

English, Icelandic, French, German, African, and other narrative traditions. Although few of the authors are folklorists as such, every essay has some interest for folk-narrative scholars, and the collection makes for very good reading. If the choice of topics is occasionally surprising, the quality is almost universally excellent, for which the editor and contributors are to be congratulated.

Since there is not space here to cite every article, I conclude by mentioning a few that I myself particularly liked. In "Of Sticks and Stones and Hapax Legomena Rhemata," David Bynum nicely demonstrates that the statistical infrequency of a phrase in oral poetry in the corpus of a particular poet can never be taken as evidence that the poet invented it himself, for often such phrases appear in the works of other poets in the tradition; however, the statistical infrequency of a particular phrase can indicate that a singer's repertory of formulaic phrases is richer than that of another poet's. Martin Camargo's "Oral Traditional Structure in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" is an interesting meditation on the problem of ring composition and of the audience's perception of it as a structuring device. Donald Fry, in "The Cliff of Death in Old English Poetry," does a skillful job of tracing a traditional narrative theme in different poems. "'ez wart ein buoch funden': Oral and Written in Middle High German Heroic Epic" by Edward Haymes is an elegant essay on the decline of the oral epic and the rise of the literary epic in Germany and on the ways in which the different composers of these works sought legitimacy for them. Gary Miller's enthusiastic "Towards a New Model of Formulaic Composition" draws upon text linguistics and cognitive science to suggest a new model for the acquisition and transmission of songs. The best title in the collection belongs to Michael Nagler's "On Almost Killing Your Friends: Some Thoughts on Violence in Early Cultures." This essay is a wonderfully crafted exploration of violence in epic and in ancient societies. And finally Joseph Russo's "Oral Style as Performance Style in Homer's *Odyssey*: Should We Read Homer Differently after Parry?" offers a simple explanation of why the Homeric poems, though they are not literary works, seem to possess both oral and literary qualities.

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KVIDELAND, REIMUND and RORUM SELBERG, editors. *Papers III and IV. The 8th Congress for the International Society for Folk Narrative Research*. Bergen June 12th—17th, 1984. Two volumes. Bergen, Norway: Forlaget Folkekultur, 1985. ISBN 82-90258-06-2. No price.

The two volumes of papers introduced here are part of a four volume set of proceedings of the Bergen Congress. Unfortunately I had no chance to see the first two volumes, but I assume that the present two volumes contain the individual contributions. They are lined up in alphabetical order by the author's name. The reader has therefore no clue as to whether a paper may have formed part of a session organized around a certain topic or not. That such sessions may have been organized can be gathered e.g. from the series of contributions about women in folklore studies and as informants or focus of studies in the Scandinavian countries. It would have been advisable to keep the related papers together, and to give some orientation to a reader where to look for what kind of topic. Reading through the collected papers, one feels

as if being treated to a *Wechselbad* of the mind. The fortuitous sequence of a great variety of more or less unrelated topics asks for a continued switching of one's mind. Of course, any Congress of this sort is something like a bouquet of wild flowers, a fact reflected to some extent in the proceedings, but if the editors had provided some means for conveniently retrieving the offered information it would have been a considerable service to the readers.

The participants to the Congress will certainly have appreciated the editors and the publisher's great efforts to have the papers ready shortly after the Congress had ended. However, the cheap production of the volumes has also its pitfalls. The papers are mostly reproduced in the form they were handed in, so that some of them are hardly readable in some passages because of bad typing. There is no uniform format, in several cases there are no references and in one case material important for the discussion is not included (BARNES, III, 97-104).

The Congress' general theme was "Quest for meaning." "Meaning" is therefore the preoccupation of many authors from a great variety of aspects. It would be mistaken to expect the Congress to have definitely solved the question of what meaning is to be for folk narratives. In fact, one of the truly fascinating aspects of these volumes is that they confront the reader with a great number of arguments pro and con on meaning in structural, historical, functional, psychological, and ecological terms. And yet, the general impression I have gotten seems to be epitomized by the subtitle of Röhrich's article: "What does meaning mean and what is the meaning of mean?" In spite of his repeating the word "meaning" he argues for acknowledging a multiplicity of possible interpretations in narratives. Although such an argument can readily be accepted, the question remains whether it answers the cryptic question in the subtitle, or are we to understand the word 'mean' in a different meaning? In other words, the author seems to take 'interpretation' and 'meaning' to mean the same thing. Such idiosyncratic handling of terms is quite common. Another author, e.g., flatly says that for her, interpretation is a form of distortion and concludes that she understands the tale analysed but hopes that she did not interpret it. How tricky in fact this area is, is pointed out already in the very first article where R. D. ABRAHAMS shows how an interpretation of a tale can be seriously misled, if it considers only the tale for itself and does not pay attention to the circumstances of its telling (R. D. ABRAHAMS, III, 1-21). I Basgöz for his part argues for a study of actual performance because of the need to distinguish the proposed function of a telling from its received function.

Such a line up of similar and yet apparently different terms and their usages makes one aware that even basic technical terms are still quite far from being understood and used in a generally accepted manner. We are reminded again that the use of the same term by different people is no guarantee that the term means the same for all the discussants. This is particularly important in cases where people of a non-European background use a local translation for an English term without considering the cultural connotations of their own understanding. In spite of the word 'international' in the Congress' title, there are only (culturally) a very few contributions concerned with other than European material, or from non-European authors. Asia is represented only by two contributions. Does this state of affairs reflect a particular importance of Europe for narrative research? Maybe in terms of history of narrative research, but hardly in terms of richness of traditions. One may ask why anthropologists or others who have done work in this field did not feel stimulated to contribute to the Congress.

The unevenness of these volumes may be disturbing at times, but if this would turn out to become a stimulus to reconsider familiar positions within a wider frame-

work and to outgrow the strong European bias, the editors' efforts would bear good fruit.

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### JAPAN

KUROSAWA FUMIKO. *Pfauendarstellungen in Kunst und Kunstgewerbe Japans. Pfauensymbolik und ihre Darstellungsformen in der ostasiatischen Kunst.* [Representations of the peacock in Japanese art and crafts. Symbolism of the peacock and its expression in Eastasian art]. Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe XXVIII, Kunstgeschichte, Kunstgeschichte Band 71. Frankfurt a/M, Germany: Peter Lang, 1987. 300 pages, 245 illustrations. Paper sFr. 65.00; ISBN 3-8204-9743-9, ISSN 0721-3567. (In German)

On my second day in Japan years ago I was treated to a whirlwind tour of Kyoto. One of the first sights was the Nijō Castle and its gardens. Much to my surprise I found peacocks represented in various forms throughout the building. What could they mean? In the West the peacock, often gracing baptistries or shown in connection with Eucharistic symbols, was a symbol of eternal life / paradise for the early Christians. In more profane circumstances the eye-like tail feathers represented bad luck, and in general the peacock degenerated to a symbol of vainglory and pride. What was the peacock for the East, specifically for Japan? In 1974 *Asian Folklore Studies* published a long article on the peacock in India, its native territory. But other inquiries only led to the general answer that the peacock came to Japan through China and is often mixed up with China's mythological bird, the "Phoenix."

Fumiko Kurosawa takes up this question in her book and treats the reader, unfamiliar with Chinese and Japanese sources, to representations of the peacock in paintings, lacquerware, and wood and metal work. A general introduction to the peacock and its symbolization opens the book. The discussion then is divided into two large sections: the treatment of the theme in ancient Japanese art and the more "modern" tradition of the decorative bird and flower arrangements from the late 1300s to the 1800s.

In China the peacock was recognized as a special bird, sometimes serving to ornament the ruling powers, sometimes taking on religious symbolization either through its function as a vehicle for Amitābha or in relation to the Phoenix. Kurosawa's discussion of the appearance in Chinese art is important because Japanese art followed the same lines. The earlier appearances had religious associations, in particular the development of the devotion to the Peacock King (kujaku myōō) within Esoteric Buddhism. But gradually, as Flannery O'Connor described the peacock in the West, it had "come down in the world" and lost its associations with the divinity. It maintained, however, the symbol of a happy marriage or good fortune. It was also associated with ruling classes. For a time it became quite the fashion in high-society to have a "peacock room" (thus the room at Nijō Castle). Interestingly, the peacock often still remained connected with the "Phoenix." At Nijō Castle one part of a sculptured wood paneling has a pair of peafowl, the other side has a pair of Phoenixes. In later years the peacock was a favorite decoration for the bird and flower screens and scrolls, sometimes being balanced by a pair of Phoenixes.

Most of the writing in the book consists of descriptions of the art works, placing