Folklore Matters
Alan Dundes
Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989. xii + 172 pp. N.p.

Reviewer: John Colarusso
McMaster University

The Dundes book is a collection of articles by this acknowledged master of folklore. These are arranged chronologically and range from 1983 to 1988. Dundes' avowed intent in drawing together this collection is to give an answer to the query of what a folklorist does. He succeeds admirably in that he has put together a wide range of topics. I shall simply summarize and discuss some of them in order to give the prospective reader a feel for the book.

"Defining Identity through Folklore" exemplifies one of Dundes' most striking attributes, his enormous erudition. He has read widely and deeply in a wide range of languages and areas, and has drawn together in this essay a wide range of seemingly disparate topics, such as ethnic, contextual and sexual identity, changes in identity and in lore, national stereotypes, negative features of identity, even matters regarding strangers and the modern problem of identification numbers. He makes a persuasive case for the changing character of identity, both within the complex setting of society and across the span of a lifetime, and the usefulness of folklore in examining this phenomenon. The references to the philosophical problem of identity, however, serve no great end. On this point Dundes seems to have confused the philosophical examination of the concept of self, that is the continuity of the experience of ego, with that of the concept of roles, the latter showing all the mutability that such a social phenomenon exhibits.

In the "Fabrication of Fakelore" Dundes inveighs against the alteration, reassemblage and selectional practices of tale recording that have characterized the work of many of the giants of folklore, from the Ossian of James Macpherson and the collections of the Brothers Grimm, to the Kalevala of Elias Lonnrot and the lore of Paul Bunyan. He insists that all variants of a tale must be recorded for a full understanding of it. His position is a venerable one within his discipline—after all, some of the major achievements of folklore have been gigantic indices of motifs and tale-types—and he makes a strong case for the claim that editorializing has lain behind many of the major 19th-century works.

"The Comparative Method in Folklore" is an important paper. This is an extensive discussion of the origin and development of the comparative method, from its (claimed) birth in anthropology and folkloristics in the early 19th century, to its loss in anthropology and its near total ascendency in folklore in the mid-20th. In fact, philology invented this powerful technique. Dundes frames the ongoing folkloristic conflict between anthropologists and folklorists: anthropologists write monadic ethnographies without reference to other cultures, whereas folklorists compare tales without independent analyses of them. Folklorists can bring perspective and time-depth to anthropology, while anthropologists can bring meaning to folklore.

"Pecking Chickens: A Folk Toy as a Source for Study of Worldview" is a small, delightfully illustrated jewel which is built around the following fascinating notion: "Worldview . . . permeates all aspects of a given culture and this is why *the pattern of the whole is to be found even in that whole's smallest parts*" (p. 83, emphasis mine).

In Dundes' hands this almost mystical notion is made plausible by the examination of a few simple toys.

As its title suggests "The Psychoanalytic Study of the Grimms' Tales: 'The Maiden without Hands' (AT 706)" is a detailed analysis of a famous folktale in which Dundes relies almost entirely on orthodox Freudian interpretation. Part of the general intellectual perspective on psychoanalysis today is that it is a mediocre clinical tool, without an impressive cure rate, and that it is irrefutable and thus not scientific. On the other hand, if science has taught us anything in the last 400 years it is that things are not as they seem, and I for one am prepared to accept that a science of mind will also show that even our own feelings and cognitions are not what they seem. Nevertheless, I can follow Dundes only so far in his analysis of these tales. I have similar reservations regarding his interpretation of "The Good and Bad Daughters," the other tale covered in this article but omitted from its title.

Freudian overtones can be heard again in the last article, "The Building of Skadar: The Measure of Meaning of a Ballad of the Balkans," but these are minor. Here Dundes truly exhibits his great forte, the ability to provide penetrating and far-reaching interpretations of folktales, interpretations which seem disarmingly simple and sensible, but have nevertheless escaped the efforts of all previous workers. From the sacrifice of a young wife in the building of a fort or castle Dundes draws an illuminating picture of the role of women in Balkan society, their figurative immurement in traditional marriage, and draws parallels between this role and that of women in India on the basis of a similar tale found there. In the course of this brilliant analysis Dundes discusses nationalistic forces and sentiments and their role in folklore, while also refuting the theory that ballads and myths arise as the oral counterparts to rituals. In fact there is no archaeological evidence that immurement was ever practised in the Balkans, and this independent fact lends strong corroboration to Dundes' already powerful interpretation. In this last article one has the feel that folklore has almost taken on the force of hard science.

American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent
Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt
Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1988. xiv + 186 pp. $35.00 (cloth), $9.95 (paper)

Reviewer: John Colarusso
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Zumwalt's book examines in detail the academic struggle to dominate folklore that has been waged in North American academic circles from the end of the 19th century well into the 20th. This book is a well-written and prodigiously researched work. It has an enormous bibliography and a useful index. Future editions would be improved if portraits of some of the *dramatis personae* were included. The book is informed by the notion of disciplinary matrix (Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [University of Chicago Press, 1970]), and is one of the best case studies of academic struggle and the social dynamics of science that I have ever read. It is no exaggeration to say that every student or professor of anthropology and folklore would do well to read it.