

For a collection this rich and important in the publication history of Black American folklore, Sutherland's original review is surprisingly compact and to the point. It unbends enough, and with eloquence, to hint that this is a book whose importance is matched by the beauty of Hamilton's prose. Hamilton organizes the tales by category, beginning with animal tales, then "Tales of the Real, Extravagant, and Fanciful," supernatural tales, and tales of freedom: an ambitious scope for a collection for young readers. An introduction gives context for the tales' transmission among enslaved Africans in the United States and explains the author's use of colloquial dialect. Each tale is followed by a short paragraph giving more information about its origins, transmission, and folkloric significance, while an extensive bibliography points the reader to additional versions of the tales. It's a fine resource for research as well as storytelling. Sutherland also praises the Dillons' "handsome pictures . . . as effective in composition as they are in use of color." The Dillons' illustrations are indeed beautiful, but I find the interior art faintly disappointing after the vibrant cover. The art was clearly done in color, as the review indicates, but all the first editions I've been able to lay eyes on are in black and white. This makes sense as an effort to keep costs down for publisher and purchaser, but it's an artistic loss: the Dillons' signature luminosity and blend of color and shape flatten into something still intriguing, but at times static and opaque. I can certainly see why the Dillons were chosen for the project—it's a wonderful match of writer and illustrators—so I have to wonder if the black and white reproductions were an afterthought of the publisher's. I'd love to see the originals, as perhaps Sutherland did. Might I suggest a fortieth anniversary reissue, with some (not necessary all forty) color plates?

- *Fiona Hartley-Kroeger, Reviewer*