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Editor
J.D.A. Widdowson

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Douglas Northover:  
"The Language of Old Burton, Burton Bradstock, Dorset"  
with notes of parallels to Newfoundland usage by  
Martin J. Lovelace  

Introduction  

The following glossary of the language of Burton Bradstock, a coastal village in West Dorset, is the work of Douglas Northover, retired professional gardener, former part-time fisherman, and amateur of local history, whose personal recollections of life in "Old Burton" go back to the 1920s. His family tradition extends much further: there have been many generations of Northovers in Burton engaged in its characteristic occupations: agriculture; net braiding; the inshore fishery prosecuted from small boats launched from the beach, and the other activities of a traditional micro-economy: gardening, poaching, and smuggling. Burton men also commonly joined the Navy or became merchant mariners.  

The "Old Burton" of the title is to be understood as much as a place in time as in a geographical sense and the wordlist is a portrait of its people and landmarks as well as a record of the language spoken there. Burton Bradstock is now much favoured as a weekend cottage and retirement community. The crucial effect for this work of a complex set of social and economic changes is that the old Burton families, and speakers of the dialect, are now decidedly in the minority.  

I was introduced to Douglas Northover in December 1986 at the suggestion of Peter Robson who had interviewed him on local calendar customs. Douglas showed me his glossary, which was already extensive, in a typescript painstakingly prepared by his wife, Georgie. Some days later I lent him a copy of the Dictionary of Newfoundland English, in which he noted many parallels, but this did not lead to any bias, I feel, in what he chose to set down as his recollection, and collection, of old Burton words. While much is from memory, a proportion is made up of words and
phrases which arose from his conversations with old friends—other survivors of the prior generation of Burton people.

Neither Douglas nor I have any training as dialectologists; ideally I.P.A. symbols should have been used here. As a folklorist, however, I found the glossary fascinating as a composite picture of the way of life that lay behind the words. There is material on blason populaire, belief, custom, games, and foodways amidst a general picture of village history and folklife. As a native of the area (my grandmother was born in Burton) transplanted to Newfoundland, I found an equal interest in comparing the wordlist with Newfoundland English. My only contribution to Douglas’s work, beyond a little folkloristic elicitation of extra detail in a few places, has been the addition of page references to DNE.

The historical connections between the West Country and Newfoundland are well known (the reader should see the entry on “West Bay Gardens” below for the export of cabbage plants from Burton to Newfoundland). Documentation and analysis of the transfer of folk culture from Dorset, Somerset, and Devon is regrettably scant, however, with the exception of Theo Brown’s article “The Mummer’s Play in Devon and Newfoundland”, and a survey of areas of lore and language yet to be investigated which was written by J.D.A. Widdowson in 1969.1 Approximately one quarter of the words listed here can be found in DNE. The rate of correspondence would be higher, however, were it not for the many local placenames, glosses on local customs, and entries showing pronunciation of otherwise standard English words that are appropriately included in the Burton collection. A focus on sea terms would obviously raise the proportion of words with Newfoundland parallels. By whatever measure is taken it is apparent that the lexical transfer between Dorset and Newfoundland is substantial.

Those of us who are privileged to live and study in Newfoundland should feel challenged by a work of this kind to continue to assemble the record of language and folk tradition related to West Country settlement there; as Douglas Northover’s glossary shows, it is still possible to record valuable new material on language and folklife in Dorset which deepens our knowledge of the roots of Newfoundland English.

Notes

Douglas Northover: ‘The Language of Old Burton’ 5

am grateful to my colleagues W.J. Kirwin and J.D.A. Widdowson for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.


The Language of Old Burton

In my early days just after World War I the everyday life of the village was still dominated by the lerritt fishing and the work of the seasons on the land. The last of the full time fishermen was still alive, there were a few agricultural craftsmen: hedgers, ditchers, scythemen and singlers (thinners of root crops) making a living.

The language that my parents and grandparents spoke was, I think, unique, being the dialect of Dorset refined and added to through contact with the sea and seamen. I believe that many of the words they used were pure Old English (i.e. Saxon), with some of Celtic and Norman French origins, the latter appertaining to the fishing. The language of Old Burton is no longer spoken; a few people remember words and phrases from their youth but, like the lerritts and the net braiders, the old seasonal way of life has died and, more’s the pity, the dry, salty humour is extinct.

Abouda
Ackel
Adder
Addernoon
Aggurdun ’ill (as wold as)
Ah
Aish
Aked
All manner
’and bar

Around, almost, nearly.
To work, of improvised plans, repairs or tools.
After.
Afternoon.
Aged, very old (Eggardon Hill is a local Iron Age settlement or hill fort)
Yes, affirmative. “Ooh ah”—“Oh yes.”
Ash tree.
Rotten or rotting of wood, worn out.
All sorts of things, plants, etc.
Wooden stretcher used for carrying nets, fish etc. on
'andy, 'andy yer
'tang gallus
An' goo
Anguish
'ant
An' that
An' went
Apem
Apse, on the apse
Arg, argy
Arms
Arn
Article
As ever was
'assen thee?
Asso to brekfusstime
Ast
At, at thee?
At
At
'aul up an' spread
Avore
Away da goo
Baccy weed
Back along
Back end
Back house

beach. Mainly used to put a ready-for-use seine bodily into a boat. DNE 238.

Close, near to this place. DNE 239.

Guilty looking.

With energy; for instance, a blacksmith would 'ammer an' goo!

Inflammation under the skin. DNE 8.

Have not.

And other things; e.g. "'Em put on 'is jacket an' trousers an' that."

Was excited, carried on work or operation with gusto; as "'Em waved 'is arms an' 'ollered an' went!"

Part of drift net nearest the boat which was pulled inboard occasionally to see whether net was fishing properly and catching fish.

Unlocked, unlatched, of doors and windows. DNE 240, hapse.

To argue. DNE 9.

Wings of a seine net.

Any. DNE 9.

A rascal, a naughty child. DNE 10.

Really, truly.

Haven't you?

All over, all the way.

Ask.

Are, are you?

Doing something, e.g. "Wot be at?"—"What are you doing?"

Being somewhere, point of arrival; as "War be at?" meaning "Where are you?"

In or before bad weather boats were pulled up the beach as high as necessary and the seine nets spread on the shingle.

Before.

Carry on, continue, e.g. "I picked up me tools an' away da goo!"

Fine, brown leaved seaweed growing on rocks off Burton Cliffs, good for setting prawn nets or pots. DNE 570, tobacco. . . in names of various plants.

Formerly, some time ago.

Autumn, early winter.

Lean-to shed against a cottage wall. Cp. DNE 13.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Back o' November</td>
<td>Dark, dismal, murky or dreary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baid</td>
<td>Bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baint</td>
<td>Am not, are not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bait</td>
<td>Whitebait.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball-cootered</td>
<td>Drunk and incapable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball-kicker</td>
<td>Football, footballer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bally-rag</td>
<td>Gossip, argue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>Wheelbarrow. DNE 28.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber (The)</td>
<td>Land mist drifting out to sea on frosty nights, when frost settled on one's beard and clothing. DNE 23.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barken</td>
<td>Cow barton, an enclosure or shed for dairy cattle. The cow barton that once stood on the site of Cheney's garage was demolished in the 1920s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barney</td>
<td>A row, argument, sometimes fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barr</td>
<td>Enclosure with cart sheds etc. demolished to make Charles Road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basin (The)</td>
<td>West Bay Harbour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bat vowlin</td>
<td>Catching small birds roosting in ivy walls by use of net on two sticks and lantern. A source of protein in bad times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay back</td>
<td>To restrict the flow of water in stream or river. Cp. DNE 32, bay, sense 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayed up</td>
<td>The mouth of the river Bride at Freshwater was bayed up when it was blocked by shingle thrown up by the sea. This caused flooding in the village in the old days. Cp. DNE 32, bay, sense 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td>Am, are, e.g. “I be yer, wer be you?” Cp. DNE 34.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td>By, near, e.g. “The kiddle's be the vire”—“The kettle's by the fire.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beckon (the)</td>
<td>The signal that a catch of fish had been made, usually a bushel basket hoisted on a pole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beckon's up!</td>
<td>A crew has made a catch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedder</td>
<td>Better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beedle</td>
<td>Wooden (usually apple) mallet used for driving stakes, splitting wedges etc. Cp. DNE 38, beetle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer man</td>
<td>Trawler from Beer in Devon or any place west of Lyme Regis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beeyans</td>
<td>Beans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benders, bents</td>
<td>Stalks of grass standing high in pasture or mown grass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biddlehead</td>
<td>Miller's thumb, a small freshwater fish with a large head.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Billet  A lump of wood. *DNE 43.*
Bin  Been.
Bine Bar  Bind-barrow, a tumulus east of Burton Hive.
Birds Eye  Common speedwell, a weed.
Bizzom  A crone, an eccentric old woman. *Cp. DNE 43, besom* [for association of besom with women].
Blackie  The blackbird.
Black pot  Black pudding, a sausage made by stuffing pigs' intestines with a mixture of blood and suet. The School Bridge was a favourite place for washing the intestines.
Blackthorn Winter  A cold period in Spring when the blackthorn is flowering.
Blaire  To cry, weep. *DNE 48.*
Blight  Could mean any pest or disease except caterpillars but was used mainly to describe depredations of aphids or the potato blight.
Blen, blin  Local name given to all species of pout whiting which used to be caught on lines in large numbers from the shore and from boats at sea.
Blooth  Bloom, flowers.
Blow  Stormy period with strong onshore winds.
Blubber  Jellyfish caught in nets.
Bobby dazzler (a)  A clever, smart or skilled person.
Bond  Knack, skill, the know-how of doing a job or operation.
Bond (a)  A tie for a faggot or bundle of thatching spars made by twisting a withy or hazel stick into a loop.
Bendy hook  Bill hook for cutting thin sticks; a sickle.
Booatt  Boat.
Booee  A boy.
Booee chap  Adolescent youth.
Boogy man  Imaginary being used to frighten children into obedience. *DNE 57.*
Bottom rope  Hauling rope bent on to seine, put into boat first (i.e. at bottom) and carried ashore last on completion of shot.
Bowl dish  Bailer, bowl or large basin with wooden handle for bailing.
Braiding  The local cottage industry of net making by hand.
Braiding needle  Wooden shuttle with one end closed round a tongue on which twine for net making was wound.
Brimble  Bramble or blackberry bush.
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<tr>
<td>Broom (to put out the)</td>
<td>A broom hung out of the window supposedly denoted a masculine house needing a woman. May have stemmed from ancient ale-house sign. Cp. DNE 69 (signal of ship for sale).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budder</td>
<td>Butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddery dore</td>
<td>Cider apple, good for eating and cooking, once grown in quantity in Burton area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Carrier for whetstone worn on belt at the back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull at a gecatt (like a)</td>
<td>Like a bull at a gate; to act on impulse, without thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull’s cock</td>
<td>The wild arum; “lords and ladies”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumbye</td>
<td>Bye and bye, later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunt</td>
<td>The fine meshed bag at the centre of a seine net; also known as “hose”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgoo</td>
<td>Scum on the sea, dirty water, floating sewage. DNE 75.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burry</td>
<td>Berry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burton knot</td>
<td>Knot used in braiding meshes, said not to slip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burton Reel</td>
<td>The local folk dance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burton’s Veast</td>
<td>Annual village fete held in streets in late August; discontinued after World War I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bury</td>
<td>An animal’s hole, rabbit warren.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byett (to)</td>
<td>To beat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caddy’s Cross</td>
<td>St. Catherine’s Cross. Road junction and site of chapel between Burton and Shipton Gorge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling the fresh</td>
<td>The boat’s crew catching the first mackerel of the day would send a boy with a string of mackerel to shout news of the catch through the village.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Car (to)</td>
<td>To carry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cark</td>
<td>Cork, plug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carner Wall</td>
<td>Section of wall at the Post Office and where the men of Burton met and sat to talk. Blacksmith’s Corner at the other end of the flat topped wall was another meeting place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carver seed cyek</td>
<td>Caraway seed cake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cass?</td>
<td>Can you? “Cass ’old these rope?” “Can you hold this rope?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch a crab (to)</td>
<td>To miss a stroke when rowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch a cripple (to)</td>
<td>To have an accident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cave</td>
<td>Storage heap covered with straw and earth for root crops in winter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>Seed of the mallow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cheese  Mixture of apple pomace and straw for making cider.
Cheeul  Child.
Chimley, Factory Chimney. The chimney of the flax mill on the end of the factory warehouse stood as high as the church tower; now converted into cottages.
Chimley  
Chimp  Potato shoot, chit.
Chipper  Cheerful.
Chipples  Spring onions, salad onions.
Chirdern  Children.
Chops  Face, chin. Cp. DNE 259, horse chop(s).
Chuck off (to)  To hint, to tease in a nasty way.
Chuck off (to)  To fish from the beach with a hand line.
Chucking off  Hinting maliciously.
Chuckling off  Fishing from the shore.
Clarty  Heavy (of soil).
Claves  Blue lias cliffs to east of Burton Beach.
Claves End  Cliff’s End, now usually called Cogden Beach.
Clint  Bend over nails etc. with hammer. DNE 100.
Clittys  Lumpy (of soil). Cp. DNE 100.
Clocks  Dandelion seed heads.
Closet  Lavatory, earth loo; often at far end of garden.
Coddle  Tangle of string, ropes etc. DNE 90, cauldle.
Come from Bridport  Anyone leaving a door open was asked if they “came from Bridport?” , the myth being that citizens of that town kept open house, i.e. kept doors open. I have been asked this as far inland as Sherborne.
Connipshun  A fit, seizure.
Cooatt  Coat.
Cooled  Cold, a cold.
Coos thee?  Could you?
Cop 'old  Take, get hold of.
Copse  To cut undergrowth in woodland or weeds (thistles, ragwort, etc.) in pasture.
Crabbied  Upset, ill-tempered.
Crewel  Cowslip.
Crib  To grouse, complain.
Cripse  Brittle. DNE 122, crispy.
Crissmass burry  Holly, holly berry.
Cronick  Dead stems left after gorse was burnt off on the Common of Bindbarrow, gathered by women for firewood. DNE 127, crunnick.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Croopie</td>
<td>To crouch down. Cp. DNE 113, coopy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croopie down (a)</td>
<td>A baby girl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crubb</td>
<td>Ridge of shingle thrown up by the sea on Chesil Beach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cubby hole</td>
<td>Small niche or cupboard, usually barely accessible, in cottage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuddy</td>
<td>The wren.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuddy</td>
<td>In the stern of a lerritt: a cupboard with a sliding door in which tins of grease, spare corks, weights and twine were kept. DNE 127.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuss?</td>
<td>Could you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyek</td>
<td>Cake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damsel</td>
<td>Damson. DNE 133.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dap down</td>
<td>Put down quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dash bagger</td>
<td>The weed fat hen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead Man’s Hole</td>
<td>Gully or ravine in Common in dense thicket of thorns. Believed to have been smugglers’ hiding place for contraband; now filled in. DNE 127.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewberry</td>
<td>Wild raspberry. DNE 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickered</td>
<td>Spotted, splashed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dig back</td>
<td>To fork over ground after lifting a crop, usually of potatoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilyer</td>
<td>Dahlia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimmity (time)</td>
<td>Dusk, dim light.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dip net</td>
<td>Net on iron hoop fitted to pole; used for dipping fish from bunt of seine. DNE 141.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirt</td>
<td>The soil, earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirty</td>
<td>Of sea water, see May Water below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diss?</td>
<td>Did you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disser?</td>
<td>Didn’t you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dooman</td>
<td>Woman, wife. Cp. DNE 359, old woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doorstep</td>
<td>Thick slice of bread.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doughbake</td>
<td>A fool, idiot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dout (to)</td>
<td>To put out fire or flame. DNE 148.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down along</td>
<td>West of Burton. DNE 148, down, sense 1; 593, upalong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down street</td>
<td>That part of Burton below the church and the pound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down to, up to</td>
<td>When referring to a specified person or place, the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Douglas Northover: ‘The Language of Old Burton’ 11*
preposition “to” followed “down” or “up”. DNE 148, 
down, sense 1.

Drain
A path or alley.

Drash
To thresh. Cp. DNE 150.

Drasher
A threshing machine.

Drasher
The thresher shark.

Dribletts bag
Small bag or purse holding petty cash from sale of 
fish, held for crew until share out.

Drott
Throat.

Drow
Throw.

Dru

Drug
Drag. DNE 155.

Drug shoe
Open ended metal shoe placed under rear wheel of 
cart or waggon to act as a brake through friction with 
the road. DNE 155.

Drush
A thrush, song thrush.

Drush in the drott
Phlegm, sore throat, wheeze.

Duckish
Gloomy, dim lighted. DNE 158.

Duck stooen
Flat stone thrown to skip on surface of river or sea.

Duck stooons
Game played with flat stones, the winner being the 
one who made them hop the most times. Cp. DNE 
434, salt-water cake.

Dumble dore
The bumble bee. DNE 159.

Duncow
A dog fish.

Dung pick
Long handled four pronged fork.

Dung pott
Two wheeled cart used to carry manure. Also used to 
carry sand and shingle up Old Cliff Road from Burton 
Beach before modern Beach Road was made. Cp. 
DNE 160.

Dung spur
To spread farmyard manure on fields using dung 
pick.

Dunnecan
Earth closet or toilet usually at the end of garden.

Dunnick
The hedge sparrow.

Dussen?
Don’t you?

Elder blooth
The blossom of the elder bush or tree used to make a 

Elder burry
The fruit of the elder bush or tree much used for wine 
making.

Eldrott
Hemlock. Cp. DNE 163, eltrot, embloch. Boys made 
toys from its hollow stems; it was also fed to tame 
rabbits in hutchies.
Pour cider from stone jar into cup.
The elm tree or its timber.
He, she. This form of speech peculiar to area around Bridport. Cp. *DNE* 163, en; 591, un.
An ant.
An ant hill.
To empty. *DNE* 163.
It, him. *DNE* 591.
A cough or croak.
Any bronchial illness.
The eft or newt.
The pond full of efts or newts which was in the field where Hive Close is now.
The mill below the church, used as a garage. Once employed up to sixty people.
The bell used to call workers to the factory.
To refold spread seine to accelerate drying.
Fine, painstaking work.
A fish buyer.
The green outside Girt House where five elm trees stood.
First hoeing of potatoes after planting.
To hurry, scurry, fly.
Butterfly or moth.
Flower border against cottage wall which was a source of pride for the housewife.
The flea beetle which attacked the leaves of the *Brassica* family.
The weighted rope along the bottom of a seine or net. *DNE* 196, sense 2.
A finch.
Deep ditch at bottom of Kennon supposed to be haunted by a headless horseman. Probably a smugglers' hide.
Jingle much spoken at one time:

Gadger’s Luck has turned at last
Gadger’s Gold has turned to brass.
It means that the Gaugers or Preventative men
(Customs and Excise) slipped up and someone got away with smuggling.

Gap (The) Break in hills at Swyre used as fishing mark. Cp. DNE 211.

Geeatt Gate.

Gee, gid Give, gave.

Giddon wi! Get on with you! Rubbish!


Gipsies The flowers of fools parsley.

Girt Big, large.

Girt Gulch Indentation in the Claves just east of the Hive (Burton Beach). DNE 230, gulch.

Girt Rock Large flat rock imbedded in shingle under cliffs between Hive and Freshwater.

Girt stick Piece of timber, large piece of wood. Cp. DNE 533, stick: A timber-tree; the trunk of a tree used for various building purposes.

Glane, glaney To smirk, smile. DNE 216 glean.

Glate An oily patch of sea usually denoting presence of herring or pilchards.


Glutcher To swallow. DNE 217.

Glutcher The throat, Adam’s apple.

Goin da baid vish The skate or thornback, thought to have aphrodisiacal qualities.


Gollop To gulp, swallow.

Goo To go.

Gookoo The cuckoo.

Goord Rod, pole or perch; land measurement.

Got the bond To understand how to do a job; to be skilled at something.

Graft A long-handled spade used for digging out clay.

Granfer griggle Early purple orchid.

Green (The) The area between Chesil Beach and pastures at the Hive and beyond Claves End, a harbouring place for boats in the winter.

Griddle Metal grid attached to bars of cottage cooking ranges used for cooking herrings etc.

Griddle cyeks Unleavened flat pastry cooked on griddle. Sometimes cooked with herrings so that cakes absorbed oil dripping from the fish.
Grizzle
To whine, complain.
Grizzle guts
A whining child, a grouser.
Groaner
A big catch of fish in seine.
Growler
A nasty sea; sea breaking heavily onto beach Cp. DNE 228, piece of floating ice . . .
Ground
A field. Often with owner’s or tenant’s name in front as “Charley Moore’s ground”. Cp. DNE 227, sense 2.
Grounder
Gudder
A drain or catchpit.
Guddle
Drink thirstily. DNE 234, guttle.
Guddle guts
A greedy drinker, a toper.
Guzzle
To drink noisily, to booze.
Guzzle
Booze, usually cider. To be “on the guzzle” was to be “on a drinking spree”.
Gwoyle
Ravine or gully used by smugglers to hide contraband.
Harbour
West Bay, the next community to the west on the coast.
Harbour veller
West Bay fisherman.
Harp
To nag, keep on about some subject.
Hatch
A solid gate, a sluice gate. Factory Hatches were the entrance gates to the Mill. Back Hatches and Garden Hatch were sluice gates controlling the flow of water to water-wheels and turbines used in local flax spinning industry.
Hay pick
A long-handled, two pronged fork. DNE 246.
Hay rake
Wooden rake used at one time for raking mown grass.
Heart Aker
Clay Hill allotment gardens which were west of Beach Road and of heavy clay soil.
Hearth-stooen
Lumps of natural chalk used for whitening the hearth and sides of the front door steps.
Heed
The head.
Heft
To lift.
Heller
A tearaway, imp, rascal.
Heller
A bad thing, trouble.
Het off
To set off in a hurry.
Het up
Upset, angry.
Hive (The)
Burton Beach.
Holing
Fish, such as bass, rolling so as just to break the surface of the sea.
Holler, holley
Holler
Hoot owl
Hop (Threepenny)
Hose
Hoss daisy
Hovel
Hunderd
Hurrin
Hurrin gall
Idee
Idee ole
Idge
Idge carpenter
Ill
Ill trap
I low zoo I spec
Imige
In tow
Jacker
Jacko’s about
Jack’s Hole
Jar (the)
Jenny
Jurrymyer
Johner
Joner
Jonnick
Jook
Jook’s Bridge

To shout, cry out. Cp. DNE 256.
A dip in the ground.
The tawny owl.
A dance, a barn dance, usually to the music of concertina and tambourine.
The fine net in the centre of a seine. i.e. the bunt.
The ox eye daisy.
A shed for cattle. DNE 261.
A hundred; mackerel were sold by the hundred.
The herring.
Young herring, often found amongst whitebait and chased by mackerel etc.
To hide.
A hiding place. DNE 253, hidey-hole.
A hedge.
A hedger.
The eel.
An eel trap made of a sack with slitted sides and fitted with straw and mackerel innards, sunk in the river on the end of a rope. Eels entered through the slits which closed when rope was pulled.
I believe.
Wicked person, a naughty child.
Accompanying, partnering in mischief, etc. Cp. DNE 571, toll.
A jackdaw.
There’s been a frost.
Large crevice in the cliff just west of the Hive.
A stoneware jar, usually of ten quarts capacity, invariably attended any celebration of hot work, i.e. a good catch of fish, the share out, haymaking and harvest. Contents usually cider. DNE 274.
The wren.
A chamber pot.
The peeler or swimming crab.
Jonah, a person attended by ill luck, i.e. a fisherman who caught no fish. Cp. DNE 278 jinker, 280 jone.
True, the truth. DNE 280.
“The Duke”, William Symes, the village carrier, died 1922, known as a petty tyrant.
The bridge in the main street over the River Bride near “the Duke’s” cottage which replaced a bridge.
washed away by floodwater at the turn of the century.

Kick up  To throw a tantrum.
Kiddle    A kettle, sometimes a teapot.
Killick   A large stone picked off the beach and used as an anchor. *DNE* 285.
Killick rope  The line attached to the killick.
Killick stoolen  An oval stone suitable for a killick.
Killick    To anchor.
Kisses    The seeds of the burdock.
Knapp     Small hill or rise in the road. *DNE* 287.
Kwirk     Grouse or nag incessantly.
Laces     Round pieces of wood or cane around which twine was knotted in net braiding. The diameter of the lace determined the size of mesh. *DNE* 298, last.
Lanches   Lynchets, ridges in fields denoting ancient cultivations. Examples can be seen on Burton Cliff.
Lardy     Slippery, greasy (of persons).
Launty    An attempt, try. To have a launty was to shoot a net in the hope of catching fish.
Lawrence is about Someone is red of face after a drinking session.
Ledd'n bide Leave it (him) alone.
Left      Left, to leave. *DNE* 302.
Lert      The Portland lerritt, which was the main seine fishing boat used on Chesil Beach.
Less      Let us.
Liddle    Little, small.
Lie       Direction, east or west, in which boat turned when making a shot at venture or determined by the direction of a shoal when shooting "stray".
Lie       Place where fish is swimming, when visible, especially in case of trout in river.
Lie to    Wait afloat with line ashore for fish to show.
Linnee    A lean-to shed. *DNE* 306.
Linnets   Folds in the arms or sweeps of a seine, pulled out when net is coming ashore to drive fish into bunt. *DNE* 305.
Longnose  The gar fish.
Look zee  Take a look, look.
Lop
A broken surfaced sea. DNE 314.

Lopmint
An allotment garden; the allotments at Clay Hill in particular.

Low
Allow, believe.

Lucky stooen
A stone with a hole right through. Hung on bows of boats and inside cottage doors to avert the evil eye. Cp. DNE 316 lucky-rock.

Lumb
Loom on an oar used with thole pins. DNE 316.

Lummix
An idiot, a silly person.

Mackel
The mackerel.

Mackel bird
The common tern. DNE 318, mackerel-bird.

Mackel drail
Spinner used for catching mackerel with a line before the innovation of feather lines.

Madder
Matter, e.g. “Woss the madder?”—“What’s the matter?”

Madder
The pus from a septic wound.

Maggie
The magpie.

Maid
A girl, a daughter. DNE 319.

Make (of sea)
Become rough. DNE 321, sense 3b.

Marks
Landmarks used to determine position of fishing grounds. DNE 323.

Marr, marr marnin
Tomorrow, tomorrow morning. Cp. DNE 593, valentine.

Mayflowers
The garlands of flowers caried by children on Garland Day, May 12th. The day ended in a procession to the beach where a religious service was held to bless the harvest of the sea.

Mayflower Song
The traditional song sung by children round the houses on Garland Day morning:

- Beautiful May, so fair so bright
- Starting forth from wintery night
- As to the heavens the lovely stars
- So to the earth these flowerlets are
- Beautiful May, flowery May,
- Queen of the Seasons, Beautiful May.

May water
Dirty water on the sea in the spring of the year. Water devoid of plankton, therefore no fish. Believed to be caused by changes in water temperature. DNE 142, dirty.

Mazed
Bewildered, flummoxed. DNE 326.

Messengers
Small clouds appearing in a cloudless sky, presaging wind and/or rain.
Mind
To remember; to look after, tend. *DNE* 329.
Minny
The minnow.
Minny pond
A pool in the river where minnows were always abundant.
Mischee
Mischief.
Mischee boooses
Mischievous, naughty boys.
Mixen
Mock
A dry or rotten stump of a tree or bush, usually in a hedge.
Monge
To chew. *DNE* 338.
Monge
Lunch.
Monkey’s birthday
Rain and sunshine at the same time.
Mores
Roots of plants, trees, etc. *DNE* 333, more.
Mossel
Small piece of, morsel, a little of.
Mote
Another very local name for a hedge sparrow. Cp. *DNE* 334.
Mote
A hollow straw used for drinking.
Mumbly stooen
A crumbling stone, quarried locally, a soft oolite full of fossils and liable to crumble after a time when exposed to the weather.
Mump
Grunt or grumble.
Na gutted
Na gutted quarter
The North West, so called because it was thought that crops would not grow in the cold nor fish be present in the sea, therefore villagers would go hungry.
Nammett
Nar
No. *DNE* 341, ne’er.
Narn
None, nothing. *DNE* 340.
Nary
Neither.
Natch
A notch. *DNE* 353, notch.
Natch er no natch
A game of pitch and toss played by impoverished fishermen using a penknife with a mark on one side in lieu of coinage, settling up when in funds.
Needle
A braiding needle or shuttle used in making nets. *DNE* 288, knitting.
Nestle-tripe
The smallest piglet of a litter; a small child or person. Cp. *DNE* 355, nuzzle-tripe.
Niddles
Stinging nettles.
Night owl
Person addicted to staying up late; a nocturnal prowler.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nish, nesh</td>
<td>Tender, soft (mostly of food), <em>DNE</em> 349.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitch</td>
<td>A bundle or faggot. <em>DNE</em> 287, knitch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nosey weather</td>
<td>Very cold and windy period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nosset</td>
<td>A sweetmeat, a luxury or delicacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not no</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuddick</td>
<td>A large lump of wood. <em>Cp. DNE</em> 352, small, bare, rounded hill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nussle up</td>
<td>To nestle, get close to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okkerd</td>
<td>Awkward, clumsy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On da goo</td>
<td>To carry on, to continue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oo ah</td>
<td>Oh yes (often used in a sarcastic or derogatory way).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ood</td>
<td>Wood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ood</td>
<td>Would.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oos, oot</td>
<td>Will you, would you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oot thee?</td>
<td>Who are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op vrog</td>
<td>A frog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ope seine</td>
<td>A seine put in the sea with one arm ashore and the other not, making a trap for shoaling fish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over right</td>
<td>Across from, near, opposite. <em>DNE</em> 365, overright.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ow at? Ow be?</td>
<td>How are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>The person owning a seine fishing boat; not always an active fisherman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm</td>
<td>A fingerless hand cover made of leather or thick rubber to protect the palm of the hand. <em>DNE</em> 366.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td>The caterpillar or larva feeding on food crops, usually that of the cabbage white butterfly. <em>DNE</em> 367.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pank</td>
<td>To pant or gasp. <em>DNE</em> 368.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panshards</td>
<td>Broken crockery or glass. <em>DNE</em> 368.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panshard Night</td>
<td>It was a custom on Halloween to throw broken crockery into doorways and under windows then run away chanting:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It's Panshard Night tonight!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It's Panshard Night tonight!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam and Eve and Pinch-me-tight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It's Panshard Night tonight!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish Pump</td>
<td>The green near the Library and Village Hall where the village pump stood till mains water was brought in 1912 after a severe outbreak of scarlet fever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parley of birds</td>
<td>Numbers of noisy sea birds congregating at sea when shoals of fish are present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peck</td>
<td>A small spot. <em>DNE</em> 373.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Douglas Northover: ‘The Language of Old Burton’ 21

Picket

High point of the cliff.

Pigs’ tiddies

Small potatoes which were gathered and cooked for pigs. *DNE* 558, tatie, tiddy.

Plim

To swell (of wood). *DNE* 383.

Pluscher

Green rod laid to thicken a hedge.

Ply

To bend. *DNE* 384.

Polly wash-dish

The pied wagtail.

Portland stroke

When oarsmen are not rowing together; this would be a sarcastic comment.

Prior cork

A small buoy attached to the centre of a seine to show where the bunt is when fishing. Cp. *DNE* 393.

Promp

A clothes prop made of wood.

Proper

The correct way, right, real.

Prong

A hay fork. *DNE* 392.

Pummy

Apple pomace used for cider making. *DNE* 395.

Pummy, smashed to

Broken into small pieces. *DNE* 395.

Pummy stoen

White stone, used for washing stone floors, etc.

Pups

Septic sores from salt water. *DNE* 397.

Purdy

Pretty.

Purdy work

A performance, a funny event, sometimes skullduggery.

Quarr


Quarters (of seine)

The fine meshed net on each side of the bunt.

Quatt

To squat, to sit, to stay in one place. *DNE* 398.

Quatt

Place where a rabbit or hare sits more or less hidden in an open field.

Queer man

Local code name for an illegal catch, e.g. salmon, game.

Quiddle, squiddle

Young cuttlefish or squid caught in the seine.

Quizzle

To pry, to question.

Rafty


Ravel

A thread of wood hanging from a garment. *DNE* 407.

Raw bait

Whitebait or other fish in early stages of growth.

Razzer off

Slice or cut in slices.

Reckon

To add up, to work out sums.

Redd, rudd

Dark patch of whitebait massed in sea near shore.

Reeve string

The string holding the bunt together which would be cut to let go unwanted fish. *DNE* 409.

Rhubarb weed

Winter heliotrope which grows in damp; clayey places locally.

Rick pound

A walled-in enclosure where hay ricks were built so as to be out of reach of cattle and sheep. Cp. *DNE* 389-90, pound.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roadster</td>
<td>A tramp or vagrant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocks Nose</td>
<td>Point of rock ledge in the sea west of the Hive and nearest to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roddle</td>
<td>To rattle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Walls</td>
<td>Dry stone walls found on high ground in vicinity. Built with courses at an angle of forty five degrees to the horizontal. One local authority said that they may have been built by Celts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rompse</td>
<td>To skylark, to play around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rompse</td>
<td>A game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rough (to be)</td>
<td>To be ill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round hoe</td>
<td>To earth up potatoes or other crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roush ashore</td>
<td>To pull a line or a net with a dash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rozzum</td>
<td>An amusing story, a joke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudge</td>
<td>A ridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudge (winter)</td>
<td>The highest high water mark on the beach above which boats were pulled in winter and bad weather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudge Lane</td>
<td>The lane along the ridge from St. Catherine's Cross to Bennet Hill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruggle</td>
<td>To roll.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run</td>
<td>The flow of water to the beach after a wave breaks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saeen</td>
<td>A seine net.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saeen booee</td>
<td>A seine boy who was responsible for the ropes and laying timbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmon peel</td>
<td>Variety of trout, sea trout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salted in</td>
<td>Of fish packed in brine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scadders</td>
<td>Fish scales adhering to clothes or boat indicating that a catch had been made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School river</td>
<td>Waterway flowing past the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Bridge</td>
<td>Bridge over the waterway outside the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scolerd</td>
<td>A clever or educated person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screech owl</td>
<td>The little owl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screws (the)</td>
<td>Rheumatism, lumbago, sciatica or similar pain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scroff vish</td>
<td>Fish, sometimes choice, sold by auction to members of the crew, the money being placed in the dribblets bag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrunch</td>
<td>To eat noisily, grind, crush.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea houses</td>
<td>Sheds which stood on the green at the Hive. Used for storing nets etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demolished in 1940 to give field of fire for coast defences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seine stooens | Round, flat stones with a hole drilled through which were tied to foot rope for weights.
---|---
Sharker | A species of loach found in River Bride.
She | A woman (especially a wife referred to by her husband). *DNE* 467.
Shek | To shake or tremble.
Shek o’ vish | Odd fish or so breaking surface of the sea. Might indicate shoal below.
Sher | A share, to share. Fishing was done on a share basis. When using a lerritt and a seine six shares were allocated to the owner, one share each to members of the crew. Boys got half a share until they could pull an oar. When using a square stern boat the owner got three shares, the crew one each. *DNE* 466.
Shered out | Ineligible for a share. If absent when a catch was made a crew member got nothing.
Shillet | Shale, flat stones found in local clay subsoil.
Shimmy | Chemise.
Shimmy shek | To tremble with shock, to shake with fright or excitement.
Shimmy shirt | A vest, undershirt.
Shinny up | To climb, to scale. Cp. *DNE* 471.
Shomble | To shamble, plod heavily.
Shomp | To tramp, to trudge.
Shoot | To put out seine net to catch fish. *DNE* 474.
Shore line | Wooden weighted line attached to the top rope of a seine thrown from the boat to the shore at the start of a shot. Cp. *DNE* 475, shorefast.
Shot (to have a) | To shoot or put out the seine for catching fish. *DNE* 474.
Shove off | To launch a boat.
Shrammed | Very cold, frozen to the marrow. Cp. *DNE* 441, scrammed.
Sidling ground | A slope or sloping ground. *DNE* 480, sideling.
Skewer | A wave rolling along the shore, usually in an east wind, making it difficult to launch or land a boat.
Skimmished | Drunk, inebriated.
Skiver | A skewer or pointed stick used for fixing bait in lobster pots. *DNE* 489.
Skowsher
The horse mackerel.

Slack
A period between tides when there is little movement of the sea. *DNE* 490.

Slatch
To dilute with water, to wash down.

Slings
Large meshed net of strong cordage put round the bunt when a heavy catch has been made to support the seine and prevent it from breaking. *Cp. DNE* 493, sling.

Sloe
The sloe, fruit of blackthorn.

Slummick
A slattern, slut, untidy person.

Slummicky
Untidy, slatternly. *DNE* 496, slommocky.

Smacko over the Bill (blowing)
Said of an east wind or south-easterly wind which caused skewers.

Smarm
To spread, to smudge.

Smart, smeart
Active, robust, healthy (of men), not necessarily smart of dress. *DNE* 498.

Smert
To sting (of wounds) to be painful. *DNE* 499.

Smop up
To clear one’s plate etc. To wipe plate clean with a piece of bread, to drink up the last of a liquid. *Cp. DNE* 333, mop, smop.

Smooch round
To lurk, to prowl furtively. *DNE* 500, smouch.

Snag
A small type of sloe, the berry of the whitethorn.

Snakes burry
Seed pods and berries of the stinking iris.

Snaky wind
A cold, biting wind.

Snar buckle
A tangle, a snarled up line. *DNE* 500.

Sooky
A whining, nagging woman. *DNE* 505.

Spadger
The house sparrow.

Spell
A rest from work [cp. *Straight back* below]. *DNE* 509.

Spit and tramboline
Wooden device of a pole and crosspiece with a socket, fitted together in a “T” shape for drying the bunt of a seine net when not in use. Perhaps derived from “tramplehead”.

Spradde
To spread, spread over, to ride astride. *DNE* 513.

Sprayed
Having a rash, raw. *DNE* 513.

Spuddle about
To muddle, fuss, work aimlessly. *Cp. DNE* 518.

Spur
To spread (of manure etc.).

Squaille
To throw missiles, e.g. men squailed with pebbles the open end of an ope seine to keep fish inside the net.

Square stern
A dinghy.

Squat
To squash. *DNE* 521.

Stall
Cover to protect finger or thumb. *DNE* 527.

Stanchion
A wooden support for a seat in a boat. *DNE* 528.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Stap</td>
<td>A rabbit’s nest, usually found in an open field, lined with fur and dried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>grass. Visited by the doe at night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start rope</td>
<td>A painter, a rope for hauling a boat up the beach, attached to the bow or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stick</td>
<td>Firewood, kindling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DNE 533.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stickers</td>
<td>Pea or bean sticks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stick jaw</td>
<td>Toffee, treacle toffee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stiffle</td>
<td>To choke, strangle, to suffocate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DNE 534.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stooen</td>
<td>A stone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stooen drush</td>
<td>A song thrush (which breaks snails on stones).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stooen rush ground</td>
<td>Fields or gardens where natural stone is plentiful in the soil. “Ground what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do grow stooens”, the old folk used to say. Small children were employed to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pick up stones at a penny (old money) per day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stool</td>
<td>A cover for a thumb [cp. stall above].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight back</td>
<td>A rest, a spell from work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straw mote</td>
<td>A drinking straw. Cq. DNE 334.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stray</td>
<td>When mackerel broke the surface of the sea in pursuit of bait they were said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to stray. The cry of “Mackel stray!” could almost depopulate the village of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>men at one time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stray shot</td>
<td>When mackerel were “straying” the net was usually shot as an “ope seine”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>often without using top or bottom ropes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stud</td>
<td>To think about, study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DNE 543.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swift, swifter</td>
<td>The swift or swifter was a wooden device on which skeins of twine or string</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>were put to facilitate the tight filling of needles or winding into balls for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>net braiding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tack</td>
<td>To hurry on foot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tack</td>
<td>One’s gear, clothes, personal belongings. DNE 553.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tack it over</td>
<td>To cast seine net from a boat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacker</td>
<td>A small child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacker grass</td>
<td>A form of sedge grass growing in matted clumps on heavy soil. Widespread on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burton Common. Difficult to cut or remove by hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taffety</td>
<td>Finnicky, choosy, as to food etc. DNE 553.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taffle</td>
<td>Tangled mix-up of rope etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taffle</td>
<td>To create a tangle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taightly</td>
<td>Lying awkwardly, unbalanced, unsteady.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tally</td>
<td>To set off in a hurry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tally</td>
<td>Label attached to parcels of twine sent out by a net-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
making firm to a braider giving details of nets to be made.

**Tally vish**
One fish was put aside after each hundred had been counted as a check on the number of hundreds caught. *DNE 556.*

**Tallywack**
A rascal, rogue. *DNE 557.*

**Teem seine**
A small seine net used with a square stern for teeming, i.e. fishing close to the shore. Sometimes weighted with lengths of chain to catch bottom feeding plaice, sole, etc.

**Thee**
You, still in common usage amongst old natives of Burton.

**Thees**
You do, e.g. "Thees know" is "you know" or "you do know".

**Theet**
You are, e.g. "Theet vrom Burton?"

**These yer**
This.

**Thik**
That.

**Thik there**
That, that one.

**Third wall**
A drystone wall running down to the green at the back of Chesil Beach between West Bexington and Cogden farms; the unofficial limit for Burton fishermen, there being rivalry between fishermen of neighbouring parishes along Chesil Beach.

**Thole pins**
Metal pins attached to the sides of boats over which the looms of oars fitted enabling fishermen to haul pots, long lines, etc. without shipping oars. *DNE 571.*

**Thornback**
The skate or ray. *DNE 562.*

**Tidden**
It is not, sometimes "there are not".

**Tidderfer la**
Finery, gaudy dress.

**Tiddly**
Tiny.

**Tiddy**
The potato.

**Tiddy balls**
The fruit of the potato, round seedcases produced on the haulm. Thought locally to be a sign of a good crop.

**Tiddy drill**
The trench in which potatoes are planted, also the troughs between lines of earthed up potatoes. The crop was said to "cover drill" when the lines of adjoining rows met.

**Timmen Bridge**
The Timber Bridge, replaced by a concrete bridge in 1937.

**Tollet**
An attic, a loft.
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Tooad
A toad, also used when pitying a person who was referred to as “a pore wole tooad”.

Towering
Seabirds soaring and circling over the sea denoting the presence of fish.

Track
One’s state of health, orderliness. *DNE* 576.

Traipse
To tramp or travel.

Trees
Pieces of wood for sliding boats on beach.

Trig
To wedge, to support anything with wedges. *Cp. DNE* 583, trigger.

Trigger
A small stone or stone flake used to wedge the face stones of a drystone wall so that they do not move.

Triggers
Wooden devices for holding a boat on even keel when ashore. *Cp. DNE* 583.

Trimble
To tremble, to shudder.

Troh
Trough, dip between waves.

Trott
A long line with many hooks anchored and buoyed.

Trousers down to boots
Dressed up in best clothes.

Trousers down to boots tidderfer la
Overdressed.

Truddle on
To trudge, to plod onward.

Truggle
To roll anything, e.g. children’s iron hoops, barrels, etc. *Cp. DNE* 585, truckle.

Tump
Hillock, bump on level of the soil etc.

Tunnegar
A funnel.

Turble
Terrible.

Turble pore
Sickly, very ill. *DNE* 560, terrible.

Turd bird
The skua, so called because it eats fish that it forces other seabirds to disgorge. *Cp. DNE* 160, dung bird.

Turmot
Turnip.

Turmot hoe
Hoe for singling etc. usually forged locally with two tines and detachable blade, sometimes used by same family for generations.

Twinnick
A twig or wand.

Twite
To nag, to bring up the past, to taunt. *DNE* 591.

Uncle’s bus
The ancient Ford bus with sit-around seats run by the late William (Uncle) Smith, the village carrier.

Union
The workhouse. Old villagers had a dread of being put in the workhouse which stemmed from memories of tales told of the terrible times for agricultural workers in the early nineteenth century.

Up along

Up-righter
A baby boy.
Up there (of wind) Off shore or northerly wind.
Up to Doing, e.g. “Wot be up to?” meaning “What are you doing?”
Up top o’ On the top of, above.
Us Often meant “me”.
Veast A feast. This usually meant Burton Veast celebrated in late August.
Veller A man, a fellow, preceded by a placename meant a citizen of that place, e.g. “A West Bay veller”.
Venture shot To shoot at a venture, i.e. to fish with a seine when no fish had been seen. Cp. DNE 474, shoot.
Vessel A ship, a ship calling at West Bay.
Villers The two red brick villas on the cliff.
Villers Stones used to fill the interstices inside a drystone wall. Cp. DNE 174, filler.
Vind To find.
Vir tree A fir tree, used for any conifer including cypresses. DNE 594, var.
Virk A fork in a tree or bush, the lower part of the human body. DNE 198, fork.
Vly The flea beetle.
Voller, volley To follow. DNE 195, follow, folly.
Vore Before.
Vox mould Fox mould—a kind of green sand.
Vresh (The) The first mackerel of the day caught off the beach in a net.
Vrozzled Frozen.
Vur Far.
Vurr A furrow.
Vurrel The ferrule used on tool stems.
Vurriner A stranger, a newcomer to the village.
Vust 'ole The dip in the bed of the sea where waves break onto the shore. This can be quite a drop and is dangerous to non-swimmers, especially children.
Waarm Warm, hot.
Wad o' vish A big catch of fish. DNE 597.
Want A mole.
Want 'eaves The heaps of soil thrown out by tunnelling moles.
Want's run The mole’s tunnel beneath the surface of the ground.
Warped up Drunk, inebriated.
Wellum The rings on the surface of the water made by a fish.
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Wer, wer be? Where, “Where are you?”
Wer to Where? (of place).
West Bay gardens The gardens at the Freshwater end of Southover allotments. At one time used by West Bay men (then in Burton Parish) and reputed to have been used to grow cabbage plants which were taken to Newfoundland wrapped in wet sacking for replanting to provide fresh greens for the crews of the fishing boats.

Whistle pipe The fflagolet or penny whistle. *DNE* 609.
Whum Home.
Willer Willow.
Winder A window.
Windley Spindly, thin, weak looking. *DNE* 613.
Wing To throw.
Wink up To wind (of engines, motors, etc.).
Winnick To utter a sharp cry, to neigh.
Wip Wop The local name for *The Bridport News*, a local newspaper.

Wire into To work hard at a task.
Withy The osier. Withy beds or plantations of osiers were made to provide materials for lobster pots and were carefully tended. *DNE* 617.

Withy wind The convulvulus or bindweed.
Woak The oak tree, oak wood.
Wodder Water, the sea.
Woddery all An empty net, nothing caught. *DNE* 601, water haul.

Wold, wole, would Old, ancient.
Wold volk The ancient or former inhabitants of Burton.
Womble To stroll, to meander, to totter.
Woos? woot’? Will you?
Wopse Wasp. *DNE* 619.
Worm Could mean not only the earthworm, but slugs, millipedes, etc. attacking root vegetables, especially potatoes.

Worm eat Eaten by worms, usually potatoes eaten by slugs etc.
Woss got? What have you got?
Woss meeyan? What do you mean?
Woss on? What is happening?
Wot be at? Wot be on? What are you doing?
Driftwood on the beach.

Collector of driftwood from the beach. Formerly a wrecker, looter of shipwrecks.

Collecting driftwood and other jetsam. This was and still is a useful and cheap way of getting timber for use in building etc.

Luring ships to founder on the beach and then looting them. Burton men were engaged in this trade, together with smuggling. Lanterns were reputedly placed on the hills to decoy ships ashore. DNE 620.

To worry.

To pick up, to bundle up for carrying. DNE 621.

Yellow.

The common toadflax.

A thin lanky person.

The bindings of twine joining the two lines at the top and bottom of a seine net to fix the corks and weights. DNE 622.

Bindings of string, cord or leather straps around the trouser legs below the knees to prevent flapping and collecting mud etc.

To hear, to listen.

Here.

Ears.

Here you are.

Ears, earholes.

Here, in this place.

Earwigs.

Yesterday.

To lift, to lever.

Young.


Ewe, sheep.

A sheep pasture.


Seem, appear to be.

So.

So are you.

Sour, acid tasting.

The common sorrel.

Zyder  Cider, the drink of fishermen and farm workers. Once made at the main farms of the village and at Cowper's Lodge which stood on the north slope of North Hill amongst the Budderydore trees.

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Linguistic Manipulation in the Punch and Judy Script

Thomas A. Green

Introduction

Crosstalk, punning, and verbal repartee inevitably develop whenever dramatic dialogue turns comic. The give and take and give again built into dramatic genres from Aristophanes’ comedies through knock-knock jokes exploits the situation of personalities in conflict which both serves to define drama “proper” and advances development of the plot. Within the similar development based on comic personae in agonistic relationships generic subgroups appear.

Characterising each of these subtypes is beyond the scope of this analysis, but certain relationships are apparent even to the casual observer. For example, the punning crosstalk which develops between tricksters and bumbling authority figures can be encountered in English-speaking tradition (among other places) in the Mummers’ Play, vaudeville, and in the Punch and Judy show. Yet within similarity divergence appears. The three types cited may be contrasted in terms of the milieux of performer(s) and audience (the folk Mummers’ Play versus the popular music hall entertainment), times of performance, animate objects versus live actors, or according to a multitude of other polarities.

One attribute in particular sets Punch apart—the systematic use of voice modification. The existence of any unique attribute is rarely left unexploited by performers. Such is the case with voice modification. The evidence indicates that the majority of instances of verbal humour based in linguistic structure in the Punch and Judy plays depend on the exploitation of phonology (the sound system) of English rather than on morphology (word construction) or syntax (word ordering in utterance).
Phonological Devices

As noted, the majority of instances of linguistic manipulation in the Punch and Judy shows arise at the phonological level of language. This disproportionate reliance on aural play may well be related to the distinctive convention of the “swazzle”.

The swazzle is an elliptical instrument made, according to Percy Press, Jr., “of German nickel, or stainless steel, or silver . . . something that is rustproof” enclosing a strip of tape and small enough to fit against the roof of the puppeteer’s mouth (Interview. 6/1980). The device permits the performer to create the distinctive squeaking voice of Punch which has become obligatory to the tradition. Although a nineteenth century Punchman claims that “with them in the mouth we can pronounce each word as plain as a parson” (in Speaight, 1970: 121) the use of swazzles and similar voice modifiers (see Proschan 1981) tends to encourage a simplification of linguistic systems, especially the phonemic inventory. For example, the kathputli “language” of the Rajastani marionettes relies on suprasegmentals (i.e., the juncture, stress, and tonal qualities of utterances) to produce a variety of puppet speech which Bil Baird has characterised as “a wordless vocabulary of sounds” (1965: 47).

We have, as a result, a scaled-down system in which redundancy, in the sense of “the presence of any detail . . . other than the minimum necessary for the representation or transmission of the required information” (Rosie 1973: 60), is eliminated. Redundancy in this sense, therefore, differs from the use of the term to allude to unnecessary repetition. On the contrary, it is redundancy which permits the interpretation of speech even when the message becomes partially obscured. Thus, for example, English speakers are likely to be able to translate as “scrape” the sequence [krep] despite the omission of the first phoneme /s/ because of the language’s phonological principles. Specifically, no word in English may begin with more than three consonants, and then only if the first is /s/. In such instances, the second consonant must be /t/, /p/, or /k/, and the third /r/ or /l/. Phonological constraints, therefore, provide functional redundancies in any natural language and are but one of a variety of features which serve to control ambiguity. On the other hand, the inherent ambiguity of languages increases with the reduction of the redundancy built into any natural system.

The use of a swazzle, however, introduces inevitable distortions into puppet speech. An example of the results of distortion is the name given to
Manipulation in the Punch and Judy Script

Punch's wife. The name Judy, Speaight proposes, replaced the more venerable Joan largely due to the difficulties of pronouncing the latter with a swazzle in place. With the restrictions imposed by this reduced system, however, came opportunities for the development of artful wordplay.

In performance, Punch wields verbal ambiguity with the same proficiency, and generally to the same ends as he wields his ubiquitous slapstick. He uses punning and other artful speech to confound, enrage, and defeat a range of adversaries, although he is often, in turn, the victim of such sorties. These plays on words may be characterised in terms of their precise linguistic features.

The following examples represent cases of simple lexical ambiguity: situations in which a single lexical item (i.e., a word) may be susceptible to more than one interpretation and in which each interpretation falls into the same syntactic class (e.g., noun, verb).

PUNCH: A kiss, a smack, my pretty little Judy.
JUDY: [Smacks him] Well, here's a smack on the kisser.

(Emberley, 1965: 9)

At the outset it is useful to note that although this example is taken from a particular text, it (and most of the other instances cited in the following discussion) is widely found in the tradition. To return to the present discussion, considering only the word smack and excluding other principles such as juncture and stress in Judy's response for a moment, we see that the utterance contains a simple lexical ambiguity. That is, smack may be interpreted as either (1) a kiss, or (2) a blow, but in either interpretation it is classified as a noun.

In another common episode, Punch agrees to settle a dispute regarding the ownership of the dog, Toby, by the toss of a coin.

JONES: You cry.
PUNCH: Head!
JONES: Tail! It's a tail. Come along, Toby; you're mine.
PUNCH: He isn't! He's mine.
JONES: I cried tail.
PUNCH: Then take his tail! I cried head, and you shan't have that!

(Speaight, 1970: 153)

This example provides yet another illustration of lexical ambiguity in that either semantic interpretation of head and tail, anatomical or numismatic, is a noun.

Simple lexical ambiguity is obvious, also, in Punch's typical response to the accusation that he has "broken the laws of the country". To which he
retorts, "Why, I never touched 'em" (Speaight, 1970: 154). Whether break should be interpreted as to violate (a law) or to fragment (an object), break remains a verb and is pronounced in the same fashion. The play on homophony, however, is much less frequent than techniques exploiting the inevitable distortion of sound arising from the use of a swazzle.

The following examples illustrate the principle at work in the overwhelming majority of cases of phonological manipulation in the dialogues of the Punch and Judy shows.

JACK KETCH: (Dictating Punch's gallows confession before he hangs him.)
Ladies and gentlemen.
PUNCH: Ladies and twenty men.
JACK KETCH: Not ladies and twenty men. Ladies and gentlemen.
I have been a wicked man.
PUNCH: I want some bread and jam.
JACK KETCH: Not I want bread and jam. the law has found me guilty.
PUNCH: And the floor is jolly dirty.
JACK KETCH: . . . I must hang by the neck until I'm dead, dead, dead.
PUNCH: Bread, bread, bread.

(Press, 1980)

SCARAMOUCHE: Stop that noise up there.
PUNCH: There are no toys up here!
SCARAMOUCHE: I said, stop that noy-eeze!
PUNCH: I said there are no boy-eeze up here!

(Emberley, 1965: 15)

BEADLE: I am the Beadle, Churchwarden, Overseer, Street-keeper, Turncock, Stipendiary Magistrate, and Beadle of the Parish!
PUNCH: Oh! You are the Beagle, Church-warming-pan, Street-sweeper, Turniptop, Stupendiary Magistrate, and Blackbeetle of the parish?

(Speaight, 1970: 148)

In each of the immediately preceding cases, there is an exploitation of minimal pairs—words differing only in the pronunciation of a single phoneme (e.g., pat/bat). In a reduced system such as that produced by the use of a swazzle, the chances of potential confusion between minimal pairs is heightened considerably.

In the example taken from a transcript of Percy Press's performance, we see how far this potential for distortion may be extended. When one reads this dialogue transcribed by means of standard English orthography, the notion of minimal pairs hardly seems to apply. When reproduced in the phonetic alphabet, however, we perceive some obvious minimal pairs (e.g.,
[flɔː]/[lɔː] (flaw/law)). Moreover, we should note that a significant portion of Punch’s speeches in Press’s performances would be difficult to understand were it not for the gloss provided by Jack Ketch and other of the protagonist’s foils. In fact, the words of Punch’s speech are often characterised as much by patterns of stress and juncture, reminiscent of Bil Baird’s description of kathputli puppet speech, as they are by phonemes of English. Given these realities of performance, we can reasonably explain the features of wit in Punch’s gallows “confession” in terms of minimal pairs.

The example from Emberley’s published script provides a more obvious case of exploitation of minimal pairs. Again, Punch misunderstands (or more likely, feigns misunderstanding), substituting the phoneme /b/ for /n/ in the minimal pair, boys/noise ([boiz]/[noiz]). When Scaramouche tries to utilise juncture and stress to disambiguate, Punch utilises an identical pattern to create another minimal pair. Such studied confusion allows Punch to circumvent Scaramouche’s request.

The final example of the three plays not only with minimal pairs (beadle/beagle, beadle/beetle, stipendiary/stupendiary), but with other features based on contrastive sets sharing central phonemes (e.g., /k/ of keeper > /sw/). Throughout the dialogue we see an aggressive exploitation of the feature of sound distortion which is a by-product of the use of the swazzle.

Another example from Emberley carries the exploitation of minimal pairs an additional step.

PUNCH: Here’s a whack!
JUDY: Here’s a crack!
PUNCH: Here’s a zack!

(Emberley, 1965: 9)

In this portion of the script, we see the principle of the minimal pair in the juxtaposition of words differing only in their initial consonant or consonant cluster. Punch concludes the sequence with a permissible, but nonsensical phonemic sequence /zæk/. By doing so, he pushes the communicative code to potential, but beyond customary, boundaries. The liberties taken here resemble in quality, and perhaps even in kind, his pushing of the boundaries of social codes. Sound distortion in the stereotypes of foreigners is common in the Punch and Judy shows, as the following episode from Emberley’s script demonstrates.

PUNCH: My nose, my nose! [Enter Doctor]
DOCTOR: Yah, Mister Bunch, vere does it hurt?
PUNCH: My nose, kind old Doctor, my pretty little nose.
In this caricature of the German Doctor we observe an exploitation of minimal pairs in both Punch/Bunch and toes/nose. The exploitation of the first pair goes no further than its use as a signifier of the Doctor's foreign accent which, presumably, incorporates voicing in its bilabial stops. The second pair goes further in that it exploits the confusion of the minimal pair for its semantic value beyond its significance as a marker of non-native-speaker English.

Other elements of the Doctor's speech involve differences in one articulatory feature of a consonant similar to the Punch/Bunch distinction. In substituting /f/ for /v/ in haff, the element of voicing is modified (i.e., /v/ is a voiced, labiodental fricative, and /f/ is an unvoiced, labiodental fricative). The Doctor's liddle versus Punch's little changes the element of voicing also; the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ becomes the voiced /d/. The remaining markers of the Doctor's "accent" are the substitutions of the German der for the English the and /v/ for /w/.

To this point the examples presented focus on distortions of English phonology, primarily through play with potentially ambiguous minimal pairs. Other sorts of sound distortions are available as well.

As noted earlier, when quoting Bil Baird, certain forms of puppet speech rely heavily on the juncture and stress patterns of the language variety shared by performers and audiences. In a previous example from Emberley, Punch's call for "A kiss, a smack" which Judy answers with a blow and the taunt "Well, here's a smack on the kisser", was cited for its lexical ambiguity; we see the manipulation of juncture and stress as well. Beyond the lexical ambiguity cited above, the dialogue exploits juncture and stress to create ambiguity at the levels of morphology and syntax of the language. By rearranging the patterns of combination and emphasis of the individual words of Punch's utterance ("a kiss, a smack") they are converted from two nouns and their indefinite articles to become homophonous with the noun kiss plus the derivational suffix er which is in turn used as an adjective to modify the noun smack and produce the sequence a kisser smack.
Given the importance of phonological play in the scripts of Punch and Judy, it is not surprising to find similar devices in the patter used by Punch "professors" to contextualise their performances. For example, on several occasions as he set up his booth, Percy Press, Jr., produced a string of sausages used as a prop in one of the episodes of the play. In doing so he stated, "I call them swasages, because I can't say sausages." His transposition of the phonemes of sausages to produce swasages comprises an instance of metathesis. Therefore, we see that the manipulation of the phonology of English permeates not only the Punch and Judy script, but spills over into the introductory frame of the event.

**Grammatical Devices**

While the exploitation of morphology and syntax, as compared to phonology, in the Punch and Judy tradition is comparatively rare, examples do occur. In fact one of the recurring jokes in the scripts found throughout tradition turns on the manipulation of syntax. The following represents one variant of the dialogue.

OFFICER: I have come to lock you up.
PUNCH: And I've come to knock you down.

The wit in these lines depends on certain features of prepositions as opposed to particles in English.

Words indicating position such as up, over, or down generally function as prepositions. In special cases, however, such as the combinations sew up, look over, and knock down, these take on the function of adverb-like words known as particles. These particles may be subjected grammatically to transformation processes which "shift" them a way from their verbs, as in the lines of dialogue cited above in which up and down have been shifted to the end of their respective sentences. In spite of the shift, the words which are moved continue to function as particles rather than prepositions. In many ways particles in combination with verbs function like compounds or idioms of a language; just as the definitions of shooting star or looking glass are not discernible from an analysis of their components, the combinations of verb and particle are semantically illogical. A literal reading of a combination such as eat up (e.g., John wished to eat up the sandwich) would be inappropriate.

In the set of lines above, a verb particle shift has been applied in order to
bring the particles down and up into confrontation with each other in such a manner as to suggest their potential for operating as prepositions. The minimal pair lock and knock serves to emphasise the similarity between the syntactic structures.

Conclusion

Clearly, linguistic manipulation plays a major role in the humour of Punch and Judy plays. As has been noted, the level of language that has been most productive in these plays is the phonological (the level of sound or actual utterance). Some of these instances of aural play are called forth by the distorted features given to puppeteers’ speech by the use of a swazzle for Punch’s delivery of his lines. Not all of the phonological play at work in the scripts may be explained in this fashion, however. This fact is especially obvious in those cases in which it is not Punch, but some other character, who exploits malleable areas of the language in the service of wit. Is there a relationship between such cases and the convention of sound distortion that has come to be Punch’s trademark?

Any arguments for a connection must be based in speculation, of course, but given the licence to speculate at this juncture, I would argue that a preoccupation with aural distortion necessarily follows from the convention of the swazzle. Certainly, play with minimal pairs, metathesis, and many of the other comic verbal devices described above are not the exclusive property of the Punch and Judy Show. Such linguistic play is at home in dramatic contexts ranging from vaudeville to Shakespeare. I would argue simply that the use of a swazzle tends to foreground the level of sound as an arena for strategic manipulation in the Punch tradition, and once foregrounded, the Punch professors are led to explore the full potential of devices based in the sound system of English.

Notes

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References


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A Nest of Vipers is the fifth and final volume in the Perspectives on Contemporary Legend series and features a selection of the papers presented at the fifth and sixth International Seminars on Contemporary Legend held in Sheffield, 1987 and 1988.

The choice of title reflects the grim nature of the subject matter covered in this volume. Unusually for the Perspectives series, the volume contains no purely theoretical essays but concentrates on the presentation of case-studies of particular legends. All the legends it features are about the darker side of life in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Hence, there are studies of beliefs about ghosts, government conspiracy, assaults on women, rape, mindless violence on the London underground, student suicide, ethnicity and AIDS. In general, though the content of the papers makes for depressing reading, the lively analysis and interpretations offered by the contributors help improve knowledge and understanding of contemporary society.

The contributors, who come from the disciplines of folklore and sociology, are Véronique Campion-Vincent, Frances Cattermole-Tally, Christie Davies, Bill Fox, Mark Glazer, Michael Goss, Paul Smith and Eleanor Wachs.
Apart from the phenomenal influence of traditional ritual performances on modern African literary drama and theatre, another form of the indigenous artistic heritage which has influenced contemporary playwriting and performance in the continent is the folktale tradition. Elsewhere, the present writer draws attention to the folkloric form and content in contemporary Nigerian drama and theatre. While substantial studies have been made of the influence of traditional prose narratives on the African novel and short story writing, little or nothing has been done to show the latter’s influence on modern literary drama and theatre. This is in spite of the early works of anthropologists and folklorists such as Ruth Finnegan who, for instance, says of African prose narratives:

“... stories are often enacted in the sense that, to a greater or small degree, the speech and gestures of their characters are imitated by the narrator, and the action is largely exhibited through dialogue in which the story-teller directly portrays various characters in turn.”

This highlights the dramatic potential and depth of African folktales. Added to this is the fact that the art of storytelling in Africa is a well-worn genre for socio-moral and political education. These dramatic and social potentials are fully embodied in most indigenous travelling theatres and local modern play formations exploring indigenous languages.

More recently, literary dramatists such as Ngugi wa Thiongo, Efua Sutherland, Femi Osofisan and others have effectively utilised the form and theatrical conventions of the folktale tradition. Most especially, Efua Sutherland, in recognition of the immense artistic and dramatic content, as well as the potency of the storytelling medium, has consistently returned to this cultural dramatic form for her plays. For example, through adaptation and modernisation she has successfully translated the traditional “Anansesem”, a storytelling art among the Akan speaking people of Ghana, into an urban
drama. Though principally a domestic activity, the “Anansesem” is a rich source for theatrical expression with its well defined and established convention. This paper discusses in totality the experimental nature of Efua Sutherland’s The Marriage of Anansewa (1975). Focus is placed on the adaptation, modernisation and fidelity to the original Akan source. Also discussed are the socio-political vision, theatrecraft and performance of the play.

Over the years, Efua Sutherland, a Ghanaian playwright, poet and producer, has established herself primarily as an experimentalist per se. Between 1958 and 1961 she founded a programme of experimental theatre, the Ghana Drama Studio in Accra. As a traditional drama activist she has sought to elevate indigenous theatrical practice from its pristine stage to a modern pedestal. Apart from such popular plays, Edufa (1967) and Foriwa (1967), she has written plays in the indigenous language (Akan) for children and adults. One of the unique features of The Marriage of Anansewa is that in her reworking of the indigenous “Anansesem” she gives human form to the original animal characters central to the exploits of the hero, Ananse, which translated means the spider. The totality of the theatrique expression she classifies as Anansegoro. Like the tortoise in most folk traditions in Nigeria, Ananse, the spider, is a trickster, clever and cunning. In both the Anansesem and Anansegoro, it represents a kind of everyman, artistically exaggerated and distorted to serve as a medium for self-examination. Thus, central to the social vision of The Marriage of Anansewa is Sutherland’s exposition and portrayal of the social contradictions, lies, greed, moral depravity and economic exploitation prevalent in most African post-independence cities.

From the plot, Sutherland depicts through the comic idiom the naivety as well as the rascally attempt of Ananse to enrich himself by betrothing his daughter (Anansewa) to several rich suitors simultaneously. To achieve his goal, first he sends his daughter to a secretarial school for prospective brides, while he makes his journey to the four different chiefs. As gifts continue to pour in from the chiefs, problems start unfolding. While the outdooring ceremony of the bride is taking place, dates of payment of the bride price were being fixed simultaneously by the chiefs. Caught in his own web, Ananse solicits the help of Christie, his lover, into tricking his mother and aunt, who were on a visit from the village, to return home, on the pretext that enemies have burnt down the family cocoa plantation. In the midst of the chaos, Ananse tricks his daughter into feigning death. On her deathbed, Ananse discovers her true lover through the messages and
actions of the representative mourners of the rich chiefs. Finally, Chief-who-is-Chief (Ananse’s choice) wins the hand of Anansewa.

Central to the exploits of Ananse is the theme of economic survival in an urban setting. For the purpose of this study, his exploits can be patterned as follows:

Problem—Potential solution—Response—Test and Resolution.

The play opens with Ananse presented as a father with problems. The nature of this problem appears to be his inability to pay his daughter’s school fees. In addition, Ananse wants the basic comfort of life and an assurance for the future. He tells his daughter:

I haven’t finished. Apart from things like that, and above all, when you return, will there be a better, leak-proof roof over our head? A fridge in the kitchen? A car in the garage? My name on invitation lists for state functions? Embassies parties? Tell me, tell me. Will I be able to go to memorial services, this week in a fine cloth, next week in a suit or a different cloth? Will I be able, if I go, to thrust my hand confidently into my pocket in public and take out a five-guinea donation?

_The Marriage of Anansewa_, p.4.

The above passage vividly captures the dilemma of most parents in post-independence Africa. Added to the craze for material wealth is the philosophy of the survival of the fittest imbibed by most urban dwellers, Ananse’s worldview and attitude are conscious ones. He believes the world is hard and life is a struggle. For him to survive he must use what he has—his daughter:

ANANSE: Listen, my one and only daughter, what I have done is that I have organised around you a most lively competition. I’m counting on human nature to help disentangle it. All four chiefs can’t be winners, don’t you see? Child, your father is trying for you. Don’t ask too many complicated questions. Your father can only cope with one step at a time.

(p.15)

In characterisation, Sutherland has remained faithful to the folk concept of Ananse: he is a cunning man who by constantly over-reaching himself ruins his schemes and ends impoverished. However, Ananse in the play appears to have triumphed. For a positive resolution, Sutherland tactfully introduces Christie, a society whore who desperately wants Ananse for a husband. Through her assistance in the competition to identify the true lover of Anansewa, Ananse resolves the crisis in his life. In spite of this new
dimension in Sutherland's *Anansesem*, the hero retains his traditional profession of a farmer, caught in the social contradictions of city life. He says at the opening of the play:

"While life is whipping you, rain also pours down to whip you some more. Whatever it was that old man did wrong at the beginning of things must have been really awful for all of us to have to suffer so." (p.1)

This opening dilemma confronts all the characters in this drama of manoeuvre and cheating. Ironically, the positive moral tone that resolves the play is dictated by the robust interplay of wit, tactical manoeuvre and economic exploitation of each other. First, as Ananse's material position improves, the other characters—Carpenter, Mason and Painter—are equally uplifted from their deplorable social position. They achieve this through the exploitation of Ananse. For instance, they delay the furnishing and refurbishment of Ananse's house, thus, gaining more pay for less done. Listen to the Mason:

CARPENTER: Plenty work. We'll be here for three weeks. Not a bad contract.
MASON: Three? Is something wrong with you? I say, five weeks.
PAINTER: Mason is right. We can't finish too quickly.
ALL: (posing stylishly together): At all. (p.25)

Furthermore, at the end of the play, Ananse wins a good husband for his daughter, while Christie is happily engaged to Ananse. He says of Christie:

"Rare helper! Supporter, your thanks await you." (p.81)

Apart from Sutherland's fidelity to her original sources in the area of characterisation, another strength of the play lies in its theatrecraft and general construction which aptly capture the lively and boisterous aura of the indigenous art of storytelling and performance. For example, she maintains the traditional role and business of the narrator. He is not only in control of the dramatic proceedings but stops the play at appropriate intervals, calls in the chorus at opportune moments as well as constantly communing with the players. He is both a raconteur and performer in the traditional sense. At the end of Act One he stops the story in the following manner:

*Stage direction:* (Propertyman clears the stage. Storyteller rises from among the PLAYERS and receiving his staff from PROPERTYMAN, speaks to them.)
STORYTELLER: Ananse certainly needs a rest after spinning such a web. (Players roar with laughter.) I was present when all this happened. (To going-player.) Calling: (p.15).

To ensure continuity with the traditional convention, Sutherland introduces an “audience” within the play, apart from the normal audience watching it. This artistic sensibility makes the play a communal art and the constant interaction of the characters and “audience” increases the aesthetics and intensity of the action. This is evident at the end of the play where the storyteller takes over from Ananse:

STORYTELLER: (Bursting into laughter and crying out.) That’s Kwetu all right!
ANANSE: (Starting) Goodness! Look, sir, leave the praise-singing alone till some other time, and instead, manage the guests’ departure for me, to end this whole event right now.
STORYTELLER: (Still laughing.) I understand you too well. In that case, friends, we will end this Anansegro right here. Whether you found it interesting or not, do take parts of it away, leaving parts of it with me. We are shaking hands for departure. (p.18)

This closing formula is to a great degree akin to the Akan closing formula which Finnegan noted in *Oral Literature in Africa:* 7

“This my story, which I have related, if it be sweet (or) if it be not sweet, take some elsewhere, and let some come back to me.” 8

Another strength of *The Marriage of Anansewa* lies in Sutherland’s effective recreation of traditional elements of theatre such as “praise names”, riddles and anecdotes. These elements, apart from their entertainment function, have also been used as elements of moral instruction and emphasis; some examples will suffice. The story of Akwasi and Akosua, two infatuated lovers, serves the moral purpose of the “head-drink” (an important token by which the marriage is legally established). After receiving various gifts from Akwasi, Akosua decides to run away from her lover. After a fruitless attempt by Akwasi to get hold of her, he threatens to solicit the help of her parents. Akosua confidently replies:

“Oh, no, I don’t think that at all. Quite the contrary they are far wiser. they know I’m not your wife until after you have come to their home and placed the customary head-drink on their table. (Teasingly.) You see what I mean. (p.18)

This anecdote does not stand in isolation, but is integrated into the
meaning of the play. In the words of the storyteller:

"... There you are. As I was saying, it is possible for Ananse to profit from the gifts his daughter's suitor brings, and not be bound by any obligation at all." (p.19)

The lavish praise names are intended to show how the rich chiefs relish flattery and how hypocritical the ordinary people are in the society in order to get material rewards. Chief of Sapa is praised by Ananse in the following words:

"O Mighty-Tree-Of-Ancient-Origin, Mighty-Tree-Of-Ancient-Origin, Rooted in the shrine of deity! Countless branches in which Benighted Wandering birds are welcome to shelter." (p.6)

The language of *The Marriage of Anansewa* is simple, straightforward and poetical in tone, especially the praise songs. Music and dance abound in the work and this is in line with the traditional characteristics of a storytelling session, where "performance makes all the difference". The impact of the folktale lies in its drama and therefore in its performance. Mime, dance, and song are aspects of the telling which the storyteller explores in his attempt to make the presentation a collective experience both for the players and the audience.

However, the play in performance also reveals the attendant problems of translation and performance in works of this nature. It is a widely held view that a traditional play may achieve greater success in the vernacular rather than the English language. In relation to *The Marriage of Anansewa*, the performance in the original language no doubt would enhance and preserve the rich cultural attributes as well as the tonality inherent in the vernacular, which is lost in the English translation:

"The type of language used often seems to be simple and straightforward. This is, however, at times rendered less prosaic by various devices, including a more frequent use of ideophones, dramatic delivery and dialogues, and the interruption of the prose exposition by songs. The language of the stories shows little of the allusive and obscure quality of some African poetry (except in the interpolated songs)." (p.9)

Sutherland has tried to achieve the above characteristics in the play. However, her attempts tend to lack depth: Apart from the retention of a
few untranslatable Akan words names, she fails to retain Akan songs in the printed text. This appears to be an oversight on her part. Another problem which *The Marriage of Anansewa* is bound to face is its urban audience. Staged in front of a heterogeneous audience, with its proscenium stage, the play is bound to lose the intimacy between the players and the audience. To avoid this problem the playwright creates a pool of players. The effectiveness of this innovation depends on the ability of a prospective director to create the desired rapport and involve the *real audience* in the whole process of the production. Failure to do this would only bring to the fore and fulfilment the visionary words of Bakary Traore:

“... an erudite theatre is taking the place of the popular theatre. Now, this erudite theatre is going to cut itself off from the masses more and more; the professional actor will gradually replace the amateur and the griot from whom he differentiates himself (although the traditional theatre too had its professional actors). In his turn this new actor will pose a series of problems: the hierarchy of the profession, his relationship with other social classes, the actor’s place in society, etc. As for decor, the need for a new scenic art, hitherto unknown, but for a few exceptions, in Africa, is evident. With the scripted play, if a masterpiece emerges, there is the possibility of translation and consequently of spreading the African message to a wider audience, etc.”

Sutherland’s effort emphasises the need for African playwrights to look inwards for inspiration in their attempt to create committed plays relevant to the present socio-political and moral needs. Furthermore, it points to a much desired radical restructuring not only of our play conventions but also the architectural and scenic concepts of the “new play” in Africa.

**Notes**

4. The works of Yoruba travelling theatres led by Hubert Ogunde, the late Duro Ladipo and Ogunmola et al. are profuse with such socio-moral themes of corruption, tribal and national unity, etc.
5. Femi Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1978), *The Chattering and the Song*
(1976), Ngugi wa Thiongo's *The trials of Dedan kimathi* and Sutherland's *Foriwa* (1967) are good examples of plays that have been modelled after traditional theatrical convention.

7. Finnegan, op cit.
‘The Old Eel that Come Up through Breydon Water’: Arthur Ransome’s Work as a Key to Folklife and Folk Speech

J.B. Smith

The son of a Professor of History at the Yorkshire College in Leeds, Arthur Ransome (1884-1967) was not only a writer of fiction, but also a chronicler, meticulous no less than lively, of scenes and events past and present. His own memory reached back to Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee in 1887 and a little beyond, but through the people he met it extended much farther. In his autobiography he tells how as a child he was taken by his father to see an old man who had been born in 1798, could recall Trafalgar, had been seventeen at the time of the Battle of Waterloo, and had spoken with persons who could remember the Highlanders coming into England in 1745. The events witnessed by Ransome himself were no less momentous. From 1913 to 1919 he experienced war and revolution in Russia, where he had gone with the investigation and translation of folklore as one of his objectives, and had ended up working as a correspondent for the Daily News. Later he reported for the Manchester Guardian in Egypt, then China.

Distant places are the setting for some of the children’s stories that Ransome started to write in 1929, but the momentous events he had experienced vicariously and at first hand hardly reverberate there. On the other hand, the observant reader will find, skilfully woven into the fabric of the narrative, patterns of folklife and folk speech that have otherwise been overlooked or forgotten, and will repay careful study. Much can for instance be gleaned about the lore and language of the Lake District, which he had known since earliest childhood, but East Anglia, which he came to know rather later, is no less well represented. Perhaps the fact that his father’s family originated from that part of the country had something to do with his feeling for people, tradition and vernacular. This is especially striking in his portrayal of a Norfolk eelman in The Big Six. From a
discussion of this I shall go on to deal with a feature of East Anglian folk speech as it is reflected in Ransome’s work and elsewhere. But first I shall consider the way he depicts the Lakeland charcoal-burners and one of their customs.

Ransome came to know the charcoal-burners of Nibthwaite during his childhood visits to the Lakes, and the acquaintance lasted at least into his early manhood. In his autobiography he describes how, when he was in his twenties, they would leave clay pipes for him at the Red Lion at Lowick. These had been matured in the great heat of the pitstead, so that when the mound was opened they would be “glossy and coal-black, ready to give a cool sweet smoke from the first pipeful of tobacco”.2

Doubtless the charcoal-burners we meet in *Swallows and Amazons* and *Swallowdale* are modelled on his Nibthwaite friends. Certainly the accounts given in the two books tally with each other and give the impression of being entirely true to life. The father-and-son team consists of Old Billy, now well into his nineties, and Young Billy, still in his seventies. In *Swallowdale* we learn that the latter is skilled as a “medicine man”. He treats a sprained foot by wrapping it in dead bracken leaves that he binds round with a voluminous handkerchief damped in hot tea. He then provides the patient with an excellent crutch.

In *Swallowdale* we are reminded also that Young Billy keeps an adder in the wigwam of larch poles he and his father inhabit when they are tending their smouldering mound.3 *Swallows and Amazons* contains a rather more detailed description of the “serpent”. Readers of that book will recall that the creature is very understandably not allowed the freedom of the hut, but is kept on a bed of moss in a cigar-box,4 and one wonders whether such captives were actually pets in the conventional sense, or whether there was some superstition, perhaps only partially remembered, at the back of the custom. The charcoal-burners, as a group apart, were nothing if not conservative, and it may be that we have here a reflex of the Scandinavian spirit beliefs recorded, for instance, by the Swedish folklorist Norlind.

In southern Sweden, Norlind tells us, the “spirit” was a white snake kept in a box. Instead of a snake an insect or spider could be kept, or “a strange creature hatched from a ‘cock’s egg’”.5 This familiar was fed on fasting spittle, that is, saliva ejected before the first meal of the day. The place of a living creature could also be taken by a wooden image of a lizard or insect.

Norlind does not tell us explicitly why such spirits were kept, but he repeats an account of how, in 1706, two soldiers were sentenced by the
magistrate of Karlshamn to eight days in prison on bread and water “because, through Satan’s inspiration, they had each tried in that town to acquire a spirit which would gain them great riches”. From this we see not only that such spirits were bought and sold, but also that they seem to have been kept as a magical means of obtaining good fortune. However, they were dangerous allies, and could bring misfortune in the long run. For this reason their owners would try and get rid of them in due course, and thus free themselves of possible evil influences.

What Ransome tells us about the “serpent” in *Swallows and Amazons* is not incompatible with all this. Note also the hint that the adder is linked in the charcoal-burners’ minds with their fire, which must likewise be kept constantly under control:

“What do you keep him for?” asked John.

“Luck,” said Young Billy. “Always had one in the hut, ever since I can remember, and dad, that’s Old Billy here, can remember longer than me.”

“Aye, we’ve always had an adder,” said Old Billy, “and so had my dad, when he was at the burning, and he was burning on these fells a hundred years ago.”

Young Billy neatly dropped the snake in its box and shut the lid of it. He held the box for the children to listen. They could hear the snake hissing inside. Then he gave the box back to Old Billy, who went off with it back into the hut.

A big puff of smoke rolled from the burning mound. ‘Look there,’ said Young Billy, ‘Can’t leave him a minute but he’s out. Like the adder is fire. Just a bit of a hole and out he comes.’

It will be clear from all this that Ransome’s charcoal-burners are more than a mere narrative ploy. For him they represent the continuity of folklife, now threatened by progress. He portrays the outward aspects of this life clearly and sympathetically, but the custom of keeping an adder is fraught with a meaning he can only surmise. When he sees the adder and the fire as symbolic of each other, he is trying to express some of that meaning: both are dangerous, both must be kept in check but not allowed to expire. This is a view of things that sounds quite natural on Young Billy’s lips.

But Ransome went a stage further in his attempt at interpretation. In referring, in his autobiography, to one of Lascelles Abercrombie’s *Four Short Plays* called “The Adder”, he reveals that it is “based on a piece of ‘folklore’ wickedly invented by myself, though, as Lascelles said, if it was
not folklore it ought to be.” In “The Adder” there is much that will sound entirely familiar to readers of Ransome’s autobiography, such as references to “a black pipe and good tap” and a pub called the “Hark to Melody”, while the scene of the play, a hut in the woods and its neighbouring mound, is reminiscent of the scenes in *Swallows and Amazons* and *Swallowdale* in which we meet Young Billy and Old Billy. However, the play transforms these into Seth and Newby, the latter a bent old man, the former, about whom the action revolves, a man in his prime. After years of dissolute living, this Seth has turned to religion and, with the uneasy zeal of the converted, he shields his illegitimate daughter from the world he has now renounced. But still tortured by the knowledge of his misdeeds, he projects his feelings of guilt on to the adder, and he likewise sees the smouldering mound as a symbol of his own past and the passions that can still consume his daughter: “Watch now, while I kick a hole in the stack./ Do you mark the glowing danger, the red lust/ Biding within? ...” These are among his words to the girl when she happens upon him in the wood at night. Eventually, full of despair at the thought that she too will succumb in the end to the flesh and the devil, he gives her the adder to play with so that this vehicle of his guilt shall bring about her death, thus, paradoxically preserving at least her innocence. In this way “folklore” is extrapolated from folklife, and imagination fills in the outline that Ransome later came to use in his stories.

Whereas the stories referred to so far are set in the Lake District, the scene of *The Big Six* is the Norfolk Broads, and in its third chapter, “Eel Sett at Night”, we find a detailed account of an old-time eelman and his work. Old Harry Bangate lives in a hulk on the Bure, north-east of Norwich, where he mends his nets, baits his eel lines and makes his babs. But his serious business is the eel sett, a net stretching from one side of the river to the other, lowered to the bottom when the boats are going by and lifted when the eels are running, or “working”.

When the ebb begins to run, and the eels with it, he raised the sett with a windlass. Later, at dead of night, he pulls his boat along silently by the rope of the sett to the place above where the pods have been laid. These are long tubes of netting, kept in shape by rings of osier fastened inside them and attached to openings in the main net of the sett. They are now alive with eels, and are raised by means of a pole with a hook on the end. The end of each pod is then untied, so that a stream of eels is released into the keep, a huge black box that also serves as a rowing thwart for the boat and is half filled with water. Later, the fish are expertly “scotched” after they have
been stunned by a blow on the tail, a knife is thrust into the backbone close behind the head. Now, after being skinned and cleaned, they can be stewed or souped or fried, or hung in the chimney, to be smoked over a close fire.

Old Harry learnt his craft from his uncle at Potter Heigham, a few miles down the river, seventy years before. "You know Potter, you do? But there been changes since then. There weren't no houses at Potter then, saving the wind pumps. And there weren't no yachts, hardly. Reed-boats and such, and the wherries loading by the bridge. And there were plenty of netting then, and liggering for pike, and plenty of fowl..." He remembers the regattas on Barton, punt-gunning and smelt-catching, great floods, and fights over the closing of some of the smaller Broads. As for more momentous events in the outside world, such as Queen Victoria's Jubilee and the Coronation of Edward the Seventh, these are commemorated in newspaper pictures pinned to the walls of his cabin. But later events seem to have passed him by; of them he has preserved no such record.

His attitudes to his prey are pre-conservationist, indeed archaic, harking back to a time when nature amply provided. In discussing the bitterns, or "buttles", he contends: "What was them birds put there for? Why, for shooting... When we was shooting there were always a plenty." His beliefs are similarly innocent of modern scientific explanation. Of tales about eels spawning in the Sargasso he will have none. He thinks they are born in the mud and go down the rivers to get a taste of salt water: "Smell the tide, they do and follow that down." And even his stories about the one that got away are not like anything we hear today, but likewise merge into the prior culture, where stories of sea-serpents and crowned eels are entirely acceptable:

"What's the biggest eel you've ever caught?" said Tom. 'I didn't catch him,' said the old man. 'Not to keep him. But we were a big 'un, that warmint. I dart for him with my old spear and catch his tail, and he shake his tail and throw my old spear into the reeds, and he near upset my boat before he go off fierce downstream with a wash after him bringing the banks down like them motor cruisers. Did you never hear tell of the old eel that come up through Breydon Water to Reedham to swop crowns with the king? That were a rare old eel. And did you never hear tell of the sea-serpent that very near stick between banks going down between Yarmouth and Gorleston? Sea serpent? That weren't no sea serpent. Great old eel. That's what he were."

Previous, shorter, quotations will already have conveyed something of old
Harry's idiom, or Ransome's representation of it, but this longer passage will illustrate a specific linguistic feature I would now like to focus on. So far we have dealt, implicitly, with items of vocabulary such as *eel sett, pod, buttle* and *work*, but what will strike an outsider most in this sample is a grammatical peculiarity, not just the well-attested dialectal absence of -s in the third person singular, but what appears to be the use of the present for the past: “I dart for him with my old spear and catch his tail, and he shake his tail . . .”

Of course it might be argued that we have the historic present here, a use of the present tense that “describes the past as if it is happening now” and “conveys something of the dramatic immediacy of an eye-witness account”. Such a use of the present would, however, hardly be conceivable in a sentence such as “Did you never hear tell of the sea-serpent that very near stick between banks . . .” Nor is this an isolated example. There are numerous other instances where a historic present would scarcely be possible, as when old Harry says: “You ain’t never seen pods lifted? . . . Seventy year tomorrow I see ’em first.” In such examples the suggestion at the beginning of the sentence that an established truth or reference to an event remote from the present is about to follow would appear to preclude the use of the historic present. It will therefore be appropriate to assume for the moment that *stick* and *see* as used above are present in form but genuinely past in meaning.

In response to all this one could contend that Ransome, who was after all not a Broadsman, has got his Norfolk dialect wrong here, that he is “making it up”. So what do scholars say on the subject of present for past in East Anglian dialects, and what first-hand evidence can be submitted of such a usage? In his study of Norwich English, Peter Trudgill mentions it, or something like it, more or less in passing. He observes that “several verbs, for example *come, give, see,* have past tense forms that are identical with non-past forms: ‘You give it to me yesterday’, ‘I see him last week.’” Another authority, Martyn Wakelin, sees a general tendency towards a reduction of forms in dialectal verbs, perhaps by analogy with *cut* and *put* and the like, which do not vary in the past and past participle. Thus *begin* and *ride* will sometimes show the past-tense forms *begin* and *ride* in the south of England, and *see* and *come* will be similarly invariant over a still wider area. Wright does not mention such a feature in his *English Dialect Grammar*, but he does provide some supporting evidence in the body of his dictionary. Thus we find *give* as a past tense form for quite a large part of eastern and southern England, and *see* for “saw” has a still wider
distribution, though Norfolk is not mentioned here. However, the following rendering by Camilla Gurdon of late nineteenth-century south-east Suffolk speech would suggest that, far from being a recent development, as Wakelin seems to imply it is, the feature was already common in East Anglia in Wright's day:

"My wife she live at the Weir Farm when she were a young woman. I never come to see her there, for there weren't any followers allowed. One night, when she and a fellow-servant were brewing in that long room they used to call the Cheese-room, they hear someone walking to-and-fro overhead. My wife, who never was afraid of anyone, she say she would go and see what it was, and she go up the stairs..." 

In the context, verbs such as live or come or say, though they are identical with the present in form, strongly suggest past meaning. Presumably live must be "true" past since the signs are that no account can begin with a historic present: the fact that the events referred to actually took place in the past must first of all be established beyond doubt by use of the past tense. In any case, like the next verb, come, it can hardly qualify as a historic present since there is nothing "anecdotal" about it: reference is not to a clearly delineated completed action. And say must likewise be past since a present tense would be incompatible with the following "she would".

A further point worth noting is that two of the verbs under discussion, live and say, are weak, although all the authorities cited seem to refer only to strong verbs as admitting of such present tense forms in the past. The testimony of Ransome and our East Suffolk source thus strongly suggests, not only that uninflected past tenses are well established in East Anglian dialects, but also that a wider range of verbs is affected than has so far been recognised.

What we now need, to clinch the matter, is the first-hand evidence referred to above. A near approximation to this can be obtained by sifting through the relevant parts of George Ewart Evans's The Days that We Have Seen. This resembles many of his earlier works on oral history in that the informants were older East Anglian country people, but is unusual in that his conversations with them were taperecorded. The transcripts were carefully done, without over-editing, partly with the student of language in mind, and we have the added advantage of naturally flowing, uninterrupted texts, rather than the short, disjointed and unrepresentative responses so often produced by interviews and questionnaires.

One of the most striking grammatical features of these texts is the high
incidence of uninflected past tenses. Admittedly, as with Ransome and Godden, many of these could conceivably be interpreted as instances of the historic present or, occasionally, of the ordinary present. In my survey I have therefore restricted myself to examples which cannot, in the context, be other than preterite in meaning. One of the things that strike us here is that, apart perhaps from be, apparently any full verb, whether strong or weak, can form its past tense without modification of the infinitive form. Some examples, in order of occurrence, are come, run, want, yowl (“and this old dog he started—he yelled, he barked and yowl”), blow, goo (= “go”), pour, see, live, happen, take, rattle, think.25 Quite often an uninflected will alternate with an inflected form of the same verb in the same speech, thus go with went, run with ran, happen with happened.

The following excerpt will illustrate these points and some others:

“Well, she *went round that there yard two or three times there with the tumbril on one wheel; and then the other owd cows, they were going about there, you know, with their pump-handles up. Well there! you talk about going and—all I was afraid she was going to do—she was coming on to the road so she would run into me! **Do, [if she did] she'd ha' made a mess of me! 'Stead of that, she *went round the corner of the stable and she **hit the corner of the barn and *turned the tumbril right over, that *did! And that *laid there bottoms up when Mr Collyer **come up with his thoshing tackle at night, and he ***say:

'Hullo!' he ***say, 'what—you have a horse run away here?' And they *told him this here cow **run away. Of course it was right: this poor owd cow, she *ran right across these fields there, what they ****call Brookey's Wood; and they *had to go and fetch her. Dear, or dear! Heart alive! You talk about—didn't I laugh! I never forget it till the day I die. I shan't. No!”26

Beside the periphrastic past tense forms and such forms of the present as unambiguously signal present tense, this short text contains eight instances of an inflected simple past (marked *), four uninflected forms of the same tense (marked **)—though one of these, hit, corresponds to the standard form—and two uninflected forms of say (marked ***) which could be seen as representing the historic present. Call (marked ****) could be past or true present. With this high incidence of uninflected forms, context obviously plays an important part in signalling tense, and potential ambiguity is quite common.

In passing, we also note that the simple form forget in the last line corresponds to standard “shall forget” and recall that, in Ransome at least,
uninflected past participles, as in “Have you touch any of them boats?” or “I ain’t walk under a ladder” occur from time to time. These are features which deserve further investigation, but I shall restrict myself to another, more relevant, observation. This is that do (the first form above with two asterisks) is, as Evans indicates in the text, equivalent to standard “if she did”, or perhaps rather “if she had done”. This type of construction is used by other speakers in the same book. Examples are: “Do [if you do] you will lose all power”; “He hid under the bulwarks so nobody could see him. Do, they’d ha’ summoned him”; “Some of them had chains round their boats, fore and aft, do they’d ha’ sunk; busted right open from the swelling of the wood with too much water.” It will be seen that, apart from if, the subject is elided, and this has to be predicted from the context. The context also supplies tense/mood and positive/negative polarity. Thus, in the last example do stands for “if they had not done so”.

Wright has entirely analogous examples for Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, for instance: “Did you leave that gate open? Do, go back and shut it” (Cambs.); “I have to put it close agin m’ eyes, do I can’t see at all” (Essex). Here do stands, respectively, for “if you did” and “if I don’t”. However, it appears that do is, or was, replaceable by don’t where there might otherwise be doubt about polarity, as in: “Shet that gaate, bor, don’t yar old sow’ll girr out” (Norfolk) and “Wrop up well, don’t you’ll git cowld” (Suffolk).

There are signs that verbs other than do can be used in this way. Compare another example from The Days that We Have Seen: “Anybody else come they could ha’ shook the house down they wouldn’t have woke me”, in which the subject is not elided and the verb is come. Elsewhere we find “Crack she bear, bend she break”, a formulaic piece of advice given to children testing the ice on a pond to ascertain whether it was strong enough to skate on. And, returning to Ransome, we find be used in an apparently similar way: “‘There’ll have to be an east wind tomorrow.’, said Bill . . . ‘Isn’t, we’ll be rowing all day.’” Note also his: “Natural he don’t want you nonnacking round under the old cruiser come they let her drop.” It is also interesting that Ransome used did where one might, from what has gone before, have expected do: “Good thing birds don’t nest in August . . . Did, they wouldn’t have a chance.”

Here, then we come full circle. We started with literary representations of dialect, where we identified a recurring grammatical feature that we attempted to verify by referring to transcripts of spoken language. In the process, further features emerged which, if we again consult the literary
J.B. Smith

representations, would appear to be more wide-ranging than the transcripts alone might have led us to suppose. The next step would be to explore and map out the full range of actual usage by examining a representative selection of spoken-language texts.

When we investigate dialectal forms, written and spoken texts thus supplement and complement each other. In the study of dialect, but also of folklore and folklife, work in the field, aided by such devices as the taperecorder, has over the past few decades been rightly regarded as indispensable. But perhaps the pendulum has swung a little too far. Literary representations by themselves can of course be highly deceptive. But, used with care, they are a vital source of clues and supporting information. Moreover, when we are studying the past, even the recent past, they are as often as not the only source of information. Thus the above-mentioned grammatical features captured by Ransome in his work can no doubt still be checked against contemporary spoken-language texts, and perhaps there are people still to be found who can verify what he says about the Norfolk eelmen, but his account of the Lakeland charcoal-burners’ custom of keeping an adder is probably unique in British tradition, unlikely as it is to have any counterpart left in living memory.35

Notes

2. Ibid., p.112. See also p.139.
5. Folk-belief had it that at the age of seven or nine or ten years black or red cocks were capable of laying eggs which, if incubated in dung, could produce a snake or basilisk. One theory is that such “cocks’ eggs” were in fact the eggs of grass snakes. See Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli, Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens, 3 (Berlin and Leipzig, 1930-1931), 1337-38.
6. Tobias Norlind, Svenska Allmogens Lifi (Stockholm, 1912), 1, 639-640.
7. Ransome, Swallows and Amazons, pp.146-147.
8. The Poems of Lascelles Abercrombie (London, 1930), pp.363-382. The play was produced in Liverpool and Birmingham in 1913.
9. Hart-Davis, p.144. This was in 1911, when Ransome was twenty seven.
10. Abercrombie, p.380.
11. Arthur Ransome, *The Big Six* (1940; rpt. Harmondsworth, 1986), pp.38-51. In what follows, page numbers are indicated only for such quotations from *The Big Six* as are not from Chapter 3.
12. The signs are that this hooked pole could be called the “crook”. See Joseph Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary* (London, 1898-1905), 4, 564-565 under *pod*, 5. Ransome’s description is entirely in tune with Wright’s citations here and under *eel-set*, 2, 237, from which I have, however, added one or two details.
13. Far from being pseudo-dialect echoing Macbeth’s “We have scotch’d the snake, not kill’d it”, this expression of old Harry Bargate’s (p.53) is apparently a genuine angling and culinary term meaning “to make an incision or incisions in”, though here it seems to carry the additional sense of “to dispatch”. See *OED*, 9, 249, *scotch*, v.¹, 1.
16. Randolph Quirk et al., *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London, 1985), p.181. This is of course scarcely an adequate description of the historic present for our purposes. For one thing it refers to standard English, and for another it does not tell us under what conditions the historic present may be used, even in that variety. It will be clear that in the circumstances my judgement of what in East Anglian English cannot be a historic present is largely intuitive, though I have indicated below what might reasonably be seen as some restrictions on its use.
19. Wright, 2, 626 and 5, 313.
21. Cp. Ossi Ihalainen, “Periphrastic Do in Affirmative Sentences in the Dialect of East Somerset”, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 4, 77 (1976), 608-622: “The so-called historic present cannot occur at the beginning of a discourse: it can only occur after the time reference of a discourse unit has been specified” (p.614). Admittedly the remarks apply to the dialect of East Somerset, but their inherent logic would suggest that they have wider validity. Different conventions seem to apply in fictional narrative, however. Thus a joke might begin: “Well, there’s this
chap who lives in a tumbledown house . . . ” Here the verb is neither past nor refers to a “completed action”.


24. For Evans’s views on interviewing, editing etc., see pp.25-26, 66, 82, 219.


26. Evans, p.117.

27. Ransome, The Big Six, pp.61 and 156.

28. See Evans, pp.30, 168 and 169 respectively.

29. Examples of the construction, some of them presumably quite recent, also for instance occur in Jonathan Mardle, Broad Norfolk (Norwich, 1973), pp.18, 25, 34. See also the story on p.53, in which the driver of a Jaguar skids into a field to avoid a tractor just emerging from it. The tractor-driver says to his mate: “Blast, bor! Tha’s a good job we come out o’ that there field, du he’d a’ had us.”

30. Wright, 2, 98. Not all authorities have, like Wright, seen this construction as elliptical. In such Essex examples as “Don’t come here again; do, I’ll thrash you”, Wilhelm Horn for instance saw do as originally imperative and hence the construction as a whole as a product of parataxis. Such a hypothesis will, however, not explain the fact that do can express negative meaning: in such cases we have to assume ellipsis at least of a negative particle. See Wilhelm Horn’s review of Gepp’s Essex Dialect Dictionary, reprinted in Edward Gepp, An Essex Dialect Dictionary, 2nd edn., (London, 1923), pp.189-194, and see Gepp’s own examples and comments there, pp.137-138 and 189. Note also the view, expressed in Claxton, op. cit., p.13, that in sentences such as “Dew you hurry up don’t you’ll miss the bus” don’t etc. is “used as a conjunction meaning ‘or’, ‘otherwise’, or ‘if’”. This may indeed be true of the meaning, but grammatically don’t, because of the variety of forms and constructions by which it can apparently be replaced in such contexts (see examples below), is best regarded as a reduced if-clause represented by the verb of that clause.

31. Evans, p.98.

32. Claxton, p.106.

33. Ransome, The Big Six, p.82.

34. Arthur Ransome, Coots in the North and Other Stories, ed. Hugh Brogan (London, 1988), pp.106 and 103. In the posthumous fragment “Coots in the North”, from which these two examples are taken, the Norfolk dialect is, if anything, more marked than elsewhere in Ransome’s works.


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David Thomson

James G. Delaney

David Thomson was a good collector of folklore and had a great understanding and appreciation of the subject. But he was more, much more than that; he was a great and sensitive artist, and he has left us two of the finest classics in modern English in his *People of The Sea*, and *Woodbrook*. He took what might have been a dry thesis on the oral traditions of the seal; took those dry bones and inspired them with life and beauty, opening for us magic casements on fairy lands in perilous Gaelic seas.

From childhood, when he first heard of the seal woman, Mrs. Carnoustie, he became obsessed with the seal and the oral traditions about it, until he finally started on his odyssey through the coasts of Northern Scotland and Western Ireland, where Gaelic was still spoken and traditions were richest. He succeeded in collecting what remained of the latter, and where these were sometimes wanting he filled the gaps from authoritative written sources. As he wove his own personal involvement with the people from whom he recorded, with an artistic description of themselves and their environment, he succeeded in giving us a work of art of unsurpassable beauty.

If he came across other interesting items of folklore in his quest for the seal, he did not hesitate to include them, and so saved the story from monotony. It also showed what a good folklore collector he was and how sure his instinct was. An example is the story told to him by Mrs. Fea of North Ronaldson, after she had given him a bannock made from bere (a kind of barley) heaped with a soft cheese called crowdie:

A stranger came begging to some door and the woman gave him a whole bannock heaped with crowdie. He ate the crowdie and gave the bannock back to her with the words: “There’s your plate, ma’am, and thank ye.”

A similar story was told to me in North Longford about a farl of thickly buttered oaten bread a woman gave to a travelling man. He licked off the
butter and gave her back the farl of oaten bread with the words:

"Thank ye, ma'am, for the butter and here's your slate."

In both stories the bread was unleavened.

The hare, like the seal “wasn’t right”, as they say, i.e. legends associating her with witches and witchcraft were common in Ireland and Britain, and it was probably these that first attracted David’s attention to the hare in oral tradition. He was almost certain to have heard some version of it in North Roscommon, when living in Woodbrook, as the tradition of the hare as witch is one of the most common and persistent all over Ireland. I first heard it as a child from my mother in Wexford, but only in outline, as the tradition was dying out there, and not at all as circumstantial and detailed as the versions David and I recorded in the Midlands, each one with a local habitation and a name.

It was to record these stories that David came to me in January 1965. At that time he was working for BBC 3, and these recordings in Ireland were intended for a programme, The Hare in Oral Tradition, which he was making in collaboration with George Ewart Evans. That was the first time I met him. He had been sent to the collectors in their respective districts by the Director of the Irish Folklore Commission, Professor Delargy. It was a measure of David’s status as a folklorist that he was trusted by Delargy, who was meticulous in such matters, to deal sensitively and expertly with the subject he was recording. During the few days we spent together I found him most companionable, a very “clubbable man”, and the old men to whom I introduced him responded to his warm friendly ways and were delighted with him and the interest he took in their stories, which some of them told for fact. He was a good collector. He was not a proud man (the highest praise they could give him). He had a deep understanding of the Irish countryman and delighted in his use of the English language, which he had so skilfully woven into a distinctive Irish fabric. David was himself a countryman, and he realised that “out of doors, however lonely the countryside appears to be, you soon find out that you are always being watched. The herdsman or the woman at her hidden window on the mountain sees and reports your actions, and your thoughts belong not to yourself, but to the land about you.” Very few people not born in the country realise this truth. But David knew it.

No matter how humble the house was he felt at home in it. One of the men I brought him to lived with his sister in a traditional three-roomed thatched house at the edge of a bog so that turf was always plentiful and
there was always a huge turf fire that roasted one’s front while the back was exposed to the draught from the end of the kitchen, where there were two doors, a back one and a front one facing each other, an unusual occurrence in a Midland traditional house. On leaving the house I half apologetically mentioned the taste of turf smoke on the tea, which we had been so generously given, to David, to be met with the reply:

“But I like the taste of turf smoke in tea.”

I did not object to it myself, as I was used to it and looked upon it as an acquired taste.

David was patient, never in a hurry to record the story he wanted, but knowing the Irish countryman so well, he was prepared to wait for a decent interval of conversation between the old man and me. He knew how things were done, and that one never precipitates oneself into the matter in hand until all the news has been discussed. It would be most unseemly to go in and immediately to plunge into business. It would not only be considered rude, but also fiercely resented.

The old men showed no surprise when I arrived with David and asked no questions. They knew they would learn all eventually, and on the occasion of my next visit they all asked for him and were eager to know how we got on in our quest for the hare stories. They were most grateful and delighted with the cheque each of them got after the programme had been broadcast on BBC 3. They were highly amused too to think that anyone would pay them for a story they enjoyed so much to tell, but proud as well, to know that they had been “on the wireless”. Only one thing was lacking. It was not possible to hear BBC 3 in the Irish Midlands. But neighbours living in England who had heard the programme wrote home and told their people they had heard such-a-one telling a story about the hare on the BBC. So David made a lasting impression. They often spoke of him afterwards and enquired about him. The few times I met David in after years I would always give a full account of it to any of the old men who were still alive, and most of them were. They never forgot him.

My recollection of the few days spent with David was of almost incessant rain and wind. It was one such day he and I went to record an old man near Ballinahown about ten miles south of Athlone. It was about 3.30 p.m. when we arrived at his house to find him still in bed because the day was so bad. I told a granddaughter to go up and tell him I wanted to bring him to the pub in Ballinahown. He was down in the kitchen almost as soon as her, fully clothed. “Put on your overcoat”, I said to him, “I have a man
out in the car wants to speak to you and we'll go to Ballinahown.” “God sent ye”, he replied, “I was bluemoulded up there in the bed listening to the wind and the rain.” So on this occasion David was a godsend, and I am sure many of the other old men felt the same about him.

The programme on the hare was so successful that there was a popular demand for it to be made into a book. Further recordings were necessary, and in the summer of 1970, when I met David in Dublin in connection with recordings we had made for him for his forthcoming book, *Woodbrook*, he told me that George Ewart Evans, who did such remarkable work on the farming traditions of East Anglia, was to come to me in September to make further recordings on the hare in oral tradition. With his usual perspicacity he said to me—and I have always remembered his words—“You'll like him, Jim.” He never spoke a truer word, for from our first meeting we became very good friends and remained so up to the day of his death, corresponding regularly almost up to that very day, a few days before which I received a belated Christmas card. We spent many a happy day in Ireland together.

*The Leaping Hare*, published by Faber and Faber in 1972, was the result of the recordings and much learned research. George Ewart Evans often told me that the general opinion was that the Irish material was the best part of the book, and he being essentially a folklorist was in agreement with this verdict. The book is more of an Evans than a Thomson work. George Ewart Evans died about five weeks before David, who wrote a fine tribute to him in *The Guardian* (Friday, January 15, 1988).

When Leo Corduff and I were recording the folklore for *Woodbrook*, the book that has become a modern classic, David was not with us, but he was looking over our shoulders all the time because he had given us a list of subjects he wished us to enquire about, such as marriage customs, wake custom and usage, holy wells, the Famine etc. As the marriage and wake customs were favourite subjects of mine I was very pleased with the assignment given us by the Director, Professor Delargy, who told us that the recordings would be lent to David for his use. He had heard this folklore when living in Woodbrook, and he wanted what he had heard to be collected by professionals. He was too much a scholar and perfectionist to be content with less.

When the collecting was finished, I wrote to David giving him an account of how we had fared in the Woodbrook district. Then when the tapes had been transcribed and sent in to the Department, David came over to Dublin where I met him and went over the manuscript with him as
he had requested, to point out to him the parts that would most be suitable for his purpose.

I met him after the book was published and he apologised to me for “taking liberties” as he called it with the material we had collected for him. I never thought for one minute that he had anything to apologise about, because his treatment of folklore was always sensitive, meticulous and scholarly, both in *The People of the Sea* and *Woodbrook*. He never took any liberties with the folklore he used in either book. What he did was to fill in from authoritative written sources what was lacking in the material so recently collected by himself and us, when the traditions were on the wane. A good example of this in *Woodbrook* was where he tells of the wake of James Currid, the horseman who worked all his life for the Kirkwoods, and uses it to give a general account of wakes, from the material we collected from Willie Maxwell on the subject, and to amplify this with further details from Sean O’Sullivan’s excellent book *Irish Wake Amusements* published by Mercier Press, Cork, in 1967. It is an excellent exposition of the wake in Ireland from earliest times. In treating folklore in this manner he makes it easy, interesting and attractive for the general reader without in any way offending the susceptibilities of the folklore scholar. I always found his scholarly and sensitive approach most satisfying, even delightful.
Hordocks in Lear’s Crown

Patricia Poussa

The Qq reading hordocks in Cordelia’s lines on Lear’s fantastic garland (King Lear, IV. iv. 4.) have been a constant target for emendation, from F1 hardokes, F3 hardocks onwards, mainly on the grounds that no such specific plant exists. Of the editors quoted in the Furness Variorum of 1888, only Wright (1877) accepts the Qq reading unaltered, and twentieth century editors mostly follow F3 hardocks, or amend to burdocks or some other specific plant. However, following Rydén (1978, 1984), I would assent that hor-dock, understandable as “grey dock”, is more acceptable as an invented plant name than the meaningless hardocks, and I would further add that the most probable motive for such an invention is a pun on whore. This would put the formation into the same class as the yellow cuckoo-buds of Love’s Labours Lost, V. ii., commented on by Rydén, where the bird’s call later in the passage puns on cuckold: “0 word of fear/ Unpleasing to a married ear!”

In the Lear passage at IV. iv., the mad king is described in the Quarto spelling as:

Crownd with ranke femiter and furrow weedes,
With hor-docks, hemlocke, netles, cookow flowers,
Darnell and all the idle weedes that grow,
In our sustayning, corne.

Rydén takes both cookow flowers and hor-docks to have a contextual rather than precise botanical significance. The “cuckoo” element here he suggests is “symbolic of the madness of the king”. I would argue that we are dealing with a more complex symbolic meaning in this passage, and that both cuckoo flowers and “whore”-docks stand for a complex of ideas involving usurpation and perversion of natural order.

Like the “idle weeds” in the cornfield, the young cuckoo displaces the rightful generation and takes its portion, thus perverting the natural familial order. This sort of cuckoo behaviour, pushing out a legitimate heir, is central to the two family plots of King Lear. In the play’s world of ideas,
the Qq reading *hor-docks* makes excellent sense, as in *King Lear* whoredom and adultery further weaken the familial bonds on which society is based. Thus in the subplot Gloucester's bastard Edmund (who himself uses "whoremaster man" as a generic term for humanity) first displaces Edgar and his father, then uses sexual lust to turn Goneril against her sister Regan, and husband Albany. Lear in his earlier ravings had insisted on two themes: unnatural daughters and lechery. The cuckoo flowers and whore docks in his crown go to the heart of Lear's madness, and the social disorder around him.

Contrasted with the real or invented weeds in Lear's crown we have another plant which is both real and symbolic: the "sustaining corn" standing in the field. The adjective refers on the concrete level to the healthy nourishment in the bread we eat (as opposed to the poisonous weeds), and on the metaphorical level to the ordered society, which the weeds of anarchy and lechery are ever ready to invade. Moreover, as Empson remarks, "The corn appears to sustain also the idle weeds, so that they are rogues, battening upon the commonwealth." Weeds, cuckoos and whores are all in the category of parasites, like the "caterpillars of the commonwealth" in *Richard II*.

As the Qq *hor-docks* is capable of supporting a far richer net of thematic imagery than any of the competing emendations, I would place it in the company of the numerous other preferred Quarto readings in *King Lear* commented on by Schmidt:6

The inference to be drawn . . . is that the actors during a performance pronounced these words or phrases rightly and clearly, which the compositor of the Folio read wrongly.

Dr. Johnson, who commented on the overall carelessness of the Folio revision, substituted *burdocks*. His strong sense of propriety would no doubt have made it difficult to entertain the notion of a pun on "whore", especially on the lips of Cordelia. Similarly, *charlocks* and *harlocks* have found adherents. The proponents of *hoar-docks* (first tentatively proposed by Steevens, and adopted by Collier, Delius, Dyce, Keightly and Hudson in the nineteenth century) would seem to be on the side of the actors, though not for my reasons.

My conclusion: *hor-docks* is good phonemic spelling, suitably ambiguous as to reference. Like the cuckoo flowers and idle weeds of the passage, it refers both to the botanical world, and the moral world of the play. *Hor-docks* is therefore the best possible reading.
Notes


University of Sheffield.
This volume is the latest in the Folklore Society's series of Conference Proceedings, given by the Folklore Society and the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language at the University of Sheffield.

Topics covered include ancient Greek theatre; cartoons; graffiti; computerized jokes; verbal duelling and traditional ballads, examined from historical, literary, anthropological and folkloristic perspectives. The authors endeavour to recreate the multi-disciplinary, lively atmosphere of the conference with its special emphasis on the cultural and traditional aspects of joking behaviour.

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Notes and Queries

Note:

Champagne Charlie

Since 1984 we have been presenting a theatrical entertainment, Champagne Charlie, based on the life and songs of that great Music Hall star, George Leybourne. Our research into Leybourne's life has gone deep. In fact it took a number of years before one of us even thought of putting pen to paper. And we are still researching. It has not been easy. Leybourne lived and worked prior to recording and moving film, he left nothing himself, and very little information could be found outside of books on Music Hall and newspapers and periodicals of the time. He has descendants living both in the United Kingdom and Canada (possibly elsewhere) and, during the course of our research, we found a number of errors were perpetuated by writers merely copying their predecessors, two of the chief errors being his birthplace and that his name was Joe Saunders, Leybourne being a stage name. The Oxford Companion To Theatre has it wrong. The Theatre Museum (when we were last there) had it wrong. A book published for schools as late as 1982 (Folksong and Music Hall) has it wrong. His name was George Leybourne; it is on his birth certificate which anyone could have found, and we have by canny detective work deduced almost to the yard where he was born. But now, with a great deal of fascinating material unearthed, we are hungry for more as we are engaged on a biography. Only recently we were sent a copy of a newspaper advertisement for The Star Music Hall, Stockton, where he appeared for one night in 1876, billed as "The Gentleman copied by all but equalled by none." We also heard of a dubious character in Kimberley, South Africa in the late eighteen hundreds who called himself Champagne Charlie. The song "Champagne Charlie must have been sung in every corner of the British Empire, and in America, together with that other great favourite, "The Man on the Flying Trapeze". May we hope that if any readers have any out of the way information on this great nineteenth century entertainer, no matter how
trifling it may seem, they would consider passing it on. We would be most grateful.

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E.R. Seary Festschrift

MACDONALD, A.A., P.A. O'FLAHERTY and G.M. STORY, eds., A Festschrift for Edgar Ronald Seary: Essays in English Language and Literature presented by colleagues and former students, St. John’s, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1975.

Readers of Lore and Language might wish to know that this volume of fifteen essays presented to Professor Seary in 1975 is still available. The essays range over a broad field of English Language and Literature.

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Review Article

The Vanishing American Legend: Oral Narrative and Textmaking in the 1980s

Bill Ellis

When we consider the matter carefully, we can determine that the constant motion and lasting security of folk legends represent the most reassuring and most refreshing of God’s gifts to man.

—Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (1816)

A pleasant event for legend scholars in the 1980s was the translation—for the first time complete and with scholarly annotation—of The German Legends of the Brothers Grimm (ed. and trans. Donald Ward, 2 vols., Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981). Yet although the very text of Deutsche Sagen has only now arrived in English, its influence, for better or worse, has preceded it. We recognise in these volumes, for instance, the now obligatory format for publishing legends: descriptive title followed by bare text, stripped of its conversational context, its accompanying belief system—even its narrator, whose name can be found, if at all, in the scholarly appendix pinched in at the volumes’ ends alongside the scholarly notes. It seems, at the moment the Grimms took the oral genre, put it into print, and so made it worthy of academic recognition—at the moment they kissed it in passages like that quoted above—simultaneously they put their texts to sleep and surrounded them with ring after ring of thorny methodological preconceptions. In the 180 years since then, few researchers have dared to penetrate this tangle to try to bring the genre back to life.
Ward cannot be faulted for trying: some of his notes elegantly summarise complicated scholarly issues or suggest provocative ways of looking at accounts of supernatural events in terms of an “altered state of consciousness caused by relative sensory deprivation (I:333)." But more often Ward surveys acres of brambles. One note begins with the unhelpful comment, “This legend is problematic as it could fit into a number of different categories” and ends, after proposing a number of pigeonholes, with the reassuring statement that “A special commission to study the question of an international classification system for folk legends came up with the outline of an international legend index” (I:365).

Ward’s helpful “Epilogue” casts some light on how criticism became so entangled. While noting that “the Grimms were committed to the precise recording of the tales and to reproducing them in the exact words in which they were told”, he concedes that the Grimms did not actually follow this method, but freely altered their texts to suit their purposes. When their contemporaries noted this, Ward tells us, Jacob responded enigmatically that “in order to get to the yolk of an egg, you have to break the shell, but if you do it with care, the yolk will remain intact.” It is true, Ward observes, that in dealing with the legends the Grimms held such normalising to a minimum—but only because the sources for many of their items were already “several steps removed from the original narrations.” Still, Ward adds, “the more aesthetically pleasing legends are . . . [those] that the Grimms themselves retold in their own narrative style because they had excerpted them from a variety of sources” (II:375).

The Grimms have cast a long shadow, and perhaps part of the reason legend scholarship remains so haphazard is that scholars still cannot discriminate what, where or why the actual subject of their research is. Nearly two hundred years later, we can barely discriminate between yolk, white, and shell, much less the chicken that gave it birth. William F.H. Nicolaisen has recently suggested that when a German folklorist looks at a Sage and an English-speaking folklorist looks at a legend, they are not in fact looking at the same thing, despite their belief that the two lexical terms translate each other. Sagen, he argues, represent things that “are said” (man sagt) to happen, which could be described in any number of different ways; the lexical term “legend”, on the other hand, carries overtones of writing and reading (as the “legend” on a diagram), and thus tends to represent patterned stories. Accordingly, legend scholars may elect either to discuss typical content (the yolk), as if this were independent of narrative media, or to examine the way in which individual performers
encapsulate such content for specific purposes or effects (the shell). In short, the topic of study has tended to be either the container or the thing contained. Scholars seem rarely to have recognised that the two cannot be treated as though they were identical; further, they can only be interrelated in terms of the forces that bring both into being and give them purpose. Folklorists need to stop collecting and breaking eggs and start chasing chickens.

If the legend is a distinct genre of oral narrative, then what are we looking at? Several options seem to present themselves to folklorists. The most popular seems to be to assume that the circulation of certain legends is proof presumptive that certain pre-existing beliefs, or prejudices, or habitual ways of thinking exist in the brains of those who pass them around. Methodologically, this presents problems, since it assumes that a given legend circulates primarily because it is believed to be true, or at least believable. Robert A. Georges and Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi have opposed this notion as simplistic and, ultimately, unprovable. Certainly, one would find it difficult to say what, if anything, “belief” in a legend means without conducting extensive tests on each of the sources of any given legend. This has not, however, stopped Jan Harold Brunvand from using this rough and ready notion as the basis of two popular books, The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings (New York, W.W. Norton, 1981) and The Choking Doberman and Other “New” Urban Legends (New York, W.W. Norton, 1984).

Before criticising the two, we must concede that Brunvand is not exclusively speaking to scholars. Rather, his audience comprises the people who circulate and enjoy legends as well as those who seek to collect and analyse them. And Brunvand tries to address this audience without condescension; indeed, he frequently runs round his lectern to sit in the audience. “The lack of verification”, he comments at the outset, “in no way diminishes the appeal urban legends have for us. We enjoy them merely as stories, and we tend at least to half-believe them as possibly accurate reports” (The Vanishing Hitchhiker, 2; italics mine). Consider the impact of this passage if “we/us” were replaced by “they/them” or even “you”! But Brunvand’s tact is such that he manages to turn aside this slight to the readers’ respect for facts and lead them onto a slippery path to self-analysis. A few sentences later, we are assured that “the stories that people believe to be true hold an important place in their worldview.” Soon we believe that accepting such “true-but-untrue” stories as folklore, comparing them, isolating their themes, and relating them to culture “can
yield rich insights into the state of our current civilization” (*The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, 2).

This method informs the whole book: adapting a variety of published and unpublished academic studies, Brunvand first describes a common type of legend, gives a few examples, then quickly rushes to huge generalisations about “our current civilization”. Again, though, Brunvand’s candid admission of his limits disarms criticism. Frequently, he admits what he has to—that the state of the research is such that, frankly, no more precise generalisations can be made. He finds Beverly Crane’s feminist interpretation of “The Roommate’s Death” to be “ingenious . . . plausible and well argued”, but he continues, “What needs to be done to analyze this is to collect . . . the informants’ own comments about their lore. How clearly would the girls who tell these stories perceive—or even accept—the messages extrapolated by scholars?” (61). And constantly, throughout his introduction and appendix, he stresses this fundamental lack of data:

> Perhaps the most telling aspect of legend interpretation—but often the most lacking in past collections—is solid information about the narration of legends in their natural contexts. What little we know about who tells the stories, when, to whom, and why invariably contributes toward understanding how legends function and what they mean (15; italics Brunvand’s).

At the same time, though, Brunvand provides precious little in the way of guidelines, either for collecting or interpreting such characteristics. His instructions to the would-be amateur folklorist come close to the ludicrous: after encouraging an “induced natural context” by “subtly urging people to tell the stories they know”, the collector is advised not to take much part in the conversation. “You should concentrate on writing down or recording the stories, noting facial expressions, gestures, audience reaction, and other subjects of conversation” (198). One pities any poor reader who takes such advice to heart and tries to jot down all this information in the midst of a characteristically chaotic legend-telling session, all the while trying to look subtle and non-directive.

And to what end? Most of the texts Brunvand quotes, by his own admission, edit out context, audience, and narrator. Even the actual spoken words have been silently regularised, or else all the collectors’ informants spoke in complete grammatical sentences without the false starts or stalls characteristic of normal conversation. Brunvand is silent about his own transcribing methodology and adopts other researchers’ texts uncritically; indeed, he often relies on journalistic versions from, for
instance, Ann Landers' or Abigail Van Buren's columns, and in his rush to generalisation he makes no distinctions between these and genuine oral variants. Comparing Brunvand's advice to his practice, one cannot help concluding that he sees the better course for legend scholars, and he approves, and he chooses the worst.

Significantly, there is little of this methodological shuffle in The Choking Doberman. It is headed by a preface full of self-congratulation:

"The reaction to [The Vanishing Hitchhiker] was gratifying . . . I even made People magazine (23 August 1982) as an instant scholar-celebrity . . . I raised many a reader's consciousness about his or her own folklore . . . I imagined at first that with The Vanishing Hitchhiker I had written the definitive work on American urban legends for some time . . . (xi-xii).

The sequel that follows, though, is slimmer still than the first volume: there Brunvand could suggest what analytical directions folklorists were trying out, but in this volume of “new” urban legends he is often reduced to summarising variant texts with minimal interpretation. And, even more than previously, he relies on journalistic and rewritten texts; even in the “sampler” of legends mentioned in The Vanishing Hitchhiker, ten of fourteen texts come from media or literary sources.

The sturdiest section deals with the legend mentioned in the book title. Surprisingly popular in the summer of 1981, the story of the protective dog has extensive roots in tradition, which Brunvand lays out in an easygoing but comprehensive fashion. Having done this, though, he stops short of analysis, concluding with a series of queries, including the big one (oddly relegated to No. 4 on his list): “Why did the story seem to become popular so suddenly and so vigorously in the Unites States in 1981 and in England the following year?” As before, he candidly admits that “the study of its oral-performance styles, contexts, and meanings in contemporary folklore [is] just ready to begin in earnest . . .” But instead of beginning, he is content with the offhanded gag, “We should number it K982, or [in case you missed his joke] ‘the legend of the canine that ate two fingers’” (49).

Given the alleged formlessness of the genre though, scholars have seen no problem with drawing conclusions about oral texts without producing or analysing oral texts. Likewise, presses have understandably been reluctant to commit themselves to careful, accurate collections of legend texts, since folklorists can apparently function perfectly well without hard
evidence. Even now there is no single authoritative anthology of legends that so much as attempts to redefine the nature of the beast. No scholar did more to legitimise legends than Richard Dorson, but, as Elizabeth Fine points out in a book to be discussed later, he frequently contradicted himself in his definitions and practices. Early on, he suggested, albeit in a "heretical" vein, that the rewriting of a local-colour writer might capture the flavour of performance better than a bare transcript, however verbatim; he also saw nothing wrong with collating multiple versions of "The McDonald Boys" circulating in Michigan and arriving at his own expanded "ideal" text. By the 1950s, however, he had recanted to the extent that he felt the transcriber should "faithfully render the words of his informants", although he yielded enough to the popular reader to allow the silent omission of oral characteristics like false starts. By 1971 he was shouting in italics that "American folk legends should be published . . . with no attempt to appeal to the general reader." And, in 1981, he finished his career as collector and publisher with Land of the Mikkrats: Urban Folklore in Indiana's Calumet Region (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1981). The book illustrates dramatically his strengths and weaknesses as a textmaker and analyst of texts. The strength, of course, is the book's readability. As a researcher and a writer, Dorson always commanded the precise descriptive phrase, the telling quote, that implied his conception of what was going on. Especially penetrating is the way he presents the personal experience narratives of one resident, "a self-proclaimed fascist and bigot" who nevertheless "claimed to have an IQ of over 145 . . . making it difficult, he said, to find persons of equal intellectual level with whom to associate" (20-21). The stories Dorson chooses to quote from his interview deftly reflect his informants' combined racial and verbal arrogance:

And last year I had a Mexican fellow who used to bring his dog into my yard to defecate. And so I went out and remonstrated with him, and he didn't get out. And I went out and got my rifle and almost killed him in my back yard last year. Because of the fact that he had a perfect right to occupy my back yard for the defecation of his dog. (21)

Dorson weaves such vignettes together into a complex but smoothly flowing overview of the region, but the smoothness itself raises suspicions. The book, he tells us, "depends for its primary data on taped interviews conducted in the field situation and supplemented by my field diaries" (241). Although the original tapes and transcripts are on file, the book is obviously a heavily edited version of both; only an occasional colloquialism
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survives. More profoundly, Dorson omits his own questions and comments in nearly every case. As a result, portraits like the above appear as though the informants simply materialised before Dorson and began speaking without prompting or dialogue. There is no question that they said what they did, but it is also obvious that, in selecting what he chose to report, Dorson interpreted his sources in an inconspicuous but heavily slanted way.

And, like the invisible methodology that underlies the book, Dorson’s background research is likewise difficult to trace. A scant four pages hold “A Bibliographical Note”, which lists a few background sources for his interpretations, but mainly details the publications of Dorson’s students, the “Gary Gang”, that also resulted from the project. As a result, The Land of the Mirlrats ultimately details the author’s subjective reactions to the Calumet Region’s lore, lacking the scholarly background or the detached methodology needed to objectify or corroborate these reactions. Like a Mike Wallace interview, Dorson’s accounts of his contact with the Calumet Region entertain us, so long as we do not happen to wonder what his informants really said.

Ironically, the most convincing legend transcripts appear in the chapter “The Folklore of Steel”. The best of these derive not from Dorson’s wide-ranging travels but from two students who “gathered some millworker buddies in their home and sat around drinking beer and shooting the breeze: all animated talkers about incidents in the mills.” Regrettably, the collectors are never identified; they and their buddies receive only first names in the transcripts. Still, as Dorson concedes, “the tape-recording of the socializing youths gives evidence of performance skills” (46-47), and the linguistic editing given the transcripts only mutes the genuine ring of performance:

Mike: I’ve heard stories about, like, if a guy falls into a vat of steel, they’ll take the steel out to the lake and they’ll dump it into the lake, kind of as a remembrance to him. Instead of using the steel, they’ll dump it, as a memorial to the guy.
Paul: How many tons of steel do you think that is, man?
Mike: It’s probably just enormous, because these are, like, two-hundred-ton kettles.
Ben: Well, they used to bury the whole ladle, years ago. But now that’s too damn expensive. When you go in, when you hire in, they measure your exact weight. And if you fall in a ladle they pour out the exact weight, and they ship that out and they bury that. They bury an ingot.
They tell you, “Well, this must be him.” You may not be in that part of the damn mold, man. But that’s what they do, they pour it to the damn ounce, if they can. (66)

In general, this chapter is the most successful in presenting the actual voices of the occupational workers in the area. But, as elsewhere, Dorson’s analysis is impressionistic, often limited to restating the narrators’ points in more formal language. The result is a book that, like Brunvand’s, introduces a variety of material to a mass audience but which, strangely, refuses to engage with its complexities.

Given the active research accorded legends under Dorson and Dégh at Bloomington, one would have expected Indiana University Press to have been one of the first to publish an authoritative anthology of legends. But Ronald L. Baker’s *Hoosier Folk Legends* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982) is a step backward from *The Land of the Millrats*: it makes primary data available, but in a muddled, inconvenient format. Its bulk is an uncritical reprinting of 305 raw texts, in the sterile stripped-down Grimm format. Baker’s short introduction does display the Brunvand-like wit and accessibility needed to leaven these texts. Particularly interesting is a discussion of the John Dillinger personal legends, which weaves verifiable history, cultural attitudes, and other outlaw legend cycles, into the fabric of the newly printed legend texts, producing a brief but coherent statement about the material. Yet too often the introduction merely summarises texts later presented in full, and to combine relevant information about any one legend, the reader has to keep flipping back and forth from commentary to text.

And the texts themselves are not without methodological thorns. Of these, thirty one come from the manuscript files of the Indiana Federal Writers’ Project (WPA), compiled in the early 1930s under circumstances that remain unclear (only one carries a date of collection or names an informant). All but two of the rest were collected by Baker’s folklore students at Indiana State University, but, like Dorson, Baker gives no information on the methods used to elicit, collect, and transcribe the materials. Most of the WPA texts have been rewritten in a journalistic style foreign to oral narrative: “An interesting reminder of the steamboat era in Indiana is . . .” (75). Even the texts collected under Baker’s supervision show such wide discrepancies of style as to suggest equally disparate collecting and transcribing methods. Even the untrained eye can pick up the discrepancy between legends evidently rewritten by students—
Southeast of the city limits of Sullivan, Indiana, there is a place called Free Springs. A small stream runs parallel to a railroad track, and there is a narrow gravel road that crosses the railroad tracks and a bridge over the stream. According to legend, there was a body found under the Free Springs Bridge sometime in the past...

—and those that preserve the stalls and stumblings of natural conversation, suggesting that the students transcribed more carefully from a taperecording:

Well, down at Edwardsport; no, close to Elnora; no, closer to Bicknell; yeah, that's it, Bicknell. Well, anyway, there was this real bad wreck here a while back about 15 years ago, and both boys were killed. It was a rainy drizzly night, and the wreck was a really bad one, and the boys were really cut up badly, so bad that the rescue crew couldn't find all the pieces...

But Baker takes no notice of such matters, glossing over legend style in a few sentences. He presents as a "workable" definition Bascom's battered and worn-out characterisation of legend as a story "regarded as fact by the storyteller and his or her audience", discards in a footnote Robert A. Georges' classic refutation of this idea, and borrows from Dégh and Vázsonyi only the statement that "the belief itself...makes its presence felt in any kind of legend" (2)—a vague reification that tells us little about why legend-tellers choose to perform stories. Baker apologises for the nature of his texts, admitting that "faithful transcripts of the texts would look more like playscripts than short stories" (36). But he adds blandly, "the general reader, for whom this collection is intended, should find the texts readable and the notes informative." The notes inform, but one doubts that the "general reader" will gain much from such examples as—

ISUFA. Collected in Sullivan, May 1970, from a 33-year-old male bank cashier. Motif E422.1.11.2, "Revenant as face or head." See note 56.10

And, yes, the texts can be read, but without the human side of the performance or the social context underlying the stories, it is a long, dull read.

Nevertheless, such dullness is far preferable to the out-and-out "entertainment" provided by James York Glimm in Flatlanders and Ridgerunners: Folktales from the Mountains of Northern Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983). The book begins with a kind of ingratiating charm: Glimm admits, "I grew up on Long Island, where the closest thing to nature was the local golf course" (xi), so when he
took a teaching job at Mansfield State, he suddenly had to deal with coons, possums, rattlesnakes and blizzards. “Although I was slow to catch on”, he continues, “the mountain people gradually began to teach me the right way to do things. Within a few months, I had fallen under the spell of the region” (xi). The next few pages detail how Glimm began to collect local material, how he got his post-doctoral training in “the latest methods of collecting ballads, proverbs, folktales, and folkways” (xiv), how he was mistaken for a federal agent by locals, how he met his prize informants, how he “travelled all over central Pennsylvania playing [his] banjo and telling folktales to anyone who would listen” (xvi)—and suddenly one begins to suspect that the prefaces are as much about Glimm as about the region. In ten and a half skinny pages, in fact, he uses the first-person pronoun some 126 times.

And inconsistencies appear: at one point he affirms that “The skill with which a story is told is more important than the actual content. It is the art of the telling which counts” (xix). Good enough, one thinks, as is his stated aim in the book: “to play the people of the region back to themselves so they can hear their own voices and laugh and marvel at their own stories” (xxii). But then Glimm ends with the following astonishing palinode:

My own questions and comments to the storyteller at the time of the interview have been omitted. I have also edited out the teller’s interjections that had no bearing on the tale. For example, Joe Borden’s story about rattlesnakes contained much irrelevant comment and was twice interrupted by visitors; I have omitted such interruptions. Some might contend that all contextual data should be included in the text; however, in a book such as this, that would be impractical and unnecessary. I hope that most readers will find the method I have used satisfactory (xxii).

Suspicious, one turns to the story mentioned and finds that, like Dorson, Glimm edits out the interruptions without indicating in any way where they occurred. Likewise, Borden, like most other informants, speaks in the same clear, unimpeded consistently grammatical language as Dorson’s and Brunvand’s informants, indicating that Glimm has silently levelled all the normal characteristics of oral discourse. And, of course, he follows the Grimms’ time-honoured method of presenting the stories, so skillfully performed by their narrators, as a sterile series of texts stripped of performer and context. Scholarly notes relegated to an appendix name names and places, but fail to characterise either.

Still more suspicious, one looks through the rest of the stories, looking
for examples that might suggest collecting in a real performance situation. Aha! This looks like it might be the real stuff:

County orphanage farmed Eva out when she was three years old. Lady name of McFee took her in for forty dollars a month . . . Mrs. McFee said Eva came from them folks up in the hollows that lives like woodchucks. She said that their girls is always too fat or too skinny. Time they’re sixteen a farm boy or a truck driver has got them pregnant. Farm boys take them home and work them to death. Truck drivers just laugh and move on. Far as Mrs. McFee was concerned, you just couldn’t do nothing with those girls. But the money was good . . . Next few years, [Eva] kept doing what country girls do best—dropping babies. Hell, she didn’t have brains enough to take care of herself, much less four kids, but she had one every year—just like a doe (77-79).

Yes, one thinks, this sounds like it might be closer to a real human voice—perhaps an arrogant, bigoted voice like Dorson’s informant, but a voice just the same. A flip to the notes leads to more astonishment: “I did not really collect this story—I saw it all happen, and this is the way I have told the story to others” (192-93). When the alleged collector quietly includes his own stories in an anthology that purports to present the voices of a region foreign to his own, we should properly question his ethics—but how much Long Island gall must it have taken for Glimm to write his own narrative in “folksy” language while silently omitting all the characteristic oral features of his other informants?

It seems unfortunately all too clear that Glimm has replaced the authentic voices of his region with his own image of what “mountain men” should talk like, and since the specifics of his collecting and editing practice remain tactfully unstated in notes and preface, we can only assume the worst—that little or none of his material reflects actual storytelling dynamics. Painfully, Glimm makes the most of his association with Dorson (made possible by one of his two NEH grants), who provided Glimm “with all the skills and motivation [he] needed to complete [his] fieldwork” (xiv). We may chide Pittsburgh for agreeing to print—and promote in paperback—such an unethical collection. Nevertheless, we must admit that folklorists in the Dorson tradition, however strong their distaste for “fakelore”, have not provided young scholars like Glimm with any better models to follow. Indeed, even Brunvand, for all the lip service he gives performance, actually gives all his texts equal weight in analysis, whether they reflect performance, artificial interview, informant (or collector) rewrite, journalistic rewrite, or novelistic treatment. As Donald
Ward accurately notes, at the end of his epilogue to the Grimms’ collection, English-language folk narrative scholarship truly presents a barren field (II:380). At the same time, legend-telling indubitably flourishes just outside our tantalised grasp.

Although long overdue, some English-language folklorists have begun to experiment with techniques to capture the genuine texture of performance, using concepts from other fields and areas of research, particularly Native American. Elizabeth C. Fine (The Folklore Text: From Performance to Print (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984)) addresses at length the problems of “translating” verbal art into words on paper, and her work suggests fruitful alternatives to the kinds of superficial anthologies we have surveyed. Most crucial to the new folklorist is her discussion of the semiotics of both performance and print: she points out that any attempt to reproduce oral discourse in writing inevitably involves “intersemiotic translation”, stripping away the aural, kinesic, tactile, and olfactory modes of communication and replacing them with a symbolic, exclusively visual mode. When folklorists ignore the many facets of performance, of course, they produce not translations but abstracts, no matter how nominally “verbatim” their texts. Conversely, when they attempt to reproduce all the observable aspects of performance in print, they risk “overloading”, suffocating the text inside layers of orthography.

Fine’s detailed consideration of alternatives leads to a sensible compromise that uses “common language” as much as possible but nevertheless finds space for the maximum amount of verbal and non-verbal communications. First she suggests that a “report”, or ethnography of the performance tradition and of the immediate context, precede the actual “record”, or transcription of the performance. At the core of her “record” are devices popularised by Dennis Tedlock in the 1960s to translate Native American performances from the previous “prose” transcriptions into a “poetic” format more suited to the elevated diction of the genre. Using line breaks to indicate brief pauses, capital letters and minuscules to suggest dynamics, and iconic devices like “upstairs” letters to represent rising pitch, Fine also employs the left margin to characterise unusual voice intonations and the right margin to describe posture and hand motions. Special symbols and orthographies represent rise in pitch, falsetto, rasp, and sustains. At the same time, she refuses to be dogmatic about what should be represented: “Recording intonational phonemes may be too many nits to pick without becoming a nitwit” (163). The result is an easily readable, indeed easily performable text.

This last quality is not accidental. Fine’s approach to performance
differs from most other folklorists' in that she prefers to appreciate performance instead of analysing it. This is not to demean her approach: perhaps one of the problems with previous narrative scholars is that they have been too willing to reduce texts to content before they have even taken notice of the qualities that make audiences want performers to relate them. To translate adequately, she insists, folklorists must first learn as much as they can about how audiences and performers see the oral tradition, then through a series of trial drafts, painstakingly compare the transcription to the electronic record of the individual performance. Finally—and here Fine comes closest to Tedlock—the act of transcription must lead to an act of "restitution"; that is, the original performance must be reconstituted through "a second, interpretive performance" (163). The textmaker may compare his or her own performance to that recorded, or ask another trained interpreter to embody the transcription. In either case, the end product of textmaking is not—paradoxically—the text, but the replication of the original verbal act.

Here, though the limitations of Fine's approach become all too apparent. "First, make both a video (or film) recording and an audio recording", she begins, somewhat in the vein of the old cookbook recipe: first, catch your rabbit. To be sure, Fine did not have to run hard to capture her sample text. An oral recreation of Julius Lester's literary recreation of the black folktale "Stagolee", it was offered her by a college student as the first in a series of several assigned performances during a course called "Oral Interpretation of Black Literature" (171). The initial performance was not videotaped, so Fine asked the performer to repeat it for the class three months later, with cameras and taperecorder present and running. He had no qualms, and even admitted to Fine that the second time around he "tried even more to jazz it up, so that the audience would see something different" (170). The resulting text abounds with vigour, drama, and detail, but can we say that it truly represents "the" folklore text?

One doubts that Fine, in constructing her model of black performing style, has really meditated over Roger Abrahams' experiences collecting black folktales and toasts in inner-city Philadelphia. He recalls one performer, highly respected by the community, who apparently took sadistic pleasure in taunting Abrahams: "He would think up the most tempting bit of lore and whenever he would see me without my notebook, he would casually walk over to me and rattle it off. Yet when he saw me with my notebook, he would run off cackling." Yet another caught Abrahams without his recorder or notebook, "delivered a marvelously full
text that lasted for fully fifteen minutes” into the folklorist’s helpless ears, then “tipped his hat and danced down the street.” Abrahams’ informants, clearly tried to tell him what folklorists in “the field” tend to forget—that performing to an appreciative human being and performing to a sterile recording device are two different things. Technological aids like video cameras or taperecorders inevitably and irreversibly influence the performance to the extent that a recorded text may or may not accurately reflect the tradition that gave rise to it. And many performers, knowing this, simply prefer to perform to humans, not technologically enhanced, notebook wielding, bionic “collectors”.

But Fine’s methodological fault perhaps derives from another of the book’s difficulties. A few years ago, a European-oriented folklorist warned me against trusting the work of a younger colleague: “He has not done the reading!” The strength and weakness of Fine’s work is that she has indeed done “the reading”. Much of The Folklore Text—perhaps the largest part—summarises other peoples’ theoretical works, and the resulting cacophony of jargon all too often conceals Fine’s own good sense. “Berleant’s diagram of the aesthetic field”, she begins at one point, no diagram in sight,

consists of four interacting elements and a set of sociological factors that influence the interaction. Within a large circle indicating the aesthetic field, four elements, represented by four circles connected by lines, interact in the aesthetic experience: Artist, Work of Art, Performer, and Aesthetic Perceiver (Art Subject). Each of these elements has its own norms and traditions which influence any one aesthetic experience, and Berleant illustrates this by dividing each circle with a dotted line . . . [and so on through additional factors, lines, intersecting circles, etc.]

The above schematic summary of the aesthetic field cannot do justice to the dynamic process Berleant envisions (71-72).

To be fair, three pages later Fine offers a variant of Berleant’s diagram, looking in all its complexity rather like an enlargement of a squash bug. But the section quoted illustrates all too well how deeply the reader must wade through whole sections of Fine’s paraphrases—or worse, through Fine’s paraphrases of Richard Bauman’s paraphrases—of material that never grounds out in real-life observation or practice.

Fine is certainly correct when she warns that textmaking experiments will lead nowhere unless they are grounded in a coherent theory of translation; “unless this innovative experimentation with recording performance is . . . presented as a valid and productive method of recording, the great majority of folklore collectors will undoubtedly
continue making texts which ignore performance" (15). But theory and experience must reflect each other, and Fine’s book would have been much stronger if it contained as many texts, or accounts of textmaking, as it does theoretical categories and schemata. For this reason, in spite of Fine’s good sense and analytical acumen, folklorists will probably continue to turn more quickly and gratefully to Edward D. Ives’ old-fashioned advice in *The Tape Recorded Interview* (1974; rpt. Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1980)—vague on theory but long on experience, and at least written in “common language”.

They might better turn, however, from older English-language methodology to one of the sources of Fine’s revolution—Dennis Tedlock, whose influential essays are now collected in *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983). Dealing with Zuñi and Quiché texts at two removes, Tedlock has had to deal with problems both in transcription and literal translation. Yet his explorations, though often complicated and highly theoretical, are never crabbed. Perhaps dealing with non-western narratives bears this built-in advantage: since their aesthetics do not obviously coincide with our western expectations, any analysis or any story will provoke some interest, if only superficially, as “exotic”. By contrast, analysts of English-language narratives risk looking like either glib truists or wilful complicators. Thus, while Fine retreats into scholarly jargon to avoid mentioning the obvious, Tedlock embraces a candid, first-person style that is sometimes unabashedly self-indulgent. To be sure, his transcriptions of his own scholarly lectures in quasi-poetic style, for instance, do not materially improve their logic or persuasiveness.

But often—far more often than Fine—his image-heavy style strikes to the heart of performance dynamics, as when he comments on one storyteller’s seeming digression:

> So our diviner stops the flow of the story here to remind us that massive trees have hollows in them, the trees we all know, not just the tree occurring in this story, he strikes a chord here rather than just playing the melody (254).

Yes, I think, reading this gloss, this is exactly what legend-telling does: it insists on drawing a response from the listener, a responsive chord/cord that harmonises the individual incident in the story with a broader structural system, a sense shared by the performer and the listener of how things are and where they are going. Tedlock, to be sure, is not captivated
by images; indeed, he chides Eco and soundly criticises Lévi-Strauss for superficial use of musical similes. But he does so from a firm sense of what is important about the performance both of music (the critical role of tempo, for instance) and of spoken narrative; and he can say precisely when the two really are doing the same things.

A second strength in Tedlock’s work is honesty. Unlike Fine, who seems unaware of how she has in many ways controlled the dynamics of her single performance, Tedlock is unafraid to witness, critique, and, ultimately exploit his own role in performance. He is aware that there are levels of misrepresentation more subtle than Lévi-Strauss’s rewritings but just as damaging. Most collections of native texts, (like the Grimms’, Brunvand’s, Dorson’s, Baker’s, and Glimm’s, we might add), “are direct quotations rather than analogical replacements of native discourse, but they are not shown to us in the full light of primary dialogue. Rather, they are presented as if the anthropologist who collected them had had a tracheotomy prior to entering the field” (325). Touche, one automatically adds, recalling Thurber.

Perhaps Tedlock rights the balance too strongly at times, reveling in his self-found role as co-creator. But in his analysis of Walter Peynetsa’s (unrecorded and untranscribed!) performance of a Zuñi story in a natural environment he attends perceptively to the features that emerged here that did not and could not in an earlier tape-recorded narration. That Tedlock prompted the specific story told, and did so for his own reasons, is candidly admitted:

It wasn’t that he didn’t want to tell them a story; rather, he couldn’t decide which story to tell. When they didn’t come up with any specific request—and he didn’t give them very much time—he threw that decision directly to me. . . . After all, no one present could surpass me in having an active interest in the stories, and by this time no one present had nearly as many stories freshly in mind as I did. One might generalize the problem this way: The more a fieldworker knows and is known, the less that fieldworker can avoid the action. The other side of this is that the less a fieldworker knows and is known, the greater will be that fieldworker’s inability to interpret the actions of others, whether those actions take him into account or not (287).

Tedlock is being a little self-serving here: he not only admits controlling one stage of the event, he also suggests that doing so certifies his capacity to interpret what happened next. There is danger in this, of course. Ignorant, ethnocentric fieldworkers who merely think they know what is going on will not only influence and control the performance, they will
inevitably influence and control every researchers’ ability to perceive what it is that is really going on. Ultimately, like Glimm or the sentimentalising Zuñi collector Frank Cushing, they may actually replace the art of the original oral performance with literary craft of their own. But Tedlock’s sensitivity to fine points of Zuñi storytelling saves him, here as elsewhere. The need for careful transcription makes him aware of details overlooked by previous scholars and even cheerfully omitted by English-language transcribers.

Like Fine, Tedlock ultimately is interested in “the possibility of a performable translation” (13). But translation, at least in this volume, takes the form of a dialogue, not monologue. The image left with us is not the performer, frozen on the video screen or carefully cut open and spread apart on the dissecting table of the printed page, but of Tedlock and his various informants and storytellers engaged in vivacious, sometimes puzzled, sometimes fruitful discussion. We may perhaps criticise him for not planning the book as a whole like Fine’s but remaining content instead with an anthology of previously published or delivered works. The book comprises a sequence of interesting discussions with no theoretical or methodological synthesis. But, at the end of one essay, Tedlock says, “Here I say leewi, “all”, which means it’s someone else’s turn” (301). In other words, the dialogue comprises the writer, the subjects, the observer, the performers—and finally the reader. And it is time for one of us to take a real turn.

Two such turns, although in different directions, compose two recent studies, Janet L. Langlois’ Belle Gunness: The Lady Bluebeard (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985) and by David J. Hufford’s The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centred Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982). The first of these details community traditions surrounding a notorious mass-murderess who lured an uncertain number of men with matrimonial advertisements, then murdered and buried them around her Indiana farm. Langlois distills into a short monograph a remarkable amount of personal research and first-hand experience of LaPorte, the community disrupted by the crime. Her brief introduction modestly surveys her sources: newspaper files, tabloid publications, Norwegian records (documenting Gunness’s birth and emigration), trial records, amateur plays and skits, local poetry, questionnaires, property deeds, and, everywhere, everywhere, interviews—interviews by Langlois, by oral history collectors, by earlier crime enthusiasts. So the first thing that amazes the reader is the shear
amount of commentary the crime produced; the second is that Langlois has "read" all this so completely. She states the paradox neatly:

... people have talked about the murders around family dinner tables, on front porches, during coffee breaks, at barber shops and club meetings, and on the benches set on the courthouse lawns in the center of town for over seventy-five years. They have talked to each other and to interested outsiders, newspaper reporters, detective story writers, and university researchers (myself included) for decades in attempts to understand what happened (8).

Langlois' book, in part, documents the way the residents used "the symbolic medium of folk art" to cope with the shockwaves set off by the murders and still reverberating through the town (9). She recognises that, persistently, the crime functions, in talk, as "a complex metaphor, a multivalent presence that ultimately defines their community itself..." (10), particularly in the way that Belle proved to represent the inverse of social norms taken for granted.16 A woman, she nevertheless dressed and acted like a man—and lured men through phony matrimonial ads to their deaths. A human, she treated people like beasts, slaughtering them and even, in one cycle of legends, feeding them to her hogs or grinding them into sausage. Langlois' analysis of stories is often perceptive and rarely forced, a benefit of her extended contact with the community of LaPorte.

Likewise, she reacts alertly to the short but always significant "asides" (usually—but not consistently—italicised in her transcriptions) that her sources drop into stories to "evaluate" them.

She woke up and she looked out the window, and she said to my dad, "Looks like a fire up at the old lady's."
And he said "Aw, c'mon to bed. She's probably got the house insured good, and she's going to burn it up now." And he wouldn't even get up and look (50; italics Langlois').

In interpreting this story, Langlois compares it to stereotypes of farmers raising barns and helping out neighbours and perceptively connects it with other stories in which she had picked gratuitous quarrels with residents. She concludes, fairly, that "Gunness's abuse of a neighbor's rights had caused a corresponding atrophy of her neighbors' obligations" (51).

Again, though, Langlois' subject matter is perhaps too close to us to be really new. Often conclusions like the above sound flat—fair, accurate, well-expressed, but not much more than the reader could get from the text
alone. (Of course, if these were Native American narratives, there might be no problem.) Novelty, too often, comes not from the material, or the conclusions, but from the secondary scholarship so heavily sprinkled along the way. The result introduces Belle Gunness to Lévi-Strauss, Allport and Postman, Babcock, and other ethnographers, but the sum total of the work does not consist of more than the individual conclusions.

Another methodological problem is the breadth of her focus. Because she is looking for symbols that reflect the community's values, she finds them literally everywhere. Indeed, her notion of "legend" is closest to the popular sense of the word as the elongated shadow of a notorious figure. Beside legends and memorates, it encompasses unpatterned reminiscences, popular literature, and even legal evidence. And, the way Langlois interweaves these elements, it is often difficult to determine which symbols are immanent in the verified facts of the case, which are single individuals' "readings" of its meaning, and which reflect the consensus of the community—or at least part of it. For one, I would have appreciated a clear, chronological exposition of the whole case (details of which now appear throughout), followed by fuller discussion of how the most telling symbol complexes actually emerge in performance. Some of her most perceptive pages involve the staging of a locally-written "Ballad of Belle Gunness" as part of revues before local literary and theatre groups: Langlois interrelates music, costume, and dance so neatly that one wishes she had considered performance of oral narratives more frequently.

Conversely, many of Langlois' perceptions had previously appeared, perhaps more acutely, in article form, and this book, short as it is, is less a monograph than an expanded article. Perhaps the article, with its tighter focus, does her ideas more justice; or perhaps a longer, more complicated book would be needed to flesh out the complex human relationships that the stories imply. As it is, the book seems to fall between the two. Nevertheless, to Langlois' credit, she at least suggests the multivalent way in which this single figure functions in local legend, and in so doing suggests why Belle Gunness did not die—and is unlikely to do so in the future.

Hufford's work, by contrast, expresses a forceful personal interpretation of his material, not as tradition but as reality. "The primary theoretical statement of [my] approach", he says, "might be roughly summed up as follows: some significant portion of traditional supernatural belief is associated with accurate observations interpreted rationally" (xviii). Bold words indeed, in a field where not so long ago folklorists automatically
assumed legends by definition to be contrary to fact, however strongly believed. One can hardly think of another folklorist so willing to take seriously informants who relate bizarre experiences of being paralysed and victimised by “evil” forces. Yet Hufford leaves little doubt that his sources consider the bizarre event empirical, and that they push their own rationality to the limits to try to account for it. *The Terror That Comes in the Night* compiles and collates a large amount of primary material about “the Old Hag” (the Newfoundland term for the event), much collected by Hufford himself, the rest culled from diverse sources representing western and non-Western cultures.

Perhaps the one weakness of the book is that it does not conclude much about the ways in which cultural traditions explain the Old Hag experience or about what the Old Hag tells us about culture. Instead, Hufford chooses not to say what the event means, but to speculate on what it is. Rather than delving into the interrelationship of tradition and culture, then, he boldly turns to psychological and neurological research. He concludes, convincingly, that the Old Hag is not merely the reflection of supernatural legends given cultural sanction. He proposes that it derives from a special form of sleep paralysis—present cross-culturally in much the same form—in which “REM phenomena intrude into wakefulness” (168).

And this attitude toward the material—this willingness to credit narrators and listen closely to what they are trying to say—in a sense makes Hufford’s book methodologically the strongest of any surveyed. To be sure, his orthography differs little from the traditional “prose” format, but, as he stresses at the outset of the study, he has also attempted to be “inclusive” in presenting the beginnings and endings of interviews, as well as careful to represent the exact questions, probes, and comments that accompany specific narratives (xx). Since Hufford is willing to listen, as an interested party, to his sources, and since he is scrupulous about presenting his interviews as they occurred, the texts—more often than in any other English-language anthology or study—break through recognisably into moving performance:

RON: ... But the next thing I knew, from one of the areas of the room this grayish, brownish murky presence was there. And it kind of swept down over the bed and I was terrified! I mean I don’t—I can’t remember when I was this scared! ... And I felt—I felt this pressing down all over me. I couldn’t breathe. I couldn’t move. And the whole thing—the whole thing was that—there was like—I could hear the stereo in the room next
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to me. I was wide awake, you know. It was a fraternity house. I could hear everything going on all over the house. It was a pretty noisy place. And I couldn’t move and I was helpless. And I was really—I was really scared. And all I could remember there was the struggle, you know. The—you know, “Jesus Christ, I got to—I got to get out of here! What’s going on?”

And this murky presence—just kind of—this was evil! (Nervous laugh) This was evil! You know, this is weird! You must think I’m a—

HUFFORD: No, I’ve heard people say things like this a lot—

RON: [Excitedly] This is—I’m not—I’m not—I’m not a paranoid person and, you know, I’d don’t—I don’t have any—I don’t think I’ve got any, you know problems like this but—This thing was there! (59; the ellipses indicate the reviewer’s omissions).

Merely to transcribe and present emotion such as this would present an advance over previous transcribers’ craft, but Hufford is not content with textmaking. Informants like this clearly are making Hufford a gift that requires greater “restitution” (in Fine’s sense) than mere aesthetic appreciation of a literal or imaginative re-enactment. And Hufford recognises this. In analysing the whole interview extracted above, he first comments on Ron’s “concern for what I would think of him despite the assurances I had given him”, and “the difficulty he had in composing and saying his sentences”, then concludes:

This combination of difficult expression and self-consciousness often prevents people from speaking of their experiences. Only after I have indicated that they are not necessarily pathological and that I know enough about them to understand even the difficult points do most victims begin to verbalize their experience freely (64).

Hufford’s methods, then, confront many of the difficulties raised in my discussion of Fine’s work: he recognises over and over the sheer difficulty of participating in an extraordinarily difficult tradition to document—one that is not (in the United States) matched by any traditional way of verbalising the tradition. He comments, in one of the most significant discussions in the book:

When one has an experience and is aware that others have had a similar experience, that knowledge is generally accompanied by the availability of words and phrases understood to describe the experience or some of its aspects . . . Such language allows a great many complex operations and experiences to be indicated quickly and conveniently. The same is true
with experiences that are considered supernatural... Not only does general knowledge allow for convenient language, but the presence of convenient language indicates the presence of a consensus, which in most cases provides assurance that one's experience is not somehow monstrous (51-52).

Here Hufford taps the genuine sense in which legends can be called one of "God's gifts to man". He recognises that "talking" is therapeutic only so far as tradition is available to make the "monstrous" experience part of what the community accepts as known experience. In spite of the apparent fear and violence expressed in the words of legends, then, at their centre lies the "lasting security", the reassurance that this fear and violence can be given order and shared. Perhaps Langlois' problem is the banality of evil among western cultures—the fact that mass murder, whether illegally by individuals or quasilegally by governments, has become so commonplace that language no longer needs to strain and crack to name the experience. Hufford, by contrast, has to confront an unnamable, a nontradition. In fact, he admits that, in the United States, the lack of convenient language for the Old Hag, which would "indicate a consensus that it is acceptable to have undergone it", means that "the experience remains largely unshared and unknown..." (53).

Ironically, then, Hufford's role is not to document an existing oral tradition, but to allow a new one to come into being. And his examples leave little doubt that one is needed. The informant quoted above had never before talked about his attack, but, Hufford says, he "was greatly reassured at hearing that others had gone through the same thing" (58). Similarly, he summarises a case of a surgeon who had kept silent, fearing he had epilepsy, and dosed himself secretly with a variety of anticonvulsive drugs; when he "learned by chance of the existence of ideopathic SP (a convenient psychological jargon term describing the Old Hag), he was reduced to tears" (160-61). In short, Hufford succeeds by focusing, not on the verbal "artfulness" of the narrations, nor on the apparent symbolic content, nor on the traditionality of the component motifs, but on the actual process that his informants are using to translate the uncanny into the canny—the known, the shared, the normal. Neither the yolk nor the shell is central for him, but the living entity that requires both. 18 For unlike many of the other researchers of English-language legends, he empathises, and in so doing completes what his sources otherwise would vainly try to tell others.
The legend, in other words, is not an expressed tradition, nor a certain pattern of narration, but an attempt to "name", to create convenient language for the events that baffle or threaten us. Consensus is its goal, though as Dégh and Vázsonyi have pointed out, it often does not achieve that goal in most group situations, and it becomes dormant as soon as it does succeed. But successful or not, it allows individuals to share perceptions of the world in a form that is linguistically and socially acceptable. The methodological problem that all legend scholars must confront is that when it ceases to serve this function, the legend necessarily becomes something else again—an abstract, a report, perhaps even a folktale masquerading as history. Unless we can catch (as Langlois and Hufford did) the community saying things through the legends, we really are collecting and analysing the shells of these traditions and speculating into their vacuity about what kinds of living entities might have been, might be, fitted inside these covers.

It is anticlimactic, but still fitting, to end this review with a book saddled with the unfortunate title, The Evidence for PHANTOM HITCH-HIKERS (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, The Aquarian Press, 1984). Part of a series discussing, for instance, alien abductions, the Bermuda Triangle, and visions of the Virgin Mary, the volume is sponsored by the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena, an English group that advocates a "scientific approach" to paranormal reports. Its author, Michael Goss, is no scientist but a former English scholar at Leeds and Birmingham Universities. And so the book has predictable faults. Too often he lapses into a kind of "gee-whiz" rhetoric designed only to lead the tabloid reader on in the hope of strange and wonderful conclusions. In fact, Goss interviews only one witness of such a phantom, and for his other test cases he relies too easily on newspaper and magazine accounts. One doubts his tenaciousness: at one point he meets an amateur parapsychologist who claimed to have interviewed no less than twelve witnesses. Yet while he paraphrases and discusses this interview at length, he seems not to have tried to have contacted any of the twelve. Goss's discussion weakly concludes that "folklorists . . . will regard [these] dozen witnesses as 'friends of friends' . . ." (117).

Nevertheless, the book is worth folklorists' attention, if only as a sign of what might be done if one applied Hufford's methods to Brunvand's materials. Goss takes more care than one might expect in presenting the topic. He is, to begin with, well aware of folklorists' writings on the "classic" vanishing hitchhiker legend; moreover, he admits from the start
that the highly patterned form of most collected variants suggests entertainment, not experience. Nevertheless, he admits that this corpus is surrounded by dozens of less patterned accounts, and he locates a certain number of apparently sincere persons who actually claim to have encountered vanishing persons along the road. Goss's approach to this persistent residue of "real-life" events is complex. While never wholly dismissing the possibility that "ghosts" might prove convenient language for some kind of empirical event, he nevertheless tends to favour rationalist and psychological interpretations.

A certain number, he concedes, must be cruel hoaxes. (He surveys one bizarre case, in which a driver picked up a hitchhiker who did not vanish, but who simply went her way, first giving the driver the address of a recently bereaved parent). Others, he admits, are the result of mistaken perception: one notorious "apparition" proved to be no more than a group of soccer players walking home with towels around their necks. Still others, though, he suggests are the result of altered states of consciousness, noting

that the act of driving requires a minute yet significant alteration of normal consciousness, which over long journeys can lead to a sort of spontaneous dissociation nicknamed 'highway hypnosis', sometimes accompanied by vivid hallucinations; [and] that night driving may involve a form of sensory deprivation which further increases the likelihood of hallucination occurring (135).

To explain the persistence of the legend and the frequency with which motifs from it enter into supernormal experiences, he posits its status as a kind of archetype, deposited by tradition in the subconscious minds of individuals, from which, "Like a long dormant hypnotic instruction, it could surge into actuality when individuals were temporarily in the right mental state and the right set of circumstances to be susceptible to it" (138).

In the end, therefore, Goss arrives at the same point as Lauri Honko in suggesting that folklore does not merely interpret, but actually projects itself into empirical reality.20 The book, however limited by its own nature, still demonstrates that there is more to legend than form and tradition. By contrast, Brunvand quotes a whole string of "Vanishing Hitchhiker" variants, ending with an "alleged" firsthand report that concludes "I just hope that poor girl gets wherever it is she's going." In place of analysis, Brunvand gives us a blithe "So do I! But let us move on in the next chapter
to another popular automobile legend . . . ” (40). But folklore, as Dégh and Vázsonyi have pointed out, has a disturbing way of becoming true,21 and in taking the empirical nature of road ghosts as his subject, Goss does what Brunvand cannot: he forces us to look at the hitchhiker before she vanishes.

Notes

1. Ward’s own provocative survey of supranormal experiences that may underlie traditions is “The Little Man Who Wasn’t There: Encounters with the Supranormal”, Fabula, 18 (1977): 212-225. One must admit, though, that even he stretches this approach too far in his notes to Grimm when he comments on the legend titled “The Wheel of Fortune” (No. 210). “It is possible”, he says, “that some element in the human perception apparatus [sic] enables people to actually see disks flying in the sky . . . It may be that such apparitions contributed to this and other related legends” (I:379). The only problem is that the Grimms’ legend never mentions discs that fly, only one used by the devil to grant initiates the ability to read the future and find treasure.


5. See for instance, Dégh’s approving quotation of Leopold Schmidt: “the legend has only content and no fixed form at all and depends on the nature of the message it communicates” (“Folk Narrative”, Richard M. Dorson, ed., Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction [Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972], p.73); earlier, she observed that fragmentary, incoherent plots were the norm rather than the exception among legends, (“The ‘Belief Legend’ in Modern Society: Form, Function, and Relationship to Other Genres”, American Folk Legend, p.62) and commented that the typical legend-teller “is no artist, he has no artistic inspirations, he claims only to tell the truth” (“Processes of Legend Formation”, in
Georgios A. Megas, ed., *IV International Congress for Folk-Narrative Research in Athens, Laographia, 22* [1965]: 82). At the same time, though, she conceded that “If there is artistry in the way a legend is told, it is in the skilful formulation of convincing statements” (“Folk Narrative”, p.74).


7. “For a local legend”, Dorson comments revealingly apropos this particular “text”, “which has various shapes and fragments lodged in the minds of the townspeople, the collector may have to ask several leading questions, much in the form of an interview, and piece the data together into a connected whole, after he has queried many people in order to establish the group knowledge of the Sage” (*Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers* [Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1952], p.5). Dorson’s reconstruction, devoid of informant notes or leading questions, appears on pp.169-176. His revealing use of the term Sage suggests that, consciously or unconsciously, he is following the Grimms’ practice of collating and polishing multiple versions into an aesthetically pleasing whole.


10. For the layman, no explanation of what a “motif” is is given, nor are the facts in the notes analysed in any way to make them meaningful. One wonders, for instance, why Baker thought the age and occupation of the narrator was worth reporting, but not his name or the context of collecting. For the specialist, no master index of motifs is provided. Indeed, no index of any sort is available, so that the researcher looking for a given legend or motif must look through all the texts and notes to locate examples.

11. Nor is this example unique: another narrative, titled “Fake Prof”, exhibits the same mountain-man lingo: “Guy claimed to know more languages than the United Nations. Said he could talk Chink, Wop, Jap, an’ lots more. He was quotin’ Hindu an’ Hebrew like they was his mother tongues... Oh, they thought he could eat hay over the big beam, they did” (p.127). The note explains, “This story is a composite of what I heard. David Darby, Soll Tessman, and Arthur Barlow also have hilarious versions, but they do not tell them in the mountain dialect” (p.196; italics mine).


15. One would have like a more extended exchange, for instance, with Dell Hymes, who proposes an alternative methodology, based on detailed linguistic analysis, for finding “poetic” form in Native American texts. See his *In vain I tried to tell you*: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981). In a brief discussion, Tedlock acknowledges that Native American narrators often consciously mark off large units of story into verbal “verses and stanzas” but finds Hymes’ linguistic analysis of regular “lines” less convincing and “wide open to gerrymandering” (p.57). Tedlock, it seems to me, is on sounder methodological footing, as he can verify the pauses on his tapes, while Hymes, dealing with ethnographic texts often collected decades before, can only hypothesise them. Nevertheless, researchers have only begun to explore the relationship between linguistic structures and narrative structures, using the techniques of William Labov. For a start, Gillian Bennett has fitted the characteristic features of “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” into Labov’s narrative paradigm in her essay, “The Phantom Hitchhiker: Neither Modern, Urban nor Legend?” (*Perspectives on Contemporary Legend*, Vol. 1, ed. Paul Smith [Sheffield: CECTAL, 1984], pp.45-63.) More recently, she has suggested important linguistic distinctions in legend texts that are signalled by differences in “paragraphing” and other linguistic markers (“Legend: Performance and Truth”, *Monsters with Iron Teeth: Perspectives on Contemporary Legend*, Vol. 3, pp.13-36.)

16. In a more contemporary vein, Sylvia Grider has found similar metaphorical patterns in legends surrounding the Halloween murder of a child by his father. See “The Razor Blades in the Apple Syndrome”, in *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend*, Vol. 1, pp.128-140.


18. Although outside the scope of this review, Henry Glassie offers another model for this “holistic” methodology in his *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982). In particular, he criticises the ways in which scholars inadvertently “attempt to control” narratives by reducing them to narratives, plots, plot summaries, even situational functions. Instead, he argues, through his intensely subjective descriptions and transcriptions, that stories “record one person’s attempt to coordinate multiple responsibilities to time, to the past event, the present situation, the future of the community . . . While existing for themselves as confections of the speaker’s craft, stories connect the transitory to the immutable through the fragile self” (47-48).

19. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, “The Dialectics of the Legend”, *Folklore*

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This is a clever, wordy book about words. The buzzwords are *symbolic* (an adjective) and *allegory* (a noun). Its objective is “to rehabilitate ‘symbolic’ as a term that contains and does not negate ‘allegory’ as a perfectly legitimate poetic device.”

The conclusion to which the book comes is based on its author’s intention to make it a widely used textbook. Using structuralist, poststructuralist and phenomenological approaches, and following a long disquisition on the symbolic tradition, Adams takes apart the “romantic” distinction between the concept of an allegory and the symbolic idea. His proffered replacement is the opposition of the “miraculous symbol/allegory” to the “secular symbolic”.

The nouns (symbol and allegory) become synonyms; the adjective is the opposite. The noun is the “miraculous”; the adjective is the “secular”. The “miraculous” opposes the “secular”, not the “miraculous” the “mundane”, or the “spiritual” the “secular”.

In figure 12.2 the sciences and humanities are classified in a dynamic system with a mythic pole (where reside languages and myths) and an anti-mythic pole where the sciences and mathematics are found. The ironic carries criticism and history towards the anti-mythic pole, where “indifference and difference are opposed, and indifference is negated”. Anti-myth can then return to myth, as mathematics can influence art and religion returns to myth. At the mythic pole “indifference/difference is opposed by identity”.

Literary criticism has never had to be sense to sell well. Adams tries to please as many parts of as many schools as possible, and insiders have given his book critical acclaim. As an outsider, I cannot avoid the conclusion that the whole business of playing with words for a living must be a terrible bore.

D.E. Bland


This book is based on one fact: it is stated on page 43: “there exists no body of basic demographic data on the Irish (or on any other group) as an ethnic group in the United States. None.” Nor have ethnic and religious data been collected in the only universally valid way, by national census.

So everything that is written about the Irish in America is speculative. This allows Akenson, himself the author of several books on Irish-American history, to do a demolition job on the common myths of Irish American culture. Using
Canadian evidence, which is more clearcut, he shows that both Catholic and Protestant immigrants settled predominantly into their old livelihood of farming. The idea that the Irish were Catholics and that the Catholic Irish were quintessentially East Coast city dwellers in the U.S.A. is unsustainable, according to this new view.

Akenson notes that it is convenient for naive Marxist historiography to have the Irish dropping into American cities as a dispossessed proletariat, but this is far too facile to carry much credibility. Some of the American Irish who do live in ghettos in Boston and New York blame their own alcoholic poverty on a racial stereotype, but that has no credibility either.

On the argument about the Irish in America, the case is made and carries conviction. But even with big type that story would not make a book. So Akenson weaves in with it another product of his researches, this time from Ireland, which would also be too thin a narrative to make a monograph on its own. This is the story of how Archbishop Whatley of Dublin, formerly an Oxford Professor of Political Economy, became convinced of the scientific value of phrenology (the measurement of the human skull as a guide to character and ability). Akenson tries to link his two stories by saying that Whatley was conned by a leading phrenologist, and the historians of the U.S.A. are conned by the Irish myth. This is a bald and unconvincing argument.

Being Had is a cheeky book. It does not hang together as a literary product. Its contents would make up two nice guest lectures at the end of term or the end of a period as president of some historical society.

D.E. Bland

BAKHTIN, Mikhail, (translated by Hélène ISWOLSKY), *Rabelais and His World*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, xxiii, 484pp., $29.50 cloth, $10.95 paper.

One notes that a copyright of this text was held by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1968. I presume that some useful text was translated from English to Russian in about that year, and this translation is the reciprocal from Russian to English. As very little Soviet science or technology would be marketable at length in the west, this sort of thing has a chance of exposure. I may have guessed wrongly, but I find it difficult to find any alternative explanation of why so tortured and intellectually confined a publication could be rendered into English.

The book is limited by official soviet ideology, and by the paucity of material (especially modern material) to which a scholar in the U.S.S.R. had access for a publication that received the official *imprimatur* in 1965.

That Bakhtin was able to write in a manner that has stimulated subsequent critics (including several in the English speaking countries), despite the difficulties of his times (he lived from 1895 to 1975), is a tribute to his ability to convey some
originality even through Stalinist orthodoxy. Bakhtin is interested in *carnival*, and suggests that the novel can be seen as a form of carnival where “the new mode of man’s relation to man is elaborated”. The masks that society and social control mechanisms place over the human face are torn away and the underlying realities can be glimpsed.

D.E. Bland


This book tries to create what never existed: G.H. Mead’s unifying book on the physical and psychological basis of social philosophy. Mead lived from 1863 to 1931, and had his great days as a professor in the University of Chicago. He published some thirty papers, and was highly regarded as a philosopher of the social sciences in his own day.

Untainted by Marxism, he was an American pragmatist whose career was ancillary to that of Dewey who first appointed Mead to an assistant professor post at Chicago. Mead believed that science and social science are best understood (and taught) by way of their history. The eighteenth century organised its thought in line with the physical sciences, the nineteenth with biological science; so the twentieth could be the century in which scientific social science could express the intellectual character of the age. It did not work like that, as Mead could see well before his death, but at the start of the century there was a movement of hope and anticipation in which he was an active participant.

He was seen as an important member of the group around Dewey who wanted to establish an American philosophy and American social sciences before and into the age of isolationism. The great (ultimately defeated) internationalist President, Woodrow Wilson, had Mead’s strong support in seeking to end the recurrence of wars on earth. Mead took the view that economic interaction in the market was efficient, though it must be balanced by “co-operative activity” and “kindliness, helpfulness and assistance” to those “in trouble and suffering”.

This book does not clearly present any unifying theory, such as John Baldwin asserts is implicit in the hundreds of quotations from Mead that he assembles. There is rather the impression of a decent, sceptical and obviously able man who talked sense in class sixty years ago. This book will go on reading lists, and will probably stay there. For all the virtues of this volume and of the man it describes, it has nothing cogent or exciting to say to a student of today.

D.E. Bland
BOWMAN, J.E., *The Highlands and Islands: A Nineteenth Century Tour*, Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1986, 205pp., illus., £10.95 cased, £6.95 paper.

*The Highlands and Islands: A Nineteenth Century Tour* was originally prepared from a daily journal kept by J.E. Bowman of a month’s tour of Scotland in 1825. Given the poor travel conditions existing at that time in the remote regions of Scotland, Bowman and his companion Dovaston managed to visit many places of historic and scenic interest in a mere month. Bowman’s manuscript of his journal was completed some eighteen months after his journey and included illustrations by his son and daughter of places of particular interest and charm. But he refused to have the journal published at the time and expressed a wish that indeed it should never be published, on the grounds that it lacked sufficient originality. In the event, however, the diaries have been published by a descendant of John Bowman for their historical and natural interest.

Bowman began his journey to Scotland from Liverpool on 15th July and visited, amongst other places, Gretna Green, Glasgow, the Trossachs, Mull and Skye returning to Manchester via Stirling and Edinburgh on 14th August. During the early part of the tour he and Dovaston visited the widow of Robert Burns whom he describes as having “very pleasing manners, and her voice mild and melodious” (p.23). In true Romantic fashion, Bowman elevates the wonders of Nature and makes many references to Sir Walter Scott and to *Ossian* and speaks of Fingal’s Cave on the island of Staffa as the “Temple of Nature” (p.109). Bowman was a careful observer of nature and his fellow men and often manages to capture most vividly the splendidours of the Scottish terrain and the social conditions and customs of its inhabitants. Women and children are frequently found to go barefoot and poverty and dirt to be prevalent. Bowman tells us that his main reason for visiting the remote regions of Scotland is for “their wild and romantic scenery and the traces of primitive manners which might still remain among their simple and secluded inhabitants” (p.171). Although the wildness and beauty of the Scottish landscape, descriptions of its geological and botanical aspects and the ways of the local inhabitants are the main themes of the journal, the architectural magnificence of Glasgow and its importance as a commercial centre are also touched on.

Despite the interest of this book, Bowman has a tendency to repetition and sometimes includes too much detail, at least for the general reader, and this can at times make for tedious reading. Nevertheless, the diaries give us insights into the Scotland of 1825 and a feeling of admiration and affection both for its countryside and its people pervades the writing.

B. Barber


The title of this book is slightly misleading in that the work does not cover all of what could be regarded as modern linguistics today. It is essentially a book which focuses on syntax, though its two opening chapters deal with more wide-reaching
issues such as language and non-linguistic communication, and models of language. It then contains chapters on words, sentences and the relations between sentences. It goes on to discuss the rise and fall of transformational grammar; this chapter may well seem odd to many readers coming to linguistics for the first time since they will not be familiar with the reasoning behind its inclusion. And if, as the chapter heading implies, this model has already fallen, they might well enquire why some other model is not proposed. Following this there are two final chapters on functional relations and sentences in texts. Generally this is a readable and well-informed introduction, though it is somewhat narrow in its scope and in its description of possible models. Because of that, it is difficult to say that it has any positive advantages over other introductions available.

N.F. Blake


This volume is both fascinating and informative to anyone with an interest in fiddle music—whether it be practical, academic or mainly for the sounds and emotions produced. It also embraces much of the social history of the islanders. Between 1970 and 1982, Dr. Cooke interviewed fiddlers from most of the Shetland islands and recorded their individual styles and tunes. In an area where roads are fairly recent, entertainment was, of necessity, home produced and many men were “house” fiddlers, playing for their own enjoyment, and their family’s recreation, but who would not consider “hall” or concert fiddling. The aural learning of tunes from older players resulted in substantial differences in interpretation by individuals, with no “right” or “wrong” versions which may have resulted if learned from a written score.

Certain tunes, mainly reels, were used for dancing (strathspeys and slow airs had little popularity); other tunes were used only in specific parts of the wedding rituals and one or two confined to Yule. Older fiddlers made great use of double string sounds and the tuning of the bass string was often to a “higher” note, partly the reasons why Shetland fiddling was not accompanied. These points are more easily understood when listening to the cassette provided with the book and also to “Haand me Doon Da Fiddle” the teaching cassette made by Tom Anderson, which is often cited in the text—as are the interviews with Tom Anderson himself.

There are comprehensive appendices of tunes, their origins in different islands and their varying titles, and also collections of music and manuscripts. It is pleasing to see the photographs of the fiddlers and earlier groups of players, especially knowing that though Scottish fiddling is flourishing today, with modern technology and communication, the Shetland style can never again be so isolated and individual.

J.C. Massey

This is a rather old-fashioned book which is something of an anachronism in the contemporary world of literary pragmatics and discourse stylistics. By “language” is meant “grammar”, by which in turn is meant “morphology”, and this is discussed in the vocabulary of, and the terms of reference inspired by, traditional philology. At the same time, by “language” is meant its use in literature (is there really any other use of language worth studying?), so that, in this book, the study of English Language amounts to the study of English Literature, especially the study of morphological forms in particular texts, as these can then be used as illustrative evidence for the development of the language. No attempt is made, however, to give the patterns and processes of historical development an explanation.

At the same time the discussion is conducted with a second vocabulary and set of references: those of the author himself, in a plethora of anecdotes, opinions and unashamed prejudices (Cottle, incidentally, was Reader in Medieval Studies at the University of Bristol). These intrude at every opportunity and are often flippanter or otiose, and although they are sometimes imaginatively and enthusiastically related, they are so irrelevantand intrusive that they become tiresome and ultimately boring. For Cottle, however, these are the very stuff of his approach: “a commonsense approach” (p.2). Cottle goes on: “I have no -istic axe to grind, being in no respect a Leavisite, or Structuralist or Feminist or Marxist or Linguist with a captial L.” But are not all his likes and dislikes, his feelings about this or regrets about that, his chauvinism, his phobias and manias, his irritations with the style in particular passages (if only he had been Shakespeare, or whoever, it would all have been written so much better), “axes to grind” too, only of a different sort?

It is hard to know for whom this book is seriously intended. Because of its views (it is quite intolerant of local dialect—“ignorant speakers” (p.141), as one might have guessed) it is certainly quite unsuitable for students, and an intelligent reader will quickly be disappointed (“stimulated” the author no doubt intended). The give-away is in the author’s remark that the text has been “written in a speaking voice”—written to be spoken, or written as spoken, perhaps? I can only think that the book amounts to an enormous self-indulgence, the publication of his “History of the Literary Language” lecture or extramural class notes by way of a valediction to his colleagues and former students upon retirement, a book in which, for the reader, the primary subject and interest becomes the author himself.

There is a sense in which the idea of “the action of grammar”, in its contribution to the meaning and effect of a literary text, has been a central concern in stylistics for the last thirty years. Needless to say, there is no mention of this. Despite the opening gambit: “this book is written in the passionate belief that English grammar matters, and in the serene confidence that it is pretty easy”, no such demonstration or substantiation follows. Of course anything can be thought to be “easy” if neither the questions to be asked are known nor their implications and difficulties
understood. No-one would deny that grammar “matters”, but to show exactly how it matters in any particular text is a rather complicated business, which pragmatics and stylistics are still coming to terms with. The title of this whimsical book would have been better as The Language of Literature: How Not To Do It or, recalling its style and apparent occasion, simply The Language of Literature: Cottle in Action.

J.M. Kirk


This book contains reprints of thirteen papers which Alan Dundes, sometimes with a collaborator, has written over the last twenty years. Most deal with sick humour pertaining to Jews, Poles and sex, though the English do not escape. Inevitably there is some repetition, since the articles appeared in different journals at different times. Dundes is looking for reasons to explain why sick jokes of this kind should have appeared so strongly in the sixties and seventies. He finds some reasons in the Vietnam War, the growth of black nationalism and the rise of feminism. Most essays are fairly light, and are more descriptive than analytic; but overall they add up to an important contribution to the study of jokes.

N.F. Blake


The subtitle of this book, More Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire, alerts one to this fashionable crusade of selling more office copier “folklore” to the eager masses—and at such a price too. Whilst understanding that “folklore” means the learning of the people, it would be hoped that the learning had progressed beyond the infantile office humour that the Americans have elevated—along with its price—to the heights of “urban folklore”. However, there is more solid reading matter in this book than can be found in many others of similar ilk. What I would call contemporary versions of American culture are shown here—slickly presented and analysed only generally for the simple mind to absorb. Perhaps some examples will help the undecided to reach a definite conclusion about office copier culture: No. 40, Strong Letter to Follow shows a Western Union telegram form collected in San José, California, in 1978. The succinct words state “FUCK YOU STRONG LETTER TO FOLLOW”; No. 87, Examination for Applicants for Reporters—San Francisco Examiner, Question 1. “You are sent to a college commencement exercise to interview a representative graduate. You choose:” The answer was “The one with leukemia” . . . Question 10. “On Sunday’s front page column ‘Pop’ refers to:” The answer was “God”. No. 126, Horoscope Extracted selections—“Taurus. Taurus
people have B.O. and fart a lot. *Gemini*. People like you because you are bisexual ... *Gemini* are known for committing incest. *Libra*. Most Libra women are good prostitutes. All Librans have venereal disease.” My own sign of Aries was “quate nace” by comparison: “You are not very nice.” “Not very nice” also expresses my response to this book!

W. Bennett


This volume is a collection of essays in appreciation of W. Edson Richmond, the eminent folklorist who, as Bruce A. Rosenberg states in his foreword, has been responsible for many ground-breaking articles, influencing the direction American folklore has taken over the past four decades and who has played a large part in establishing the reputation of Indiana University in this field.

The volume has been named *Narrative Folksong* rather than “Ballads”, to concur with D.K. Wilgus’ redefinition of the term in 1973. Although this particular reviewer has every sympathy with this redefinition, it must be said that not all scholars readily accept it, particularly its controversial inclusion of lyric songs.

A total of eighteen essays are included which the editors have arranged (apparently post-hoc) into nine groups—a division which seems rather unnecessary. The contributors include many internationally-established names in ballad studies, such as Coffin, Buchan and Wilgus, and a number of Scandinavian scholars, reflecting Richmond’s own particular interest in that region. The papers vary from detailed analyses of individual ballads (see the articles by Olason, Pio, Holzapfel and Bo), and examinations of individual performers (Porter, Roth and Roth, and Brown), through to national and generic historical surveys (Asplund, Armistead, Petersen) and analytical and classificatory techniques and projects (Coffin, Nicolaisen, Andersen and Pettitt, Cartwright, Wehse, Buchan, Renwick, Wilgus and Long).

While not wishing to denigrate any of the articles, certain work seems of especial importance. Tristram Coffin’s article presents a new, much-needed and very plausible system for indexing love lyrics. The article by Flemming Andersen and Thomas Pettitt, “The Murder of Maria Marten”: The Birth of a Ballad?, which traces the patterns of variation which occurred as a broadside ballad passed into the oral tradition, presents us with an excellent model for other such studies. Christine Cartwright presents a fascinating and stimulating analysis of love and death in Anglo-American ballads, illustrated by the variants of “Barbara Allen”. In their respective articles, Buchan and Renwick argue persuasively for the adoption of structuralist and semiotic analyses of the ballad. And, of course, Wilgus and Long
can never be ignored, even if, to some, their work is at times somewhat controversial.

All in all, these essays create an impressive volume and one worthy of dedication to such an acclaimed folklore scholar as Richmond.

C.W. Neilands


This is a very good read—a brisk trot through excerpts from such favourites as Hugh Lofting, Laura Ingalls Wilder, C.S. Lewis and many others.

There are poems too. Here, for example, is Sylvia Plath in unfamiliar joky vein writing about beds:

> The *right* sort of Bed  
> (if you see what I mean)  
> is a Bed that might  
> be a submarine  
> nosing through water  
> clear and green  
> silver and glittery  
> as a sardine.

Any adult would enjoy this book as I did—thoroughly recommended.

M. Knight


Setting out to review this work with an open mind, I soon “fell by the wayside” and felt my long-held prejudices creep up on me. These office computer, photocopier, what-have-you humorous compilations have been tried by me in the past and found wanting; their given number of pages is no indication of any solid reading matter. *The Office Humour Book* falls into a category which will inevitably appeal to the “progressive folkhumorist” who appreciates the superficial gimmick and the flashy coarseness of “alternative” humour. Each of the fifty eight pages in this compilation can be copied and hung up on the office notice board or sent anonymously (of course) to your boss. Preferring the overt approach myself, I present to the covert comedian the following examples from *The Office Humour Book*; “p.15, WE HAVE READ YOUR PROPOSAL . . . (cartoon of three laughing men) . . . AND ARE GIVING IT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION; p.30, (cartoon of four laughing ghostlike figures) YOU WANT IT WHEN? p.43, A FABLE FOR SECRETARIES When the body was first made, all parts wanted to be Boss . . . All pleaded with the Brain to relent and let the Arsehole be Boss. And so it happened. All the other parts did all the work, and the Arsehole just bossed and passed out a
lot of shit. THE MORAL: YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A BRAIN TO BE A BOSS, JUST AN ARSEHOLE.” Finally, my own sentiments on this book taken from p.58, the ultimate one: “(cartoon of man urinating on desk) I QUIT!!!”

W. Bennett


Only when you realise that the hardback edition of this book was published over twenty years ago, is it apparent what a leader it is in its approach to the subject. It was written long before the term “oral history” was the familiar phrase it is today.

Social dancing in Scotland prior to World War One is recollected via informants from various regions of Scotland. Whilst both the repertoire and execution of dances changes with locality, (and this is most apparent in the second part of the book which presents descriptions of actual set dances) other things have changed completely in the intervening years. Most people attended professional dancing classes and wore ordinary shoes. Our “Scottish dancing shoes” of today were then worn only by professional dancers. The ritual performance of certain dances and certain tunes for calendar events or weddings is no longer so important today.

The appendix by Dr. Rhodes gives descriptions of Cape Breton dances, which show older forms of Scottish dances, as the more isolated existence there has subjected them to fewer influences of change over the years since Scots emigration.

The book ends with a useful list of informants and their places of dancing and teaching, plus a bibliography of printed works and manuscripts—invaluable for anyone interested in further research.

I am happy to say that the only thing that has changed since 1964 is that traditional Scottish fiddlers are not now in danger of dying out, as I have personally witnessed the resurgence of Scottish fiddle orchestras in the last decade!

J.C. Massey


The book reveals indications of a concern to convey to the reader a fairly precise knowledge of the subject-matter of social anthropology, and delineate the boundary between the subject and other neighbouring fields of inquiry, especially sociology. Social anthropology is shown to be concerned with the study of simpler, atomistic societies, though it occasionally invades the domain of highly developed communities. Because of an obvious difficulty in giving a neat definition to the subject, the author directs the reader’s attention to the subject’s main focus: man
and society as they relate in a coherent continuity of interaction. But even though the essential concern of anthropology has remained unambiguous, the forces and factors which gave this area of scholarship its shape have been in a perpetual state of change.

When the subject began to shape itself in the mid nineteenth century, two factors—Darwinism and colonialism—were the obvious determinants of its form. While Darwinism delved into the ancestry of the prehistoric man, and consequently created a theory of civilisation that is evolutionary, the latter became an opportunity for man to study what was believed to be a period he had passed in this evolutionary progression.

However, argues the author, the twentieth century brought with it the Malinowskian revolution in anthropology which was to change the patterns of social thought in the English-speaking world, and then in the rest of Europe except Russia where Marxist orthodoxy gave legitimacy to the historicist tradition of pre-revolutionary Russia. Malinowski redefined anthropology in synchronistic terms, and the school he created thereafter, devoted to the understanding of the common antecedents of humanity, dethroned the evolutionary kingdom of Frazer. The school became the functionalists who insisted on articulating social characteristics in context, and explaining them in relation to their contemporaneous relationships. The emphasis of Malinowski on arduous and dedicated fieldwork was expected to create one coherent community of anthropologists who were both romanticists and also positivists. The methodology of anthropology was thenceforth transformed, giving the subject both cultural national validity and international universalism.

Malinowskian anthropology has survived, but the world of Malinowski has changed radically. The dismemberment of the colonial empires made impossible the continued existence of the large reservoir of commonly delimited societies which the anthropologists could traverse at will in search of empirical data. The third world has gone into the hands of governments of diverse ideological inclinations, suspicious of the motives of anthropological researchers, and ethnographic scholarship has become the worse for it. The functionalist vision, with its eye for stable societies to be directly investigated, has therefore lost its basic validity. Structuralism, which tried to revive the vision, but adopted its own ways, has also lost much of its vigour. The cult of fieldwork however persists, and has come to be an essential factor in differentiating between the anthropologist and the sociologist—the latter being less context-bound than anthropologists—and between anthropologists and historians, the latter being very text-bound. Anthropologists thus remain the “anti-scripturalists” of the social sciences, and if they are becoming very interested in the social role of writing, it is because they do not want to take it for granted. For them, the validity of fieldwork as a method remains, but for what destination?

Gellner is not inclined to pontificate on the matter, though he recognises possibilities. Anthropology could redefine itself in micro-sociology, but to do so would be to reject many of the principles which have sustained it. It could restrict
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itself to a theory of investigation of smaller societies, but this too would exclude some of the areas of inquiry with which the subject has come to be associated. The author argues that anthropology should retain its sensitivity to small and intricate social structures, but at the same time reinvigorate the application of anthropological data to historical questions which, in any case, it really has never discarded. Gellner writes with an ebullient style which makes the book even more pleasurable to read.

A. Ebeogu


The first thing I noticed about this fourth volume of photographs selected from the London Borough of Ealing Local History Collection was the price! After reviewing so many of the excellent Hendon Publishing series which have stayed well within the £2 plus bracket, one wonders if this pioneer of the £3 plus tag is a portent of things to come or a victim of London inflation. There appears to be little in the *Ealing of the '30s and '40s* to interest the environmental traditionalist yet there are many royalist shots such as Mr. R.H. Wanklyn reading the message to His Majesty King George V for his Silver Jubilee from members of the Boys Brigade. Such photographs as that of a pageant of history, *Events contributing to our Present Civilisation*, with its crowds and buildings did nothing to take away today's sadness toward the overcrowded masses and ugly development of Ealing. The war years shown were, perhaps, the start of that appearance of insecurity, and the period illustrated is too close to the present time of instability in the borough to convey an idea of a homogeneous society content in a place called Home. I would rather remember the Ealing with the village atmosphere.

W. Bennett


Jonathon Green has updated the concept of the term "Newspeak" which George Orwell coined for his novel 1984, in this dictionary of jargon. He has compiled and selected the slang language and specific vocabularies of numerous trades, professions, occupations and interests to show the extent of jargon usage in everyday life. Not all jargon used now (how simple it would have been to fall into the trap and written "at this time" which the media so often use) is meant to allay suspicion or divert one's attention from difficulties; many who use "trade slang" do so to make themselves understood and accepted by their peers. Understanding all this, *Newspeak* provides a practical survival kit for the practitioner and an
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entertaining mine of information for the student who may actually enjoy the vagaries of a language. All you folk who shop at Oxfam may be interested to know that “charity goods” in sexual jargon is “a homosexual prostitute who is persuaded to give his services free”. Why risk embarrassment by having no knowledge of current language? “Break a leg”, leave the “hogging-out” to the “chair warmers” and let the ring of Newspeak be your personal “halo effect”.

W. Bennett


The “literary discourse” which is the subject of this book is the original meaning of discourse that implies speech, talk, conversation, lecture, sermon, treatise etc., rather than the structuralist notion of discourse, interested only in expressions—the manner and the style in which a story is communicated. By associating literature and discourse, as embodied in the title “literary discourse”, the authors show that literature is a peculiar art of discourse. When related to cognitive and socio-psychological points of view, discourse becomes a dynamic verbal complex within which communication takes place. The work examines how this discourse produces the effect it does and how the reader experiences it; it goes beyond these to look at how the reader perceives, remembers and comprehends the literary text, and this also implies an examination of certain characteristics of the text itself.

Literary discourse is shown as requiring complex and complicated discourse processing, essentially because it deals with specifics—special perception in general human affairs and relationships between different cultures, and with symbolic modes of communication. For this reason, social psychology and psycholinguistics are essential disciplines in dealing with the arts, and the researches used to illustrate this point are the product of co-operative work between American and Hungarian scholars.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first relates literary discourse to artificial intelligence, processing schemata, story memory, understanding and enjoyment. The second examines the place of the short story in the psychology of literature, and discusses studies carried out with given stories on the readers’ social perception and on the possibility of the application of narrative pattern analysis to personality assessment. The third part examines the issue of measuring the popularity of literary works, both from the perspective of psychoanalytical literary interpretation and the conventional interpretation usual to narratives.

A. Ebeogu


The introductory chapters of this book discuss the different sites with which
traditional customs are involved, and also compare them with those in similar situations in other counties. Most are of a familiar type—Roman soldiers, black dogs, buried treasure, weather rhymes. The “Cuckoo Pounds” of the title is taken from the tale of “foolish villagers” enclosing the cuckoo in a pound or pen, a widely spread story, but only in the south are April fairs called “Cuckoo fairs”.

The bulk of the book is an alphabetical inventory of ancient sites, discussed at varying length, depending on the extent of their legends and importance. Of course each age (including the present) has many legends associated with the Cerne Giant; Maiden Castle and Woodbury Hill too offer much to discuss. It is surprising how many legends have their counterparts throughout the British Isles, and similar named sites (e.g. variants of “Maiden Castle”) appear in many counties.

The illustrations are from eighteenth and nineteenth century sources, and the bibliographical sources quoted in the text, are listed alphabetically at the end of the book.

Although I was already familiar with the location of a number of the sites discussed, I now have new insight into their significance in earlier times.

(Two minor inaccuracies—Breedon on the Hill placed in “Lincs.” when it is in “Leics.”—and “grims” must have been at work on the quote from D.Y.B. 1955—“a united service held on the occasion of the Coronation of Edward VIII” ?!)

J.C. Massey


This tenth volume in the series of African Literature Today is celebrative, for it marks the tenth year, so to say, of the unalloyed recognition by scholars from various parts of the world of the status of African Literature as an autonomous “national” literature, with its own unique characteristics for which reason some scholars have insisted on a separate set of critical criteria for assessing that literature. Between the first volume of the series in 1968 and this volume ten years later, a lot of water has passed under the bridge: most of the writers have veered off the theme of culture conflict and protest against colonialism, and have turned their creative imagination to the portrayal of the socio-political situation—which is by no means enviable—in the various independent countries of Africa. The result has been an increasing bitter confrontation between the writer and the politician. Even as the old writers still write, new ones have joined the burgeoning group of African creative writers, with the result that African Literature now features great variety in themes, style and form. The situation obviously calls for a discussion on the “retrospect and prospect” of the literature.

The present volume includes theoretical critical discourses on the African novel, poetry and drama in general, and essays on individual writers like Ouloguen, Awoonor, Ngugi, Mphahlele, Ekwensi, Armah, and Nortje. There are also reviews of recent creative and critical works on African literature in the continent.

A. Ebeogu

Jung has a vast reputation. This is, at least in part, due to the boldness of his assertions. They are stated in low key language, hedged about with a thicket of cautious statement, yet they are recognised by fellow psychologists (and many amateurs) as being pronouncements of profound significance. For the folklorist, the interest of Jung’s *Archetypes* is that they are folklore figures as much as creations of (or emanations from) the individual psyche of the subject or patient. “Mother”, the concept of “Rebirth”, the idea of a “Spirit” and the universal type of the “Trickster” are all the very stuff of folklore as the collective subconscious, the folk memory, the means of coping individually with situations by having a recognised type to associate with the individual one is trying to cope with. The story told to a child, or to an adult in a time free from some particular stress, can be used as a reference in a subsequent real life situation of personal stress.

Jung’s approach is to say that “there are present in every psyche forms which are unconscious but nonetheless active and living dispositions, ideas in the Platonic sense, that preform and continually influence our thoughts and feelings and actions”.

Few readers of this journal will see anything even slightly strange in such a view. Although Jung’s writing is less fashionable than it was, this newly accessible form of one of his general writings may be of interest to many people who are interested in folk culture and the collective memory. This book can safely be recommended to them.

D.E. Bland


A large volume handsomely illustrated, the major part of this book consists of over 200 pages of an alphabetical arrangement of customs, varying from those many centuries old, to modern and state-ceremonial events which have become identified with British life. Wherever you open the book you will find black and white photographs which span the whole age of photography, and are well documented. There are also a few engravings and paintings relating to older customs.

After the introduction, there is a calendar of customs, with a full page colour photograph representing each month. At the end of the volume are lists of events arranged in geographical areas. Both here, and in the main text there are cross-references to related ceremonies—which broaden the reader’s knowledge—though you could say this makes the book difficult to read in an orderly manner, without getting sidetracked into other interesting topics. However, this shows that it is primarily a work to be read to give pleasure.

J.C. Massey

The Tain Bó Cuailnge is an Irish epic story of uncertain origin. Fragments of manuscript of the middle ages attest to its antiquity, though the oldest complete version (in Irish) dates from the eighteenth century. This translation was published first by Dolmen, Dublin in 1969, and the new “library edition” that is here reviewed comes with exciting drawings by Louis le Brocquy and four rather unhelpful maps.

The basic story is of the pursuit into Ulster of the great brown bull Donn Cuailnge by men from Connaught. With the men of Ulster incapacitated by disease, the cattle breeding potential of their province is saved by the hound of Ulster, Cuchulainn, who sees the invaders off.

The translation is made into clear, modern English prose. The speech is convincing to the modern reader; the descriptions of places and actions are always comprehensible but the contemporary prose style still somehow fails to convey the full sense of the ancient world that the stories describe. The notes are very informative.

All in all, this is a welcome book. It is nicely presented and it presents a classic story in a manner that holds the attention and arouses the interest of a modern reader.

D.E. Bland


The destructive urge of President Caucescu has destroyed much of the habitat in which Câlus flourished for many centuries, but there is no doubt that the cult survives. Câlus is a masculine magic of healing and social bonding, with a strong ritual basis that involves the members dancing and mumming for considerable periods. The members have a strong affinity with their own fairy guides and guardians, and the position of leader is one of great importance in each group. Women healers take from the men the healing media (wood, potions etc.) and the relationship of the sexes is carefully defined. Role reversal in all male ritual is intrinsic to the system, under strict controls.

This book is rich in description and strong on analysis. It is a worthwhile addition to the library of anyone who is interested in this aspect of European folk culture.

D.E. Bland

Sergeant York received the surrender of a large number of war-weary German soldiers a few days before the end of the first world war. The American forces had been subject to severe and frequently successful German attacks during the few months they had been committed to battle in France. Following the collapse of Russia, Germany was able to concentrate her diminishing military resources on the western front, and the inexperienced Americans were exploited as being probably the weakest part of the allied forces. The Germans' strength was spent by the middle of September, 1917: the virus of revolution that the Kaiser had transported to Russia was beginning to affect his own troops. The Germans did not want to die in the last hours of the war, and the Americans needed to get in some good publicity before the hostilities ended.

Although accounts by both Germans and other Americans are incomplete and contradictory, the basic fact appears to be that a group of war-weary Germans were happy to surrender to a smaller group of Americans among whom was a conspicuously tough looking red-haired sergeant called Alvin C. York. The sergeant was credited with the capture, which the press reported was achieved singlehandedly. The U.S. wanted such a story of Davy Crockett type daring, preferably with a live hero to exhibit.

When the war ended, York returned home as a hero. He was an ordinary chap who had to go back to an ordinary home and live with a legend that the press had made about him. He coped with this situation pretty well for forty five years. He helped to develop a school, then became a dead hand in its administration; he was invited to comment on matters he did not understand, and was puzzled at public reaction to his utterances. But all who knew him agreed that he was a decent, well-meaning, honest and simple man. History, in the powerful form of the popular press, simply used him.

D.E. Bland


Sandy Stewart is one of Scotland’s travelling people and his memories and comments on life throughout more than sixty years are told here in his own words. Roger Leitch has transcribed the text from recordings he made between 1981 and 1983, showing in an excellent way how the taperecorder had made possible this type of “oral autobiography”. The interviewer’s sensitive rapport has been built up over many years as Sandy and his wife had called regularly on the Leitch family home since Roger’s childhood.

Sandy's formative years were spent in the Birnam and Dunkeld area of Perthshire, and as one who knows the district well, I found this most interesting, so
too the comprehensive notes giving details of ministers, teachers, shopkeepers, etc. of friendly disposition. Events of universal concern, such as schooling, effects of wartime (when blackout severely curtailed their fires) lie alongside personal discomforts like flooding and severe wintry weather. There is a glossary of Scottish words and also one of cant terms as used by Scottish travelling people. Suggestions for further reading also broaden the outlook of the subject. I hope this book shows the way for the Association of Scottish Literary Studies to produce other such life-histories.

J.C. Massey


The folklore of Orkney and Shetland brings to mind the world of George Mackay Brown, the world of fisher folk and seal wives. It is a full and vivid account of the life of Orkney and Shetland, of the words for instance the fishermen use out at sea. In Shetland the parts of the boats are given Norse names and the language of the sea consists of Norse words. It reminds us that until 1471 Orkney and Shetland were a Norwegian province, with Norse laws.

One ceremony which shows the pride with which Shetlanders regard their Norse past is that of Up-Helly-A. But it is not an ancient custom. Until the 1880s the young men amused themselves by dragging blazing tar barrels along the streets on the 24th night, marking the end of Yule. In 1889 the citizens used a Norse ship which was set alight by burning torches thrown by the guisers who accompanied the ship to its last resting place.

There are many other points of interest in the book which will enthrall and fascinate the reader. Perhaps Mr. Marwick might produce the thorough study of the Scottish contribution to the folklore of these islands which had not been attempted at the time of the first publication of this book in 1975.

M. Knight


In three illustrated essays, the contributors to this volume portray the diverse cultural traditions of a region rich in places and people eager to pass on the folkways of their heritage in the New Jersey Pinelands. Each contributor explores the folklore of the Pinelands with singular enthusiasm—Mary Hufford the folklife expressions, John Sinton the different settlement patterns and the final essay has Rita Moonsammy, David Cohen and Mary Hufford drawing on the oral history of the area through the actual words of the residents. Much of the material in this
interesting book has been researched by members of the Pinelands folklife survey team attached to the American Folklife Center. With its historic name, Pine Barrens, creating an impression of infertile land, *Pinelands Folklife* has redressed this issue with vigour to present here a panoptic view of the region's rich, fertile culture. The end result is a picturesque representation of southern New Jersey folklore whose fame may well last long, resting on the brand name of its equally famous cranberry crop—the Laurels!

**W. Bennett**


Although humour is one of the most frequent and familiar uses of language, it has been surprisingly neglected by linguists. In his latest book, Walter Nash, Professor of Modern English Language at the University of Nottingham, gives us a much-needed introduction.

It is an excellent book. Nash has not only conceptualised his subject with admirable clarity, he has also provided a thorough classification of the different types of humour, of the structures of jokes, and of their characteristic linguistic features. The book has already established itself as the current model. Part of its success rests with the copious exemplification, and many of the memorable jokes (did you hear the one about the Irish centre-forward who missed the penalty shot but scored on the action replay?) as well as most of the unforgettable literary parodies have come from Nash himself (e.g. in his parody of the opening of *Bleak House*, the fog that is everywhere has become milkmen who are everywhere, or his ingenious period parody of medieval lyric which is about a telephone). In addition to his "figures of speech" approach to the description of the joke, which displays an awareness of contemporary pragmatics and stylistics, Nash is also concerned with more fundamental issues such as the logic of humour and with its likelihood in terms of truthfulness. For him, humour amounts to drastic compression (jokes) or drastic expansion (anecdotes, parodies and allusions), with similarities and differences. At its widest, humour (and its successful communication) cannot be divorced from its social and cultural context, but this relationship, with which the book begins, might have merited some fuller discussion than the few opening remarks.

As with all of Nash's publications, I cannot recommend this book highly enough, and all those at all interested in the subject will be rewarded. For students it also offers a genuinely fresh and naturally very lively and readable introduction to style and techniques. It is a labour of love, elegantly and gracefully written.

**J.M. Kirk**

This pictorial and explanatory exhibition of the 106,000-item collection which the Girards gave freely to the State of New Mexico is a magnificent tribute to the couple's generosity and contribution to folk art. Alexander Girard, the benefactor, introduces the book which has been published by The Museum of International Folk Art—a unit of The Museum of New Mexico, charged with the care of this important collection: "In my earliest days I became very aware of Christmas. The Nativity groups, miniature to life-size, that abounded in Florentine churches are lodged in my earliest memories... I was surrounded by it—Folk Art". Mr. Girard has designed the cover of *Multiple Visions*, a Ceramic Angel by the Mexican artist Onecime Martinez Tecomatepec whose representation offers a foretaste of the multi-crafted Nativity Groups illustrated within the covers. With this book so clearly a team effort it may be churlish to single out individuals who have contributed, but much credit should go to the photographer, Mark Schwartz, who collaborated with Max King on a photographic design that brings the Girard Foundation Collection to pulsating, vibrant and colourful life. Three essays by Charlene Cerny, Yvonne Lange and Paul Winkler display an intimate knowledge of the Collection which comes from working closely with the Girards over a span of several years, the informative text being meticulously edited by Sarah Nestor. With so many beautiful objects collected from 100 different countries, I discriminate by admitting to a favourite in The Dolls Christmas Lunch, a nineteenth and twentieth century collection from Europe and the United States, evocative of past Christmas joys of family and home. As Alexander Girard quotes in his introduction: "The whole world is hometown."

**W. Bennett**


Ó hÓgáin is an established scholar in Irish folk studies, particularly those in the Irish language, but this is his first major work to be written in English. It is an extremely well-researched, academic volume but with a density of style and presentation which many "lay" readers may find heavy going.

The six chapters seem to serve a classificatory function, dividing the heroes and their legends into thematic groupings. The usefulness of such an exercise is always somewhat questionable, in that the resulting categorisation is seldom watertight; here, many of these heroes do not conveniently fit into just one group—for example, the Saint as Hero (Chapter One) has many overlaps with the Hero Extraordinary (Chapter Six). The concept of hero does not seem to come from folk tradition but rather is employed in a scholarly sense. Ó hÓgáin did not carry out original fieldwork but used the resources of the Department of Folklore archives at
University College Dublin, and his method would seem to have been to use his own
criteria to select the legends and characters described—unfortunately, he does not
detail these criteria.

The work brings together many disparate sources, literary as well as oral, and the
reader is introduced to many figures of greater or lesser fame: so, as well as the
major Irish saints (Patrick, Brigid and Colmcille), there are tales of localised saints,
such as St. Conall Caol and St. Kevin of Glendalough; and as well as figures like
Dean Swift, Daniel O'Connell and Brian Boru, there are legends concerning
Carroll O'Daly, Malachy MacAuliffe and Michael O'Dwyer.

While admiring the depth and scope of the work, there are several points with
which I take issue. In his Conclusion, Ó hÓgáin too quickly summarises the
interesting points, somewhat buried in the text, regarding the creation of some of
the legends attached to these heroic figures and the possible reasons lying behind
such manipulation. I would have thought that these would be the very points and
issues which a conclusion would expand upon and possibly lead to some overview,
however tentative, of the portrayal of the heroic figure in Irish folk history. There
are too many throwaway remarks here, all of which could have led into fascinating
general discussion, with references made back to the accounts given in the
preceding chapters. His discussion of the hero in some modern Irish literature is
very interesting, but, I feel, it is given too much space.

There are a couple of other points. No concession is made to the reader not
familiar with Irish pronunciation—some initial explanatory notes, or a glossary,
would help make the text more accessible. A map of Ireland, too, would not have
gone amiss. And, finally, a point which constantly riles me, although the author
does give a comprehensive appendix of sources, no additional bibliographical
listing is provided—this is such a useful tool for other scholars that it always seems
nigh on criminal of an author not to provide it.

C.W. Neilands

PAIKEDAY, Thomas M., The Native Speaker is Dead!, Toronto and New York,

The text of this book seeks to thrash out a basic and simpler concept of linguistics
which can use as its arbitrator the “native speaker”, a controversial agent in the
“grammatical/acceptable” dichotomy facing language analysts today. Although
never officially defined, the term “native speaker” has always been associated with
the insights and intuitions of the form by linguists such as Chomsky to extend the
tenets of their linguistic faith. Paikeday attempts a contextual analysis of the term
to press his belief that “native speaker” has a true meaning of “a proficient user of
language”. The format of the book is based on the responses received to memos
sent out to forty distinguished scholars of linguistics; in the international line-up
are such well-known names as Professors David Crystal, William Labov, M.A.K.
Halliday, Sir Randolph Quirk and the theory's protagonist himself, Noam Chomsky. Stating in his introduction that “Prof. Chomsky's explanations seem to me 'systematically misleading' in a broader sense than what Gilbert Ryle means by it”, Paikeday then goes on to seek establishment of the principle that the native speaker in the mistaken sense never even existed and there is no real corpus delicti; to quote therefore: "Requiescat in pace".

W. Bennett


*Presences*, a Visionary Anthropological Epic, is a long narrative poem of decantos broken into short numbered sections within two books. The rhythm and metre are a combination of various forms comprising stanzaic, heroic, blank and free verse which admirably suits the story's theme of a voyage on the River of Life. The narrative is subtle yet sustained, beginning where the river is born and ending “in the bitter eaten afterglow” with the Life traveller at the heart of his limits. This “river trip” is a seaway of dangerous bends which the one at the helm of the vessel has to learn through the various shapes of the river whilst the different kinds of moonlight change those shapes constantly. The imagery is magnificent—beautiful in some parts like the “crossing of the Equator”: “Down the waterway/you drive among banana plants/below the fingerling vines that bloom/from a pink lotus”; and soul-stirringly vivid in other parts: “Then the horizon collapses like a curtain/lightning dipped in streaking thunder/black-veined fires swelling around us”; I thoroughly enjoyed learning the shapes of this river, perhaps because I often steer by the shape that is in my head and not before my eyes. The vision of Thomas Paladino is so advanced that his poetry should be on an international curriculum for students. This poet has discovered the essential quality of free epic verse—an inner logic that gives it shape and form: the essence of Life itself?

W. Bennett


The end result of this research into what the use of language reflects about culture arose from the author's personal interest and commitment to the members of Igbo society. Dr. Penfield was motivated by her curiosity and interest in Igbo culture—enough to want to understand more than any superficial aspects and more to present an insight of Igbo society to the Western world. This book reports on the analytical findings of a study of a particular type of verbal behaviour in this area of southeast Nigeria. Referred to as “quoting behavior”—the use of quotes to communicate a message—the examples offered in this work focus solely on the use
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of Igbo proverbs in situations of conflict. With three chapters covering the defining, studying and ethnography of "quoting behavior", two further chapters of Igbo themes and quotes communicating, four appendices and a bibliography, this Contribution in Intercultural and Comparative Studies, Number 8, will be of interest to all students of Nigerian culture and language.

W. Bennett


In the West, insofar as we think about Ivan the Terrible at all, we tend to assume that he was a tyrant, all powerful. But this is not how he is seen in Russian folklore. As early as 1671, tales were in circulation, telling of his benevolence. Samuel Collins who published a collection of tales about Ivan in this year, though it was not translated into Russian until 1846, observed "that the people loved him very well, for he treated them kindly, but chastised his boyars."

Folklore records which came into existence in the late eighteenth century follow this picture. Even when Ivan condemned innocent people to death, he was shown as imposed on by false informers and quick to repent once they were shown to be innocent. When Stalin rose to power, the party faithful confronted by terrible deeds such as the purges managed to do the same as those who whitewashed Ivan. They said that either traitors were killed or that Stalin had been misled by party informers.

The first half of this interesting book analyses Ivan the Terrible himself and the picture he presents in folklore; the second half deals with texts, some of which have not been translated into English before.

M. Knight


Growing out of ten years of research, writing, and teaching in the area of American literary study, these essays cover the native works of the Indian and Anglo cultures of the Far West. The title comes from a message akin to the spirit of Bachelard: "We are reading the fire. It is this fire, burning before us here and now; and it is also every fire that ever flared and flickered before gleaming eyes, anywhere. When we face the fire, the stories begin." Reading the Fire is a sequel and companion volume to Jarold Ramsey's 1977 anthology of traditional Indian literature from the Oregon country: Coyote Was Going There. Most of the texts printed there are discussed in Reading the Fire, with the anthology choices followed up with the author's own interpretation. Through this Professor Ramsey hopes to show that there is more
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purpose—beyond amusement—in Indian literature: the people were being taught "how to live well and build good houses", surely a basic human right!

W. Bennett


What Rose describes as "a partial ethnography of America... the result of scholarly, poetic enquiry, an identification of the corporate form and its colonising effects as central to our consciousness and constraining to our research" (pp. 12-13) is an impressive and challenging, if slightly disjointed, attempt to unify several years of ethnographic research on the American class system around a literary theme (estrangement).

After a short opening section on the fundamental importance of "colonization", or the continual creation of the new, in American culture, Rose describes the three years he spent immersed (doing fieldwork) in a Philadelphia ghetto, where he "realized with new intensity that there were two worlds: the private, chartered corporate life of those who manufactured and ran business, and the life of those who in remarkable and distressing contrast hustled on the street for the necessities, people who... were essentially and in nearly every way outside corporate America" (Rose's emphasis) and who led "the theatrical life of performance on the street" (p. 32). (This point about the drama of street life, however true, seems underdeveloped in Rose's text.) The Philadelphia experience forced Rose to re-evaluate the booklearned anthropological method in which he felt trapped: "The whole structure of the research apparatus of traditional ethnography fell under scrutiny... It became apparent that our forms of knowing were housed inside our institutional forms" (p. 30).

A thoughtful analysis of two poems, William Carlos Williams's "The Wanderer: A Rococo Study" and Wallace Stevens's "The Comedian as the Letter C", follows Rose's exploration of the corporate nature of community action in the coalmining community of Hazelton, Pennsylvania and the "top-out-of-sight" world of Chester County, Pennsylvania, as well as a somewhat forced attempt to present a hypothetical encounter between Frolic Weymouth, from Chester County, and Boycie, from downtown Philadelphia. Rose reads these poems as attempts "to create an American landscape of imaginative resource... [where] self and location become fused in Williams, endlessly prowled by Stevens" (p. 56). He compares the ethnographer to the poet searching for "place" in order "to emphasize the collisions and fusions... between the arts and sciences... [resulting] from the challenge to comprehend and simultaneously resist the culture of contemporary capitalism" (pp. 72-73).

Rose's futuristic short story "The Masks", which concludes and is designed to complete this study, is a very personal attempt to question the position of the
ethnographer in “corporate”, “institutional”, “colonizing” American culture. (I think Rose would not object to readers who question whether his demand for a “new and improved” ethnographic method can itself be considered another instance of colonization.)

Rose sees that “ethnographic practice grew up in this colonizing milieu and is one of its intellectual products, and that our ethnographic inquiry is conducted from within institutions” (p. 12), but “envisage[s] . . . an ethnographic practice that aggressively uses a principled montage of methods and sensibilities that alternately describe, criticize, parody, and celebrate the world we have made.” (p. 69)

Although its fragmented and impressionistic character may be deliberate, *Patterns of American Culture* could benefit from a more explicit and logical argumentation. Ultimately, this book provides concrete examples of the limitations of traditional ethnography and makes a convincing argument for a more flexible, transdisciplinary anthropological method—even if it is not an outstanding, well-polished example of what this new ethnography might become.

**J.J. Patton**

**ROSE, Gerry, *Deciphering Sociological Research*, London, Macmillan, 19182, ix, 325pp., £12.95 hardback, £5.95 paper.**

This is a student textbook, the objective of which is to introduce the basic methods used in sociological research (both statistical and in data collection) and then to offer some samples of research reports.

It is clearly laid out and easy to read. It meets its writer's objectives in those regards. It is generally generous in referring the student to the many sources that are cited, and the overall impression is of a useful general introductory guide.

**D.E. Bland**


This well regarded and well established work of reconstruction has been a very useful overview of the Celtic world since its first appearance. The evidence that modern man has about the Celtic era is almost all either archaeological or folkloric, and the folklore is greatly influenced by the consequences of Christianisation, the Anglo-Norman imposition of feudalism, the reformation and the counter reformation.

To depict the Celtic peoples as they were before the dominance of the saints (whose lives and legends in turn dominate the earliest surviving Celtic literature) requires a complex of scattered data to be integrated after more recent influences on the available record have been filtered out or discounted. Dr. Ross succeeds in
her objective of giving coherence to the social and political structure of a specific
group of iron age people who were the dominant occupants of the British Isles for
some centuries before the Roman occupation.

D.E. Bland

SCOTT, John Anthony, The Ballad of America: The History of the United States in
Song and Story, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press,
1983, 438pp., $12.95.

This reprint of the 1966 History of the United States in Song and Story has had an
afterword written especially for it indicating its usefulness for social studies, the
humanities and the arts discipline teachers at all levels. The bibliography and
discography have also been brought up to date to indicate the resources available to
anyone interested enough to probe more deeply into the folk origins of any given
period. The folksongs are well presented on a single-stave music score; the aim to
integrate folksong within the curriculum so that students can draw on past
resources of rhythm, melody, verse, imagery and repetition is an admirable one; the
“price is right”—so why can I not say “Come on down” with total conviction?
Perhaps it is the accompanying socio-political text of “America’s favorite folk song
book for the classroom”, whose perpetuation of the ‘All-American Schoolboy
Dream’—illustrated by Errol Flynn in such films as The Dawn Patrol and
Operation Burma—describes with nationalistic chauvinism “How America Won
the War”. An extract from the chapter titled Between Two World Wars reads:
“... After 1933, as after 1914, the United States gradually emerged from its posture
of isolation from European military conflicts and shifted its weight to the weaker
side (the Western Allies) in order to prevent the destruction of the international
balance of power. The conflict became both total and global in 1942 when the
Fascist Powers (Germany, Italy, Japan) found themselves aligned against the Allied
nations coalition led by the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and
China. It then became America’s destiny to play a part in preventing the
engulfment of the globe by Hitler and his allies.” Whatever became of Pearl
Harbour! The tradition of blason populaire is still alive in America: I read all about
it in The History of the United States in Song and Story!

W. Bennett
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