

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Tradition Today*, the occasional e-journal of the Centre for English Traditional Heritage. The journal aims to continue and develop the remit of *Lore and Language* which was published by the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition at the University of Sheffield over the thirty year period 1969-1999. Like their parent Centres, both journals adopt a broad approach to all aspects of language and cultural tradition, and also publish articles on related topics in anthropology, social studies, history (especially oral and local history), and literary studies, among other subjects. Modern approaches to the study of tradition, whether theoretical or applied, are emphasised, and the recognition of the importance of urban tradition is central to the aims of the Centre and the journal. However, the primary focus is on traditional forms of language and on childlore, custom and belief, narrative, traditional music, dance and drama, and material culture, the handcrafted trades, and traditional arts and crafts. This breadth of scope is intended to reflect the extraordinarily diverse ways in which tradition operates within culture.

The study of tradition has a pivotal role to play not only in the documentation and analysis of culture, but also in providing a unique approach to the study of culture and society from that offered by other disciplines. Language and tradition lie at the heart of cultural and personal identity, helping to locate both society and the individual in time and space, and contributing essentially to our sense of rootedness, of belonging, of allegiance. This central core of shared cultural norms and values, though inevitably modified over time, is transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth, customary attitudes and behaviour, and countless other means which help to identify, define, and perpetuate the forms, practices, and attributes of each and every culture. Approaching cultural description from the viewpoint of tradition studies offers a different perspective, not only on culture as a whole, but also on the effects of continuity and change. The monitoring of both the persistence and the development of all aspects of tradition by means of the systematic collection and analysis of data on a continuing basis over a lengthy period of time is an indicator both of the resilience of established traditions and of emerging innovations and trends in the flux of social and cultural history.

Both these Centres and their journals espouse a dynamic model of tradition studies, rather than the static, backward-looking, antiquarian approach so often associated with the discipline. In essence, the study of tradition reveals not only how past and present customary practices, behaviour, attitudes, and perceptions lie at the heart of culture but also suggests ways in which culture will develop in the future. Traditions perceived as outworn will be discarded, others which continue to be relevant will persist, and new ones will be introduced to serve cultural needs in the future. A comprehensive and continuous overview is therefore essential to a full description of social and cultural development. This requires the investigation of how tradition operates in all regions, social classes, and age groups within the culture. The ultimate aim is to add the information gained from this ongoing study to that contributed by other social sciences in order to piece together a more complete account of cultural development over time.

The e-journal invites contributions on the wide range of topics outlined above. Articles will be reviewed by an editorial board of leading scholars in language, folklore, and tradition studies and those representing the relevant ancillary disciplines (see p. i). Contributions from students and recent entrants to these subject areas are especially welcome, not least to encourage younger scholars to develop their interest in these fields, particularly those working on aspects of cultural tradition in England.

Tradition Today provides a forum for the promotion and encouragement of original research, both internationally and within the British Isles, across the wide fields of tangible and intangible heritage. A Notes and Queries section offers opportunities for contributors to record their findings in brief, or to seek information from others. The journal acts as a focus for the redevelopment of tradition studies in England specifically, where the discipline has not enjoyed the status and support accorded to it in most other cultures. In particular, the Centre and its journal emphasise the importance of language in the transmission, interpretation, and social impact of tradition.

Submissions should be sent as an e-mail attachment to:

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and should follow the journal's stylesheet (see pp. 70-71).