

**Book Reviews**

Douglas Gray, *Simple Forms: Essays on Mediaeval English Popular Literature* (Oxford: University Press, 2015). Pp. ix, 267, with about 10 blank end papers, for notes, references, etc., to be added, if so desired.

This quietly but elegantly presented and apparently gently argued but clearly deeply reflective survey of the English and England-linked culture, story and better known books, is a work which appeals enormously to the present reviewer, and, indeed, it should also do so to most with an interest in (comparative) folklore on many grounds. For it was written by a man, born in Melbourne, and first trained at the feet of Professor Ian Gordon, in the Victoria University of Wellington, in New Zealand. He had then been a student at Merton College in Oxford in the time of J.R.R. Tolkien, and long taught at Pembroke College there, before being appointed, also in Oxford, to the Foundation post of the Tolkien Professor of English Language and Literature, as located in Lady Margaret Hall. Shortly before the book was released, he had retired on age.

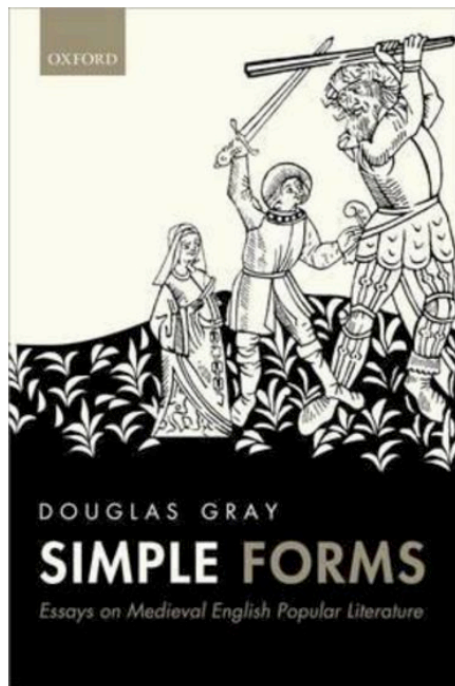
The writer's career and long background of innovative teaching of the literary inheritance of the English people is of some real explanation when it is pointed out that the book's bibliography runs to well over 700 items, most of which would amplify in close detail various of the points made, nuanced, or suggested by a man who has been a superb scholar, a deeply serious religious thinker, and the most compassionate interpreter of the oddities of the literature and linked societies of the peoples of western Europe over the last thousand years. Lest the reader be immediately put off by this bold summation of the writer and thinker to be met in these pages, it should be added, now, that there are to be found so many of the names of the more orthodox university teaching of the Dark Age cultures, and most literature up to the European Renaissance, to wit: H.M. Chadwick, R.W. Chambers, C.L. Wrenn, W.P. Ker, or E.V. Gordon.

Then there are glances at New World literature after the mediaeval period, and in so many cases, the voice of authority singles out motifs that recur in better known English folklore, tales with some sort of Biblical reference or point, and in many tongues. For the work is a folklorist's joy, since it treats in gentle but deeply illuminating fashion motifs that cross centuries, cultures, languages, in short to give us an amazingly convincing and passionate view of the perennial motifs behind stories.

Further, there is a simple index which guides us to the familiar, and that, located, is put in a comparative context for us innumerable times. This last point is reinforced for the reader when we are told of J.A. Burrow's comment in *Notes and Queries* on Gray's earlier *Later Mediaeval English Literature* that it display[s] the qualities for which Douglas Gray's work has long been admired—scholarly excellence, of course, but also a keen and catholic

appreciation of medieval writing. For it is certain to become a classic text and one to be in the libraries of every serious folklorist working in the fields encompassed in the phrase 'the English tradition'.

And it will have a like appeal to those more closely focused on the folklore and like genres that have flourished and waned, during the long flow of the language, in its relations with other more contemporary cultures, and of its recording the cultural history of the English people's thoughts and, at the same time, of the contemporary stories then, and later, to be plotted about their lives and their thought patterns. The Bibliography contains upwards to 800 titles, most of them being reasonably accessible books by scholars of standing, and the rest substantial research reports, as from European literature in the main.



As the publisher indicates at the outset, there is a surviving and reasonably presented editing for the contemporary reader of a vast body of the oral literature themes and mores that lies behind the written texts which have survived from earlier periods. And all of this latter material may often be linked with the popular literature (or texts about the common folk), and Professor Gray's prime concern is to show how such materials relate to the lifestyle and its depiction as a social way typical of the learned. Interestingly, almost every text glances sideways and adds droll juxtaposed situations to further illustrate any clash as between the classes and belief structures operating in a given tale.

Put in the most basic terms, the key Gray thesis is that the stratification in the culture was a deceptive matter, but in practice it, the story—or the ingrained (social) attitude that it contained—was much more frequently produced by one social stratum, but by setting that against others, even as almost all tales do, illumined the values and morality of the social class or group which framed the setting.

While this not a cheap work, it must stand alongside Chadwick, Klaeber, Ker, and Tolkien himself. What more need be added to the last encomium.

J.S. Ryan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reviewer had been in small tutorial groups with Douglas Gray when they both went to Oxford, and he has followed with delight the quietly incisive and so deeply compassionate prose of one of the last of the Mediaeval men of the Tolkien stamp

Brett J. Stubbs, *Very Good Beer and Ale: Breweries and Brewers of Tasmania 1820s to 1930s* (East Lismore, NSW: Tankard Books, 2013). Pp. xvi, 372, ISBN 978-0-9806209-3-1 pb. \$49, plus \$10 p&h (Aust.). Order from [www.tankardbooks.com.au](http://www.tankardbooks.com.au)

The increasing global interest in Foodways of recent years has also included consideration of drinking customs. In Australia, nearly twenty five years ago, in her entry on 'Foodways' in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore*, Gwenda Davey noted: the 'six o'clock swill', 'shouting', and the 'chook raffle', as well as 'pubs' being then noticeably 'more refined'. Her notes may now be read as closure upon a long period in which 'the pub' was a node for much social life in Australia, with its associated codes of behavior, but also of characters and especially of stories. In written works, the period noticeably spans from Henry Lawson's stories, to David Ireland's *The Glass Canoe* (1976), to Sam Weller's sequence from 1976 ending with *Funny Bastards* (1981).

This current work appears at the same time as an explosion of interest in the craft brewing of beers and ales, a proliferation of small scale producers, a trend which itself emerged from the uptake of home-brewing since the 1960s. Despite the impression of 'excess', as recorded in Davey's notes, in Australia today there is less overall community consumption of beer but more interest in the specifics of ingredients and process. For example, more today know the basic ingredients of: *ale* (malt plus water), *beer* (malt plus hops plus water). In contrast, the mass-produced commercial beverages which substitute sugar are often described as 'tasting like cardboard'. Fuller knowledge of ingredients and process is most accessible in local 'micro-breweries', and this interest can be readily linked to brewers as 'known locals', and more generally to regional loyalties. This current work does not explicitly participate in the long tradition of pubs and of drinking stories, nor in these recent trends, but nevertheless should be of interest to folklorists for the insights which it can provide into that long period.

Commencing with the rise of ales and beers in the early nineteenth-century, this work subtly undermines the common view of colonials as hard drinkers of hard liquor—their 'sprees' on rum—a view which owed much to the "gin lane" excesses of eighteenth-century London. The increasing regulation of brewing is traced, with definitions upon alcoholic content of beverages, and pressure from the Temperance movement. The role of light Dandelion Ale is interesting in these moves (pp. 289-292).

Yet it is Tasmania's distinct advantage in climate (over the other colonies) which is the guiding rationale of this book. That both barley (for malting) and hops could be grown locally meant that quality ale and beer was possible. Drawing upon a multitude of historical documents—largely newspaper accounts, and often court reports (e.g. pp. 21-22)—this work then presents a picture of local pride, initiative and entrepreneurship, competing with Sydney and London, drawing resources from Sydney and South Africa, but all mostly to serve a local community. Today, with only two main commercial brewers in Tasmania (one each in Hobart and Launceston, for a state of half a million

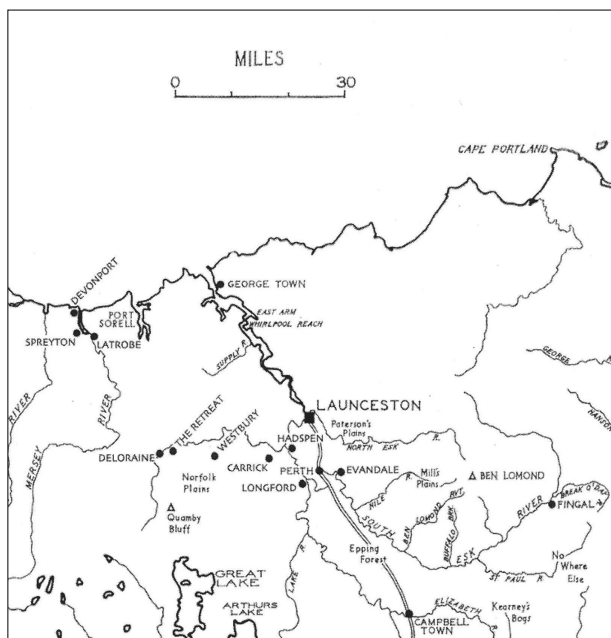
people), the larger number of these early breweries might be commonly acknowledged; however, the surprising extent of the number can best be seen from the book's structure:

1. Beginnings (c.1820-1844)	
Hobart	- 23 breweries
The Southern Districts	- 11 breweries
Launceston	- 12 breweries
The Northern Districts	- 7 breweries
2. Hobart and the South (c.1845-1882)	
Hobart	- 19 breweries
The Southern Districts	- 30 breweries
3. Launceston and the North (c.1845-1882)	
Launceston	- 14 breweries
The North-Eastern Districts	- 23 breweries
The Mersey River District	- 3 breweries
The North-Western Districts	- 4 breweries
4. Consolidation (c.1883-1930)	
Hobart	- 7 breweries
The Southern Districts	- 1 brewery
Launceston	- 6 breweries
The Mersey River District	- 2 breweries
The North-Eastern Districts	- 4 breweries
The West Coast	- 1 brewery
The North-Western Districts	- 1 brewery

Each of these breweries is considered separately under its own sub-heading, in what is an amazing piece of data collection. Remembering that these many breweries then served a much smaller population, the list also shows a pattern of local communities, one closer to the more 'organic' relationships of villages and towns than to our modern conurbations.

Over time, cheaper transport, consistency in product, and economies of scale added to pressures for consolidation, e.g. Cascade in Hobart, 1883 (pp. 265-267), and later to monopoly. Concluding in the 1930s, the focus of this work is upon the period prior to major corporatization of breweries by multi-national giants. However the final paragraph (and then extended in a long footnote) traces the ownership changes of Cascade and Boag up to the present—noting their 1994 return to separate entities.

Of particular interest throughout are the details on processes. So the text on Cascade Brewery works (pp. 267-268) can be closely matched with the indicative diagram of the building and its works (Fig. 53, p. 270), and so understanding can extend from process to the design of the buildings and to interpretation of modern relics of this era. Much of the technical detail throughout this work would inform and delight a contemporary participant in home-brewing or in craft beers.



*Extract from map of northern Tasmania, from the work, p. 263. The filled circles indicate places with breweries referred to in Chpt. 3.*

All is presented in an accessible style, with many photographs (b&w), clearly captioned, and with useful maps. These enable one to locate sites and the stories in a modern landscape. Indeed this work could be useful as a traveller's guide to much of Tasmania. Still, this is a scholarly work, detailed and comprehensive in facts, as well as meticulous in its citations. (One wishes that page numbers were given for each of the newspaper references.) The work is supported by a list of figures, by unobtrusive footnotes, a bibliography and an index of names. It is not surprising that the endpapers declare of the author 'Dr Stubbs is Australia's leading historian of beer and breweries.' (p. [371]). This is a solid work which has the potential to support many other studies, but is a delight in itself—a tasty regional drop.

Robert James Smith

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