

the Folk (1972). The verbal patterning they isolate as crucial for “distinguishing between a ballad and a broadside hack’s rendition” (p. 7) is simply one aspect of Buchan’s oral structure.

Holzapfel’s section of the book is comprised of five case studies of German and Danish texts, and offers two interesting and useful contributions. First, he discusses narrative technique not only as “a means of telling a story,” but also as “the basis for the correct understanding of the action” (p. 120). In particular, he argues that the use of “epic formulae” communicates to the listener the universal implications of a ballad’s narrative, extending its relevance beyond the reach of the specific characters and events it concerns. Second, he takes what he terms a phenomenological approach to the analysis of the “interpretative model incorporated in the poetry” of the ballad genre (p. 120). It is phenomenological in two senses: it is achronic, rather than limited to a specific region and period, and it is subjective, though he is careful to document the cultural appropriateness of his personal responses to ballad narratives and narrative techniques. These five essays are better interrelated than those in the first section, and their individual analyses are, I think, more carefully researched.

Both the bibliography and the footnotes leave much to be desired, though Holzapfel’s citations are again an exception. The central problem with both is that the obvious is often included while the useful is omitted. Space devoted in the text and bibliography to the discussion of major collections and phases in ballad scholarship could perhaps have been better used in expanding and supporting the central arguments made, and issues raised, in the first section. If the volume is intended for college curricular use (which may explain the authors’ inclusion of these citations and discussions), there is all the more reason to have lavished explanation and documentation on the arguments and to have indicated background sources in a note.

On the whole, the book certainly starts some hares worth chasing. Holzapfel’s work is thorough and innovative, and his particular kind of departure from the historic-geographic approach to ballad scholarship—similar to Renwick’s in its attention to cultural meaning—may repay emulation. As studies of ambiguous or borderline examples in balladry, Andersen’s and Pettitt’s essays on printed and manuscript texts raise interesting questions; perhaps in the study of ballads, as in the ethnography of cultures, we have spent too little time on the interstices between our tidy categories. The book’s contribution may ultimately lie more in its attention to these areas than in its definition of the ballad as a narrative mode.

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Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry, Volume One: The Traditions. Edited by A. T. Hatto. (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1980. The Modern Humanities Research Association Series vol. 9. Pp. xiii + 376, a note on the two illustrations, general introduction, introduction to volume one, photographs.)

For aficionados of the epic, to be in London between the summer of 1964 and the winter of 1972 must have been very exhilarating. During that period the London Seminar on Epic convened 31 times to hear lectures on diverse epics from both nearby and remote cultures, delivered by specialists of these poetic narratives and their literary traditions. The 12 articles that constitute the present volume are partial result of the seminar work. They are devoted to the “heroic and/or epic traditions in general terms,” while a second volume, planned for the future, will include “detailed investigation, quoting original texts, of problems of diction, prosody and versification, observations on voice-production of bards” (p. 1), and similar concerns.

The organization of the present volume reveals the historical and literary conception of the epic that has been formulated in the London Seminar on Epic. Hence, heading the studies is an essay by J. B. Hainsworth on the epic in "Ancient Greece," which is followed by an article by John D. Smith on "Old Indian (Two Sanskrit Epics)." The Middle Ages are represented by essays on the epics of "Old French" by D. J. A. Ross, "Medieval Spanish" by L. P. Harvey, and "Medieval German" by A. T. Hatto. The epic traditions that have been uncovered during the 19th and 20th centuries constitute the rest of the volume, and include essays by R. Auty on the epic of the "Serbo Croat," by G. F. Cushing on the "Ob Ugrian (Vogul and Ostyak)" narrative traditions, by H. W. Baily about the "Ossetic (Nartä)" epics, by C. R. Bawden on the "Mongol (The Contemporary Tradition)," by A. T. Hatto on the "Kirghiz (Mid-19th century)" heroic tradition, by C. J. Dunn on the "Ainu" epic, and finally an essay by H. F. Morris on "East Africa (The Bahima Praise Poems)." With such a diversity of literary traditions, the absence of a map and an index is immediately noticeable.

In spite of the broad geographical spectrum of epic traditions, the selection appears to be more arbitrary than systematic, "a very mixed bag" as the editor himself points out (p. 10). Modern epic traditions are represented chiefly by Central and North Asia, the medieval traditions primarily by Europe (Central, Western, and Southern), and the antiquities by Greece and India. Such a sporadic examination of the traditions cannot support any assertions about the historical development of the epic nor could it provide a basis for the analysis of the epic's literary varieties. Significant traditions are missing. The volume does not include the British, nor the Irish, nor the ancient Near Eastern, nor the West and Central African, nor the Russian, nor the Finnish epics. These many gaps render any comparative or historical examinations of the epic's international dimension clearly deficient and do not support any general observations on the genre. An adequate geographical sampling of epic traditions is essential for the comparative understanding of the epic, an approach with which the contributors have toyed and abandoned, yet which the editor clearly endorses (p. 7).

While the essays in this volume are not representative of the entire global gamut of epics and their performances, however, they do afford some valuable preliminary distinctions. For example, on the basis of these surveys, it becomes clear that there is a need to differentiate between the bardic and the shamanistic epic traditions. While the former has worldwide distribution, the latter is concentrated primarily in North Asia and is represented in this volume mainly by the epic tradition of Ob-Ugrian peoples, though shamanistic elements occur also in Mongol and Ainu epic traditions. From a literary perspective, the bardic tradition involves a third-person narrative, while the shamanistic accounts are told in first-person singular. The ancient and medieval European epics evolve and are sung within the court systems of hierarchical societies, while the North Asiatic traditions are of nomadic people and revolve around battles on herding grounds. Similarly, historical reconstruction suggests that European epics enjoyed formal performance, often within the court or feudal system, while some of the North Asian epics were performed in religious context. Since the volume focuses on "heroic traditions," epical romances are excluded by definition; consequently, the correlation between epical themes and regions is made meaningless.

The individual essays themselves are of high scholarly standard. They offer a thorough introduction to respective heroic traditions and the research about them, and together make up a handbook indispensable to any oral epics library.

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