

suas responsabilidades culturais, publicou este volume e sem dúvida os que nesta série se lhe seguirão.

David Atkinson, *The English Traditional Ballad: Theory, Method, and Practice*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002

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I have been waiting for this book for a long time. This is not to say that David has been behind-hand, but rather that it is a very useful combination of introduction and detailed examination of a great tradition. It is well known that “traditional” singers rarely differentiate between ballads and the myriad other songs that pass for traditional.

Balladry is envisaged here as an expansive genre, part of a continuum of folk song with a more or less explicit narrative element, which certainly embraces songs that for good historical reasons were not included by Child [in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*], and which accordingly does not seem to demand strict definition. (p. ix)

Prefaced by this neat sleight of hand, Atkinson is able to make interesting links and connections between the “ballads” under discussion and other folk songs related or in some way analogous to them. In addition, *The English Traditional Ballad* goes well beyond the concerns implied by its title through elegant and judicious use of European and North American criticism.

The “English” of the title is shorthand, of course, “used to stand for the closely related family of languages, dialects, and usages spoken throughout England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, North America, and elsewhere — everywhere these songs have been sung” (p. ix). Many will be familiar, too, with David’s part-time crusade to re-emphasise the English content of Francis Child’s *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, redressing the common (and, of course, correct) perception that the best of Child’s material came from Scotland. With that in mind, most of the discussions of specific ballads, or types, draw on previously under-analysed material from English counties and collectors. This welcome emphasis —for example, in a chapter devoted to English variants of “The Unquiet Grave”— shows how rewarding such a change of focus can be, and how rich the field still is, even after more than a century of modern scholarship.

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The book's subtitle, "Theory, Method, and Practice", is exemplified throughout. To begin with, the introduction ("Accessing ballad tradition") presents a perceptive, common sense picture of the ballad genre and its academic, theoretical offshoots, taking in major trends and schools of thought, and including a very useful review of the question of literacy and non-literacy in relation to the oral tradition. The five central chapters then exemplify these methodologies and themes, yielding the promised method and practice.

It is no surprise that Atkinson takes Francis James Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* as his starting point, though the fact that he discusses nearly two hundred different Child ballad types may come as something of a shock to those of us who, at conferences over the years, have watched him whittle the number of songs deemed truly worthy of inclusion down to around three examples. It would, perhaps, have been as well to state that it is *English-language* ballad studies that "have been dominated by the 305 sets of song texts" (p. ix) in the Child collection, as our continental colleagues in ballad studies have no such fealty to that particular collection, or its avowed completeness.

Five meticulous case studies make up the main body of the book: "The lover's tasks in 'The Unquiet Grave'", "Comic ballads and married life", "Incest and 'Edward'", "Motivation, gender, and talking birds", and "Magical corpses and the discovery of murder". A variety of approaches is used, notably thematic and literary interpretation as pursued by D. K. Wilgus, Barre Toelken and others, and Proppian analysis of tale-roles, as pioneered by David Buchan in relation to ballads. Throughout, one finds English, Scottish, Irish, and extensive continental comparisons, largely drawing on the work of the Kommission für Volksdichtung, to which David has contributed for many years. Atkinson's scholarship is worn lightly, drawn on with fluency, and the notes are copious and thorough without ever detracting from the book's flow, in any way. Thankfully, unwieldy terms like "transformativity" only make an occasional appearance and they must, of course, be acknowledged when applying theoretical approaches.

The winningly-titled "Motivation, gender and talking birds" is particularly rewarding; constantly shifting interpretations of traditional song across time and space (p. 180) are anchored around the central issue of truth in folksong. Verity is undoubtedly important for many traditional singers, having a profound effect on their perceptions of characters' motivation, and therefore on the very validity of a song and its significance. In this chapter, careful readings, coupled with singers' reflections on their own songs, reveal a great deal. Particularly well-done is the discussion of gender here, which focuses solely on the data at hand, namely songs and oral testimony, while avoiding fanciful excursions into modern-day sexual politics. Atkinson is also careful to avoid privileging the academic's interpretation over that of the singers themselves (p. 180) and, while academics are naturally past masters

at extrapolating great meanings out of the littlest signs, I welcome the up-front acknowledgement, in “Incest and ‘Edward’”, that “it is necessary to keep a sense of proportion, for while incest is supposedly well known as one of the famous ballad themes [...] it is dealt with explicitly in only a handful of types” (p. 108). Having said that, of course, Atkinson goes on to explore one of balladry’s most powerful social motifs to great effect.

As one might expect from the methodical and well-read author of *English Folk Song — An Introductory Bibliography*, there is an expansive thirty-two page list of books consulted, a four-page discography and useful song title and general indexes. A measure of the book’s success is that one is drawn to listen to any number of the recordings listed in the discography, as well as to consult the literature cited. The introduction and conclusion, in particular, would be useful in the teaching of literature and ballad studies; the case study sections, while less generally applicable, are exemplary, which will come as no surprise to those who know Atkinson’s work. *The English Traditional Ballad*’s combination of survey, synthesis and close analysis make it an essential resource for aficionados, teachers and libraries.

Germán Conde Tarrío (dir.), *El componente etnolingüístico de la paremiología*, Fernelmont, Editions Modulaires Européennes, 2007. ISBN 978-2-930481-34-0

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El profesor de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela Germán Conde Tarrío es un experto en fraseología y paremiología y el autor del primer repertorio de frases proverbiales en gallego y sus correspondencias al español y francés. También ha viajado a numerosas universidades de todo el mundo impartiendo sus enseñanzas y pasa buena parte del año impartiendo conferencias sobre su especialidad. Con este libro, que resulta ser un compendio del estudio de doce paremiólogos sobre las paremias desde un punto de vista etnológico, el lector se deleitará con el reencuentro del pasado.

El libro recoge un total de doce artículos, todos ellos presentados en el Congreso Internacional de Fraseología y de Paremiología, que tuvo lugar en Santiago de Compostela (España) en septiembre de 2006. Según afirma Germán Conde en el prólogo, “este libro, [...] quiere mostrar la investigación de doce paremiólogos que, a partir del estudio de un corpus de paremias, nos describen maneras de ser, nos presentan una determinada sociedad, nos hablan de costumbres ya desaparecidas, etc.” (pp. 5-6).

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