Australian Ballads or Ron Edwards' The Overlander Songbook.

Modern Black Poets: A Collection of Critical Essays. Edited by Donald B. Gibson. Pp. viii +181, selected bibliography. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973.

Reviewed by Camilla A. Collins

This volume in Prentice-Hall's Twentieth Century Views series is an unexciting and weak report on the emergence of modern Black poetry. The introduction by Donald B. Gibson attempts to survey the historical periods in the development