

cisive" (298). Certitude is not the goal. Certitude has as its cruelest consequence the loss of ongoing dialogue. Instead, Booth seeks the joint pursuit of common ground that disputants share, hoping that a genuine discussion of the conflict could become possible. He desires reconciliation.

When we reach the climax in the book's final chapter, Booth's testimony as it were, we are faced with the discovery "that all of the disputes boil down to a simple conflict of three irrefutable, ultimate universal values, oversimplified with the labels Truth, Goodness, and Beauty" (298). Booth's conclusion—that in everyday experience and in intellectual life there are "conflicts among these three absolutes, requiring choices that violate one or the other" (299)—means that one of the three values must prevail. For him, "the supreme value of the three is 'goodness' and . . . the pursuit of goodness dictates negotiation" (299). The rejection of truth as a supreme value may be surprising. But Booth still believes in "pursuing truth" (302). He rejects jumping too quickly to conclusions about truth that undermine goodwill and thereby stifle ongoing efforts to keep communication open. Persuasion, respect, and agreement are ethically more important than grimly hanging on to truth claims that would better be subjected to dialogue. The case for this position is the justification for Booth's career.

In conclusion, I recommend reading this book, not because it brings me into careful intellectual engagement with powerful ideas or gives me insight into the pursuit of excellence. Booth's body of work outside the autobiography does that. Read this book to gain some insight into the need for understanding and goodness in a world where people refuse to speak to one another. Read it to meet a man with whom we no longer have the pleasure of probing, seeking, and learning together. Read it to meet Wayne C. Booth, whose pursuit of goodness made him a very good man.

Getting at the Marrow

William A. Wilson. *The Marrow of Human Experience: Essays on Folklore*. Edited by Jill Terry Rudy. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2006. vi + 321 pp. Cloth: \$24.95.

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The Marrow of Human Experience collects seventeen of William A. (“Bert”) Wilson’s essays from three decades of a distinguished career. The topics of the essays vary, but all of them reflect, in one way or another, Wilson’s dominant interests and passions: the promotion of folklore studies as a humane discipline distinct from, yet with vital connections to literature, history, and the social sciences; an advocacy for the concerns and interests of ordinary people in both public policy and the projects of the academy; and a rigorous critique of the assumptions and methods of folklore studies, past, present, and future.

Jill Terry Rudy’s well-designed edition arranges the essays topically under three headings, “The Importance of Folklore,” “Folklore and National Identity,” and “Folklore, Religion, and Who We Are.” Each essay is preceded by a brief commentary by another folklorist, including prominent national figures, institutional colleagues from Brigham Young University and Utah State University, and Wilson’s former students. The introductions are useful for setting the essays in their disciplinary contexts. The best of them go further by engaging the issues raised by Wilson and briefly exploring some of their implications.

The six essays collected under the “Importance of Folklore” heading include eloquent pleas for breaking down institutional and disciplinary barriers between folklore and related disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Some of these arguments are directed primarily to folklorists, pointing out the dangers of disciplinary isolation. Other essays are aimed more at historians or literary scholars, suggesting ways in which folklore studies can complement and enrich the work of those fields. One essay, “Documenting Folklore,” is designed as a primer for folklore students, but its clarity and succinctness make it an effective introductory overview of the field for general readers.

In “The Deeper Necessity: Folklore and the Humanities,” Wilson attacks the “evolutionary view of folklore” that characterizes it as “primitive, subliterary artistic or musical material from which the ‘higher’ art forms eventually evolved” (15). He insists, rather, that

there is no such thing as folk literature—there is simply literature, which I would define as the artistic expression in words of significant human experience. Sometimes that expression is made through the written words of individual authors, sometimes through spoken words in face-to-face encounters among people usually sharing the same social identity. These different modes of transmission and the different audiences to whom the folklore is addressed will, of course, require somewhat different methods

of analysis. But that should not obscure the fact that behind each expression lies the human urge, that deeper necessity, to communicate significant experience and emotion and to influence the surrounding social world through the artistic, and therefore powerful, use of language. And neither of these expressions is any less literature, or art, than the other. (16)

The essays assembled in the section titled “Folklore and National Identity” reflect Wilson’s groundbreaking work on Finnish folklore. Wilson’s interest in Finnish culture was formed during his service there as an LDS missionary and strengthened by his marriage to Finland native Hannele Blomqvist. His knowledge of the Finnish language won him a National Defense Education Act fellowship for graduate study at Indiana University. When his interests turned toward anthropology and folklore, it was natural that he should pursue these studies in a Finnish context. A major strand in the development of folklore as an academic discipline was the effort of nineteenth-century Finnish scholars to collect the traditional songs and tales that formed a repository of Finnish language and culture among a people dominated for many generations by the kingdom of Sweden and later by Imperial Russia. As a result, the people lacked a coherent sense of national identity until one was provided by the folklorists, most importantly a rural physician named Elias Lönnrot, who collected peasant songs and arranged them to form the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*. Wilson’s study of this “romantic nationalism” achieved its fullest expression in his prize-winning book, *Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976). Essays in the present volume examine the roots of romantic nationalism in the ideas of Giambattista Vico and Johann Gottfried Herder, and its flowering in the music of Jean Sibelius. Characteristically, Wilson also argues that Finns and Finnish Americans should value the folk expressions of their current societies, and not only their past traditions.

Mormon readers will probably be most interested in the third section of the book, which presents seven essays on Mormon folklore, including pieces on missionary folklore, Mormon humor, and the persistence of legends of the Three Nephites in contemporary Mormon society. In “The Concept of the West, and Other Hindrances to the Study of Mormon Folklore,” Wilson criticizes the historical and environmental determinism that long dominated scholarly studies of “Mormon country.” He writes: “If we are ever to understand Mormons by examining their folklore, we must turn our eyes from the past to the present, from the rural