ARTHUR HATTO

Arthur Thomas Hatto
1910–2010

Although Arthur Hatto would never have considered making such a claim himself, his passing on 6 January 2010, just five weeks short of his one hundredth birthday, assuredly marks the end of what justly may be called 'the heroic age' of German studies in the University of London. At best, he would have regarded himself as an epigone of that age which embraced such distinguished scholars as Robert Priebsch (1866–1935), John George Robertson (1867–1933), Leonard Ashley Willoughby (1885–1977), Edna Purdie (1894–1968), and Frederick Norman (1897–1968). In any case, as we shall see, although Hatto earned his crust as a professor of German Language and Literature, his abiding interests lay in a much broader field: he was a life-long student of texts composed in a dozen languages, spanning four continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, and America) and four millennia.

Arthur Thomas Hatto was born in London on 11 February 1910. His parents, Thomas Hatto, a solicitor's clerk (he later became Assistant Chief Solicitor in the British Transport Commission legal service), and his wife Alice, née Waters, a nurse, lived in Forest Hill and later in Clapham. Towards the end of the First World War their eight-year-old son spent an unforgettable year living with an aunt in the safety of the Sussex countryside, 'running wild', as he admitted, in and around the 'still semi-pagan' village of Barcombe, near Lewes. His head already full of exciting tales from the past, he was even at this early age deeply aware of his southern English roots, symbolised by his ancient West Germanic name, 'Hatto' (= 'fighter' < *χađ-). How a London solicitor's son could win the trust of his rustic contemporaries is something of a mystery, but win it he did. From them he learned the names and behaviour of the birds: 'I didn't feign

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knowing anything, so everything I saw, I learned,' he recalled. There, too, he developed a lively awareness for what was important in seemingly strange human proceedings and in the time-honoured social patterns that structured Barcombe life. Here already, then, we may discern the making of a young man eager to learn and sensitive to the complexities of human society.

In 1923, with his imagination already well stocked with Greek and Far Eastern tales combining physical prowess and exquisite beauty, he won a scholarship to Dulwich College, an institution which—if we may judge from the success of the likes of P. G. Wodehouse, Raymond Chandler, Dennis Wheatley, and C. S. Forester—excelled at nurturing men with lively imaginations and a love of vivid turns of phrase. Entering on the Modern Side, he chose to study German, 'the most exotic language available'. His school record for 1926 and 1927 shows him to have been a pupil of modest achievement: he was placed barely above the middle rank of his contemporaries. He passed his School Certificate in 1926 taking Latin, French, German, Arithmetic and Elementary Mathematics, and achieving a distinction in English, which he attributed to his having written a brilliant essay on the subject of 'Roads', treating of roads in the Roman, Chinese and Inca Empires. He was a born cross-country runner and a keen rugby player; in later life he would display comparable energy, tenacity and commitment to the mental challenges he encountered in his chosen fields of study.

At the age of seventeen-and-a-half, at a time when he might have contemplated working for an Exhibition at Oxford or Cambridge, Hatto was sent by his father, unwilling to have his son 'loll on a Sixth Form bench', straight from the Remove to King's College London, a place renowned for its sobriety compared with the allegedly more licentious ambience of University College, 'the godless institution of Gower Street'. Nevertheless, thanks to the intercollegiate teaching arrangements at London University, he came under the influence of two eminent medievalists, the erudite but dour palaeographer Robert Priebsch, Professor of German at University College, and the colourful Frederick Norman, Reader in German at King's, whose extensive knowledge, wide reading, wit, and stimulating conversation captivated him. Forever afterwards Hatto referred to Norman in awe as 'my tutor'.[1] Although Hatto narrowly missed a First Class BA with

[1] Hatto's devotion and loyalty to Norman was manifested in his editing *Three Essays on the 'Hildebrandslied' by Frederick Norman; Reprinted and Edited in Honour of his Memory [. . .] by A. T. Hatto; together with a Letter by Andreas Heusler* (London, 1973).

Honours in German in 1931, having failed to achieve an Alpha mark on the German language paper, his teachers, Henry Gibson Atkins, Professor of German at King's, Priebsch and Norman, all clearly recognised that he was cut out for an academic career. It was Norman's wont, canny businessman that he was, to offer to buy up any books the students no longer needed at the end of their course. When Hatto offered his, Norman declined them, saying, 'No, not yours, Mr Hatto, you will be needing them in years to come!' At this point Hatto himself recognised where his future lay; the university was his true element and he never looked back.

It was important to improve his German, however, so in 1932 he was despatched to the University of Bern as Lektor for English, having meanwhile been given some coaching in the teaching of English to foreign students by J. R. Firth, later Professor of General Linguistics in the University of London, whose context-focused, ethnographic approach to language already appealed to him far more than the dry fare of the conventional Indo-European comparative philology in the Neo-grammarian mould. Immediately upon his arrival in Switzerland he set about trying to master the archaic local dialect of *Bärndütsch*, even participating in the ancient rustic team-game of *Hornussen* (so-called because the puck makes the sound of a hornet as it flies through the air at great speed). From 1932 to 1934 from his Swiss vantage point he was able to watch and weigh the collapse of German civilisation. Naturally, he also availed himself of the opportunity to further his studies by attending the seminars of the distinguished but (compared with Norman) dull medievalist Helmut de Boor (1891–1976) (whose daughters were reputed to sport swastikas under their lapels) and the modernist Fritz Strich (1882–1963) whose approach he considered too 'arty'.

Hatto enjoyed life in Bern so much that he had visions of becoming an octogenarian Lektor there. However, in 1934 his teachers summoned him back to London. At this time he had met in Switzerland a medical student from Düsseldorf, Rose Margot Feibelmann, whom he would marry in 1935. As she was from a Jewish family—her father, Max (b. 1874), was senior cantor of the main synagogue in Düsseldorf—their move to Britain probably saved her life and the lives of her parents also, for these would follow them to Britain in March 1939. The Hattos settled first at Radlett in Hertfordshire, later moving to Mill Hill. Margot Hatto, a lady whose firmness of character and deep sense of family he so much admired, fulfilled his ideal of an artistically and at the same time practically gifted partner. Eventually she set up a successful small printing business, specialising in greeting cards, and later became an accomplished silversmith,

having studied the art at Sir John Cass College in London. She died on 7 July 2000.

The immediate cause of Hatto's return to London was that his teachers there, impressed with his academic promise, offered him an appointment as Assistant Lecturer in German at King's College. He had been awarded the London MA with Distinction in 1934, then a rare accolade (which Norman had also received under Priebsch) and one of which he always remained immensely proud—at that time, this was deemed the equivalent of a doctorate elsewhere.[2] As part of the degree requirements Hatto presented a thesis entitled 'A Middle German Apocalypse edited from the manuscript British Museum, Add. 15243', a topic that had been proposed to him by Priebsch. In this study, which he later published in German,[3] he showed that the manuscript was probably written between 1350 and 1370 in south-west Thuringia and was evidently closely related to MS Meiningen 57, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century.

After four congenial years at King's, Hatto's career took an unexpected turn. H. G. Atkins retired from the Chair in 1937 and Norman, who had held a Readership half-time at King's College and half-time at University College (receiving £350 p.a. from each college, which gave him more than if he had had a full-time post paying only £500 or so), had meanwhile been thwarted in his ambition to succeed Priebsch as Professor at the latter. L. A. Willoughby, though later renowned as a Goethe scholar, was appointed at University College—as a medievalist! Norman, no longer needed at University College, was obliged to become full-time at King's, succeeding Atkins as Professor. This in turn meant that Hatto's services as a medievalist were no longer required at King's. Fortunately, a vacancy had arisen at Newcastle, and Norman encouraged him to apply. As a young married couple, however, the Hattos were reluctant, not least for financial reasons, to leave their small, happy home near London. Norman, though incensed by this challenge to his authority—throughout his career he seemed to think that he had a divine right to decree who should teach German where—nevertheless recommended Hatto for a new position at Queen Mary College, London. Despite strong competition, he was appointed, not least, Hatto believed, thanks to his prowess at rugby. At the interview, the Principal, Sir Frederick Maurice (1871–1951), Field

[2] According to Norman, the university had introduced the Ph.D. degree in the humanities in 1917 as a means of luring wealthy Americans away from German universities—but without much success.

[3] As 'Eine deutsche Apokalypse des 14. Jahrhunderts', in Hans Vollmer's *Neue Texte zur Bibelverdeutschung des Mittelalters*, Bibel und deutsche Kultur, 6 (Potsdam, 1936), pp. 175–99.

Marshal Haig's former Quartermaster-General, asked him whether he had taken part 'in the famous match between Dulwich and St Paul's'—Maurice was himself a Pauline—to which Hatto replied, 'Yes, Sir, twice, and beat them twice!' When the candidate had left the room, Maurice said, 'That's the man I want!'[4] Hence, in 1938 Hatto became Head of the Department of German at Queen Mary College, an office he would hold with colourful distinction until his retirement in 1977.

Scarcely had he taken up his lectureship, however, than he was recruited on Norman's and Sir Frederick Maurice's recommendation in February 1939 to work in the cryptographic bureau in Admiral Hall's Room 40 at the Foreign Office, where two other professors of German, Walter Bruford and Leonard Willoughby, had already gained experience before 1918. Now, even before war was declared, Norman was steering able young linguists into war work of this kind. Hatto, in fact, found himself working under Norman in the Air Section. On 3 September 1939 they were seconded to the British monitoring and cryptographic centre at Bletchley Park to work under the cryptographic genius Captain (later Brigadier) John Tiltman (1894–1982). Hatto was thrilled when Tiltman succeeded in cracking the German 'stencil' cipher which no less a mathematician than Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, alias Lewis Carroll, had once declared to be unbreakable. George Steiner has opined, 'It looks as if Bletchley Park is the single greatest achievement of Britain during 1939–45, perhaps during this century as a whole.'[5] Whether or not that is so, 'BP' has been rightly called a 'nursery for Germanists', for among its denizens were many Germanists, several of whom would become professors after the war. Besides Hatto, they included Walter Bruford and Leonard Forster (both Fellows of the Academy), Kenneth Brooke, the lexicographer Trevor Jones, C. T. Carr, D. M. Mennie, R. V. Tymms, Dorothy Reich, William Rose, K. C. King, F. P. Pickering, and H. B. Willson (the last three distinguished medievalists).

But for the fall of France, Hatto might have been sent to the Continent to serve as a wireless operator in a cryptographic unit. As it was, he was set on decoding tasks at Bletchley Park, one of which was to produce the first report on the Luftwaffe's operations in France. He also worked successfully on Gestapo ciphers, German weather ciphers and others, and soon attracted attention—standing out from the largely Oxford-trained specialists in Classics, English, and Statistics—through his rare ability to

[4] This exchange was reported by Norman in a tape-recorded interview in June 1965, of which the author has a transcript. He had been the expert adviser at Hatto's interview.

[5] George Steiner's remark is cited in Robert Harris's novel *Enigma* (London, 1995), p. viii.

interpret even corrupted messages thanks to his philological training and his now excellent command of German. Unfortunately, his skill in such matters was regarded with envy by Oliver Strachey (the brother of Lytton[6]) who apparently believed that the war would and should be won without the help of London University, which did not make for a harmonious working relationship. However, Strachey had appointed the Classicist L. R. Palmer (1906–84), a man who, as a pupil of the legendary Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, had excellent German, and Denys Page (1908–78), later Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, to his section, and these recognised Hatto's considerable abilities. They gave him the task of trying to gather advance information on impending changes within existing ciphers, on the introduction of new ciphers, and on changes in German cipher personnel. In this role he had a major success, on the eve of the Allied landing in Sicily in July 1943. Despite being highly distrustful of their own cipher security and observing the strictest discipline in their communications, the Germans were let down by one of their own communications officers who broke the golden rule of not referring in a current cipher to any element of a new cipher it was proposed to introduce. Hatto discovered that, by foolishly revealing the three-letter call signs from the preamble to messages, this officer had inadvertently published the key to one of the Germans' most secret communication routes, and since the various networks were linked, this gave Bletchley Park access to communications to German land, sea and air forces before the Allied landings took place.

After the defeat of Germany, part of Hatto's section at Bletchley Park was to transfer to Ceylon en route for Tokyo. Although Denys Page invited Hatto to join his team there, he somewhat reluctantly declined since his wife had recently given birth to their daughter, Jane.

Hatto never spoke of the work at Bletchley Park, even after its importance became widely known following publication of F. W. Winterbotham's *The Ultra Secret* in 1974. According to one of his then colleagues, he was alarmed by this book (though he is not mentioned by name), fearing that he might be abducted by the Soviets to the Lubljanka, 'so far removed from the Reading Room of the British Museum'. Like Margaret Thatcher, he seems to have wished the secret had never been revealed.[7]

Though attached to Room 40 of the Foreign Office until 1945, he was able in 1944–5 to spend a weekly day of leave as a temporary lecturer

[6] Cf. also Hugh Trevor-Roper's experiences with Strachey, as related in Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper. The Biography* (London, 2010), p. 82.
[7] According to Sisman, *Trevor-Roper*, p. 465.

for Medieval German at bomb-damaged University College London. Returning to Queen Mary College in 1945, Hatto found himself with exiguous resources. In 1946–7 the whole College numbered no more than 783 students. Over the years he built up a flourishing German Department, starting with only one part-time colleague and ending with five permanent full-time staff and one-and-a-half language assistants. His own achievements, in scholarship and as a committed Head of Department, were soon rewarded with the conferment of the title of Reader in German on him by the University of London in 1946 and in 1953 by the title of Professor. An undated photograph of him from about this time, showing his sharp features and penetrating eyes, is reproduced in the college's official history.[8] He kept his staff on a light rein, trusting their maturity; he would, one feels, have had little sympathy with the modern obsession with teaching quality and research assessment exercises. To all he was unfailingly respectful, courteous and kind. His old-fashioned courtesy expressed itself for instance in the care he took always to address his seniors and even his junior colleagues by their formal academic titles, even long after the use of Christian names among colleagues began to be the custom (around 1970). And as an example of his sympathetic kindness one may cite the case of a colleague who lamented to him that the lecture he had just given had been poorly attended. Hatto consoled him with the words, 'Ah, Doctor [. . .], do not be downhearted. Who knows, the few who did attend your lecture may one day prove to be the most distinguished scholars,' words which the colleague concerned found to be most heartening and truly unforgettable. Yet, for all his kindness towards generations of students, Hatto never disguised his view that universities were for the elite and his belief that university education should never have been allowed to become an object of party politics.

Norman had a story of how, late one afternoon in 1935, he had encountered Hatto unexpectedly at a time when he should have been teaching. 'Hallo Hatto', he said, 'haven't you got your Science German class now?' With a puckish grin, he replied, 'Well, I should have, but when I went along last week there was nobody there, so I'm staying away this week to punish them!' Norman advised him not to punish them that way in future, lest he incur the wrath of the Professor.[9] In fact, though, Hatto

[8] G. P. Moss and M. V. Saville, *From Palace to College. An Illustrated Account of Queen Mary College (University of London)* (London, 1985). p. 113, ill. 240. Other photographs of him are found in *German Life and Letters*, NS 30 (1976–7), facing p. 91, and on the Special Forces Roll of Honour website <http:// www.specialforcesroh.com>.

[9] This incident was related by Norman in his interview in 1965.

was to become renowned as a committed and enthusiastic teacher, perhaps too enthusiastic for some of his students, one of whom recalled how when Hatto had been lecturing at some length on the symbolism of the lime-tree as a feature of the *locus amoenus* in medieval poetry the students one day covered the lectern with lime leaves: Hatto entered the room, sweeping the offending greenery aside without recognising it for what it was—a story which, however, is hard to credit in a man with such a keen eye for nature. His study of the lime appeared in the *Modern Language Review*.[10] When he gave a version of this paper to Hugo Kuhn's seminar at the University of Munich in 1961, the students were amazed at the way he put the symbol of the lime-tree into the context of global literature and archaic cultures, and by the verve with which he delivered the lecture. The vitality he displayed in lecturing was legendary: in teaching the ninth-century Old High German *Hildebrandslied* he would act out Hildebrand's and Hadubrand's parts on the lecturer's podium. Professor Ian Short, an undergraduate pupil of his at the time when Hatto was putting the finishing touches to his Penguin translation of the *Nibelungenlied*, remembers him as 'energetic, bubbly even, forever pacing around the room and talking nineteen to the dozen, [...] leaping onto the table to show either the agility or the sword-play of Siegfried, and darting nimbly over to the door to heave Gunther onto the coat peg in emulation of Brünhild. Never a dull moment ...!' He also remembers Hatto's many asides 'and the pleasure he took in interrupting himself and relating whatever it was that we were reading to a wider context, to folklore and to mythology, mostly, and to exotic literatures that none of us had even heard of'. In illuminating a particular textual detail by applying a comparative method Hatto was way ahead of his time. He outlined the aim of his approach in a letter he wrote to Daniel Prior: 'Without leaving the empirical level comparisons bring out individualities, help to illuminate, even decrypt obscurities, as though light, dancing round the vortex of specifics, were accelerated into an ever-intensifying brightness.'

Although Hatto was a fervent and loyal 'college man' he was also an ardent supporter of the federal University of London. He loathed administration and was never interested in power for its own sake, yet he was scrupulously conscientious in carrying out the duties of such offices as came his way. His entertaining aperçus enlivened many a meeting of the University's Board of Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures.

[10] 'The lime-tree and early German, Goliard and English lyric poetry', *The Modern Language Review*, 49 (1954), 193–209.

He was a rigorous chairman of the Board of Staff Examiners for German, and a vociferous member of the Committee of Management of the University of London Institute of Germanic Studies whose fortunes he had followed with keen interest ever since Leonard Willoughby had proposed to the Senate in 1943 the establishment of such an institute to serve as a focus for German studies in London and 'a house of call' for visiting scholars from home and abroad. Nevertheless, there were really only two administrative appointments that he welcomed: that of representing the University's Faculty of Arts on the governing body of the School of Oriental and African Studies from 1960, an institution for which he cared very deeply and which gave him entrée to the world of professionals in the exotic and archaic cultures which so strongly attracted him and gave an added depth to his interpretation of much Germanic poetry; and his membership from 1969 of the committee of the University's Central Research Fund which he cherished because it furthered the careers of students.

From his earliest days at Queen Mary College and through the war and beyond he produced a stream of perceptive (and remarkably succinct) articles. The earliest appeared in *London Mediaeval Studies* (*LMS*), a short-lived journal founded by Frederick Norman and A. H. Smith at University College London. His essay there on 'Some Old High German vowels in the light of the phoneme theory'[11] appears to be his sole engagement with linguistic theory but also, it seems, the earliest known application of the phoneme theory to the earliest stage of German. Two further articles appeared in the same volume of *LMS*: 'Moriz von Craon' (pp. 285–304) and 'The elephants in the Strassburg Alexander' (pp. 399–429).[12] At about the same time he began a remarkable sequence of articles, published mostly in *The Modern Language Review* (*MLR*) and sometimes in *German Life and Letters* (*GLL*) and a number of leading German journals, mainly on aspects of medieval literature, notably on textual problems relating to Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walther von der Vogelweide, two of the leading poets of around 1200.[13] Nineteen of these pieces were later reprinted

[11] 'Some Old High German vowels in the light of the phoneme theory', *London Mediæval Studies*, 1 (1937–9), 65–76.

[12] The latter was reprinted in Peter Noble *et al*. (eds.), *The Medieval Alexander Legend and Romance Epic: Essays in Honour of David J. A. Ross* (Millwood, NY, 1982), pp. 85–105.

[13] They include: '*Minnesangs Frühling* 40, 19 ff.', *The Modern Language Review* (hereafter *MLR*), 33 (1938), 266–8; 'sînen dienest verliesen', *MLR*, 33 (1938), 416–22; 'vrouwen schouwen', *MLR*, 34 (1939), 40–9; 'Archery and chivalry: a noble prejudice', *MLR*, 35 (1940), 40–54; 'Were Walther and Wolfram once at the same court?', *MLR*, 35 (1940), 529–30; 'Gallantry in the mediaeval German lyric', *MLR*, 36 (1941), 480–7; 'The name of God in Gothic', *MLR*, 39 (1944), 247–51; '*Parzival* 183, 9 "… und arger schützen harte vil"', *MLR*, 40 (1945), 48–9; 'The name of God in

Germanic', *MLR*, 41 (1946), 67–8; 'Venus and Adonis—and the boar', *MLR*, 41 (1946), 353–61 (Hatto claimed that C. J. Sisson, one of the editors of the journal, offered him a Readership in English at University College on the strength of this article alone!); 'Two notes on Chrétien and Wolfram', *MLR*, 42 (1947), 243–6; 'On Wolfram's conception of the "Graal"', *MLR*, 43 (1948), 216–22 (a review of Konrad Burdach's *Der Gral. Forschungen über seinen Ursprung und seinen Zusammenhang mit der Longinuslegende* (Stuttgart, 1938)); 'On Chrétien and Wolfram', *MLR*, 44 (1949), 380–5; '"Revolution", an enquiry into the usefulness of a historical term', *Mind*, 58 (1949), 495–517 (this article was later anthologised in Rosemary H. T. O'Kane (ed.), *Revolution: Critical Concepts in Political Science, Volume 1* (London, 2000), pp. 3–22; O'Kane calls Hatto a 'political philosopher', in her introduction (p. xl)—unintentional praise!); 'Walther von der Vogelweide's Ottonian poems: a new interpretation', *Speculum*, 24 (1949), 542–53 (republished in German translation as 'Die Ottonischen Gedichte Walthers von der Vogelweide', in Siegfried Beyschlag (ed.), *Walther von der Vogelweide*, Wege der Forschung, 112 (Darmstadt, 1971), pp. 230–50); 'Walther von der Vogelweide: A note on the poem "Madam, accept this garland"'. *German Life and Letters* (hereafter *GLL*), NS 3 (1949/50), 141–5; 'On beauty of numbers in Wolfram's dawn songs', *MLR*, 45 (1950), 181–8; 'An early *Tagelied*', *MLR*, 46 (1951), 66–9; (with R. J. Taylor) 'Recent work on the arithmetical principle in medieval poetry', *MLR*, 46 (1951), 396–403; 'Zur Entstehung des Eingangs und der Bücher I und II des *Parzival*', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, 84 (1952/53), 232–40 (with a correction on p. 346); 'The lime-tree and early German, Goliard and English lyric poetry, *MLR*, 49 (1954), 193–209; 'Snake-swords and boar-helms in *Beowulf*', *English Studies*, 38 (1957), 145–60 and 257–9 (which ends with an illuminating comparative reference to an Ainu epic); a review of Hermann J. Weigand's *Three Chapters on Courtly Love in Arthurian France and Germany. 'Lancelot'—Andreas Capellanus—Wolfram von Eschenbach's 'Parzival'* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1956), in *GLL*, NS 11 (1957/58), 57–60; 'Das Falkenlied des Kürenbergers', *Euphorion*, 53 (1959), 20–23; 'Enid's best dress. A contribution to the understanding of Chrétien's and Hartmann's *Erec* and the Welsh *Gereint*', *Euphorion*, 54 (1960), 437–41; '*Parzival* English', *GLL*, NS 15 (1961/62), 28–36; 'Das Tagelied in der Weltliteratur', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift*, 36 (1962), 489–506; 'Folk ritual and the Minnesang', *MLR*, 58 (1963), 196–209; (with D. Dalby) 'The historian of the hunt in Germany', *GLL*, NS 18 (1964/65), 189–93; 'Poetry and the hunt in medieval Germany', *Journal of the Australasian Universities Modern Language Association*, 25 (1966), 33–56; 'Herzeloyde's Dragon-Dream', *GLL*, 22 (1968/69), 16–31; 'On the excellence of the *Hildebrandslied*: a comparative study in dynamics', *MLR*, 68 (1973), 820–38. Hatto also contributed essays to a number of Festschriften for Germanist colleagues and conference proceedings. These include: '"ine weiz …" Diplomatic Ignorance on the Part of Medieval German Poets', in *German Studies Presented to Leonard Ashley Willoughby by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends on His Retirement* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 98–107; 'Y a-t-il un roman du Graal de Kyot le provençal?', in *Les romans du Graal aux XII^e^ et XIII^e^ siècles. III^e^ Colloque: Strasbourg, 29 mars—3 avril 1954*, Colloques internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 3 (Paris, 1956), pp. 167–84; '"Der Aventiure meine" in Hartmann's Iwein', in A. T. Hatto and M. O'C. Walshe (eds.), *Mediaeval German Studies. Presented to Frederick Norman by his Students, Colleagues and Friends on the Occasion of his Retirement* (London, 1965), pp. 94–103; 'The earliest extant Middle High German political songs: Friedrich von Hausen's "Si welnt dem tode entrunnen sin" and "Ich gunde es guoten vrouwen niet"', in P. Valentin and G. Zink (eds.), *Mélanges pour Jean Fourquet* (Paris and Munich, 1969), pp. 137–45; 'Wolfram von Eschenbach and the Chase', in Sigrid Schwenk *et al.* (eds), *Et multum et multa. Beiträge zur Literatur, Geschichte und Kultur der Jagd. Festgabe für Kurt Lindner zum 27. November 1971* (Berlin, 1971), pp. 101–12; 'Germanic and Kirgiz heroic poetry', in Brigitte Schludermann *et al.* (eds.), *Deutung und Bedeutung: Studies in Germanic and Comparative Literature presented to Karl-Werner Maurer* (The Hague and Paris, 1973), pp. 19–33 (Maurer had been a colleague at University College London before the war); 'Die Höflichkeit des Herzens in der Dichtung der mittelhochdeutschen Blütezeit', in Alfred Ebenbauer *et al.* (eds.), *Strukturen und Interpretationen. Studien zur deutschen Philologie gewidmet Blanka Horacek zum 60. Geburtstag*, Philologica

in his *Essays on Medieval German and Other Poetry*, Anglica Germanica, 2 (Cambridge, 1980), arranged under the headings 'Love-poetry', 'Heroic poetry', 'Wolfram von Eschenbach' and 'Animal symbolism'. If one had to choose just a couple of essays to epitomise many of Hatto's outstanding qualities as an interpreter of literature, these might be 'Der minnen vederspil Isot',[14] and 'On the excellence of the *Hildebrandslied*: a comparative study in dynamics',[15] the latter appearing in the same year as he edited Frederick Norman's *Three Essays on the 'Hildebrandslied'*. In the former, dealing with a motif in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, he brings to bear a wealth of knowledge, literary and practical, of falconry, parallels from other literary sources, study of the semantic field, and above all an appreciation of Gottfried's purposeful employment of metaphor to propose a solution to one of the most disputed interpretative issues in the work: he shows conclusively that it is the love potion that causes Tristan and Isolde to fall in love and not that they were already in love before they drank it. And in the essay on the *Hildebrandslied*, he demonstrates how the poet's presentation of the human drama of the deadly encounter between father and son displays far higher ethical and literary qualities than does treatment of the similar theme in Irish, Persian, and Russian heroic poetry.[16] This essay fruitfully brings together the two halves of Hatto's scholarly vision, as a Germanist and as a practitioner of comparative studies. Both essays represent philologically informed literary interpretation of the highest order—and all in the compass of a few pages! Virtually everything he wrote is characterised by unusual perspicacity and acuity, though his ingenuity was not always appreciated: for example, when he advanced his theory that the length of the strophes in the political songs of Walther von der Vogelweide reflected the social standing of the personage to whom they were addressed[17]—the twenty-four-line songs in

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Germanica, 1 (Vienna, 1974), pp. 85–101; 'The secular foe and the *Nibelungenlied*', in Volker Honemann *et al*. (eds.), *German Narrative Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries. Studies presented to Roy Wisbey on his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (Tübingen, 1994), pp. 157–71.

[14] *Euphorion*, 51 (1957), 302–7; repr. in Alois Wolf (ed.), *Gottfried von Strassburg,* Wege der Forschung, 320 (Darmstadt, 1973), pp. 209–17.

[15] *MLR*, 68 (1973), 820–38.

[16] The article, reprinted in *Essays on Medieval German and other Poetry*, pp. 93–116, has, however, not met with universal admiration: see Jerome W. Clinton, 'The illusion of objectivity: A. T. Hatto on "The Story of Sohrāb" and the *Hildebranslied* [*sic*]', *Persica*, 17 (2001), 27–33, who declares that Hatto's piece is 'a caricature of what comparative literary studies should be—subjective and polemical where one looks for clarity and dispassion—and based on scholarship that is, at least with regard to the *Šāhnāme*, seriously deficient' (p. 29) and accuses him of western 'cultural bias' (p. 32).

[17] In *Speculum*, 24 (1949), 542–53.

the so-called 'Reichston' being directed to the Emperor, those in the shorter strophes to lesser princes—the experts were sceptical. In a letter of 16 May 1950 Carl von Kraus (1868–1952), the 'grand old man' of Walther studies, had indicated to Frederick Norman that he entertained doubts about the tenability of this thesis. Norman, replying on 23 May, wrote:

> [. . .] Hatto is extremely brilliant and extremely headstrong. He takes a great deal of convincing and he always prefers the difficult and abnormal if he can possibly find an excuse. Very stimulating and very dangerous. [. . .] I am, as you, most sceptical about the importance of patrons and the length of the strophes. This seems to me very fanciful and far too mechanistic. When I pointed out to Hatto that the mediaeval lyric was essentially a 'social' art and that the more social an art the less one could play esoteric tricks, he replied that he did not for a moment expect the audience to understand the references and that these references were merely meant for other poets. I fear I cannot agree [. . .].

And on 23 July, again to Norman, Kraus reinforced his doubts: 'Ihre Skepsis gegenüber der These Hattos, dass die Grösse der Strophen im Verhältnis zur Grösse der darin Besungenen stehe, teile ich durchaus. Die Rechnung geht auch nicht glatt auf.'[18]

As well as contributing numerous stimulating articles on several of the medieval German lyric poets—Kürenberg, Friedrich von Hausen, Walther von der Vogelweide, and Wolfram von Eschenbach, in particular—Hatto collaborated with his colleague Ronald Taylor (another pupil of Frederick Norman's) to publish a book on the thirteenth-century poet Neidhart: *The Songs of Neidhart von Reuental: 17 Summer and Winter Songs, set to their original melodies, with translations and a musical and metrical canon* (Manchester, 1958). This was the first fully critical edition of one of the most valuable groups of Minnesinger melodies to have survived.[19] A song by a Minnesinger, like one by a Troubadour or Trouvère, was a composite entity, blending literary and musical skills in a subtle interplay of conceptual and formal elements. Neidhart (*fl. c.*1210–36), arguably the last great poet of the Middle Ages in Germany, injected a note of rustic exuberance into the increasingly sterile artificiality of the courtly Minnesang, but was criticised for this by Walther von der Vogelweide who lamented 'Alas,

[18] 'I entirely share your scepticism regarding Hatto's idea that the size of the strophes corresponds to the status of the persons to whom they are addressed. It just doesn't add up.' The correspondence between Norman and von Kraus is in the personal possession of the author.

[19] Despite its importance, the book received but a single review, by Norman, in *German Life and Letters*, NS 13 (1959), 155–7. Ronald Taylor, later to become Professor of German at the University of Sussex, made the music of the Minnesang one of his special fields, publishing *Die Melodien der weltlichen Lieder des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1964) and *The Art of the Minnesinger* (Cardiff, 1968).

Courtly Song, that ever vulgar tones should have ousted you from court . . .' In their study, Hatto and Taylor demonstrated that both musically and metrically the songs show a mathematical precision—Hatto's interest in such matters was surely a hang-over from his involvement with cryptography.[20] Neidhart's songs seem to have been dancing-songs; as such they held a particular fascination for Hatto in as much as the relevance of the seasonal, occasional, or ritual setting of poetic performances was so central to his enthusiasm for 'archaic' poetry.[21]

Hatto's publications discussed so far were addressed to a scholarly, mostly highly specialist audience. To the wider public, however, he is best known as a translator of medieval German narrative verse in the Penguin Classics series: *Tristan*,[22] *Parzival*,[23] and the *Nibelungenlied*.[24] How the *Tristan* translation came about is of interest. It was the result of a conversation between Hatto and E. V. Rieu, General Editor of the Penguin Classics series, over tea at a meeting of the London Medieval Society, of which Hatto was a co-founder. Rieu was there to hear a paper by Dorothy Sayers, who had translated the *Chanson de Roland* for Penguin. Hatto asked Rieu what he thought of the great medieval German poems. He replied that he had not really encountered them. Hatto persuaded him that the classic version of the Tristan story was that by Gottfried von Strassburg, and Rieu invited him to submit a specimen. This he did, and

[20] While Hatto was investigating 'the beauty of numbers' in medieval poetry around 1950, Norman had written to Carl von Kraus on 12 May 1950, as follows: 'Taylor is carrying on a furious intellectual battle with my old student A. T. Hatto, who is developing the most astonishing esoteric notions on numbers in mediaeval love poetry.' Kraus, for his part, was much more favourably impressed by the work of the Dutch scholar, Johannes Alphonsus Huisman, whose book *Neue Wege zur dichterischen und musikalischen Technik Walthers von der Vogelweide. Mit einem Exkurs über die symmetrische Zahlenkomposition im Mittelalter*, Studia litteraria Rheno-Traiectina, 1 (Utrecht, 1950), had just appeared.

[21] Witness also his article 'Stonehenge and midsummer: a new interpretation', *Man*, 151 (1953), 101–6, in which he advanced his view that the stones were a representation of a spring fertility dance. This theory was sharply debated in subsequent numbers of the journal. Interesting as it was, it has not stood the test of time, but Hatto himself treasured as high praise the archaeologist Stuart Piggott's reported comment on the idea: 'This is not mad.'

[22] *Gottfried von Strassburg: Tristan. Translated Entire for the First Time. With The Surviving Fragments of the Tristran of Thomas, Newly Translated* (Harmondsworth, 1960; rev. edn., 1967).

[23] *Wolfram von Eschenbach: Parzival* (Harmondsworth, 1980). One of his doctoral students, Linda B. Parshall, wrote a thesis on 'The art of narration in Wolfram's *Parzival* and Albrecht's *Jüngerer Titurel*' in 1974; this was published under the same title at Cambridge in 1980.

[24] *Nibelungenlied* (Harmondsworth, 1965, rev. 1969). The first half of this translation (Âventiuren 1–17 (i.e. down to and including 'How Siegfried was lamented and buried')) was reissued, bereft of context or commentary, in 2006 under the title *Siegfried's Murder,* as one of 'the greatest stories ever told' as volume 15 in the 'Penguin epics' series.

the deal was soon done. The translation includes also Hatto's rendering of the surviving fragment of the *Tristan* of Thomas (of Britain, or of Brittany[25]), which happily begins within a few lines of where Gottfried's text breaks off, and thus ensures that Penguin readers are not left guessing what fate overtook the lovers.

As Hatto wrote in the introduction to his *Tristan* translation (pp. 30–1),

> To place Gottfried's *Tristan* in its true perspective it must be stressed that it is but one of four great narrative poems in medieval German, the others being the *Parzival* and the *Willehalm* of Wolfram von Eschenbach, and the epic *Nibelungenlied*, all written within twenty years of one another at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Together with the songs of leading Minnesinger like Heinrich von Morungen, Walther von der Vogelweide, and Neidhart von Reuental, these longer poems make an age of great literature as yet unsuspected by readers of English at large. German genius has sometimes been over-cried in its native land, so that where there is a hindrance to its appreciation as here—only a discipline as exacting as that of classical studies will unlock the door to it—others have taken the line of least resistance and ignored the just claims to their attention of this fascinating poetry. Even that great master of medieval literatures, W. P. Ker, shows few signs of having savoured the poetry of the Hohenstauffen age of Germany. Here, then, is a lost world of the imagination awaiting discovery by the curious, and here, as a beginning, is Gottfried's *Tristan*, which, unless I have sadly betrayed it, should bring a shock of delight to those who were expecting an Arthurian romance, a Tennysonian idyll, or a Wagnerian melodrama; or who imagined that in the year AD 1210 Germany was still altogether in the Dark Ages.

Here, in essence, was Hatto's 'programme' for medieval German studies. Of the 'four great narrative poems' he himself tackled three.[26] Each of the translations is accompanied by supporting materials, introducing and contextualising the works and offering interpretative guidance. Hatto's colleague F. P. Pickering (1909–81), Professor of German at Reading and himself an eminent medievalist, is on record as saying that the introduction to *Tristan* was the best thing he had ever read on that work. Similarly, Alois Wolf considered it was Hatto's 'balanced judgement' that made the introduction to his 'masterly' (*meisterhaft*) and 'indispensable' (*unentbehrlich*) translation 'one of the most satisfying manifestations of recent Gottfried research'.[27] If one reads the introduction to Hatto's *Parzival*,

[25] For discussion of this problem see Hatto's 'Note on Thomas's Tristan' on pp. 355–63 of the translation.

[26] The fourth, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm*, would be published in the same series by his pupil, Marion E. Gibbs (together with Sidney M. Johnson) in 1984.

[27] Wolf (ed.), *Gottfried von Strassburg* (see above, n. 14), p. IX: 'Hier wäre auch die Einleitung [. . .] zu erwähnen, die wegen ihres ausgewogenen Urteils zu den erfreulichsten Erscheinungen der neueren Gottfriedforschung gehört.'

one is struck by the boldness and assurance with which he writes on a range of critical issues that might nowadays be handled much more equivocally. His *Nibelungenlied* is particularly notable for the extensive ancillary material that it provides, including discussion of the possible processes by which historical events were transformed into legend, summaries of the most important cognate texts in Old Norse and other languages, and a detailed 'Introduction to a Second Reading' which still stands, even after almost half a century, as one of the best short overviews of the work in English or, indeed, in any language—in particular it provides a remarkably sane and lucid guide which will be appreciated by anyone who has had to struggle with the theories of Andreas Heusler, Friedrich Panzer, Gottfried Weber and others concerning the complexities of the subject. The three narratives are quite distinct in character, and each presents its own particular challenges to the translator in respect of form, language, and style. Hatto aimed for translations which would be eminently readable by his contemporaries, while maintaining the greatest possible fidelity to the sense and style of the originals—he was acutely aware that perfection was unattainable. He succeeded in producing stylish, non-archaising prose versions which mirror the high literary qualities of the three works and which display a sensitivity to the subtle distinctions of meaning which need to be teased out from the often polysemous medieval vocabulary, particularly in the area of ethical evaluation, in order to convey to the modern reader the precise nuances of words in their given contexts. This precision has meant that his renderings have sometimes been criticised for being somewhat mannered and precious, excessively coloured by the translator's own literariness—some of today's students find him quite a hard read!—but for the medieval German specialist who will be aware of the dangers of working mechanically with fixed renderings for particular items of vocabulary, the care taken in the latter regard makes Hatto's translations into sustained commentaries on the texts which are of inestimable value. His insistence on precise, where necessary specialised, language led him to encourage postgraduate students to undertake lexica of well-defined areas of medieval life, a notably successful example of such an undertaking being David Dalby's *Lexicon of the Mediæval German Hunt. A Lexicon of Middle High German Terms, 1050–1500, associated with the Chase, Hunting with Bows, Falconry, Trapping and Fowling* (Berlin, 1965).

The *Tristan* translation gave him especial pleasure, as is evident from his reported conversation with his father when it appeared. His father had offered him a belated apology for having entered him on the Modern Side at Dulwich some thirty-five years earlier, rather than on the Classical Side

to read Greek. 'Not at all, Father', he replied. 'Having done German, I was eventually able to translate a world masterpiece, Gottfried's *Tristan*, for the first time anywhere, whereas had I read Classics I might have been tempted to translate Homer for the n-thousandth time!'

The success of his *Tristan* translation led to an invitation from John Asher (1921–96), Professor of German at Auckland and a pupil of Friedrich Ranke, a great-nephew of the historian Leopold von Ranke and editor of the then standard edition of *Tristan*, to visit New Zealand for several months in 1965. This took him to Istanbul, Delhi, Kathmandu, and Bangkok before reaching Auckland. At Wellington he was thrilled to make the acquaintance of John Cawte Beaglehole, editor of *The Journals of Captain James Cook* (Cambridge, 1955 ff.). After lecturing at all of New Zealand's universities, he returned via Fiji, Hawaii, California, the Grand Canyon, and New York where he was delighted to acquire a copy of K. K. Yudakhin's *Kirgizsko–Russkij slovar* (Moscow, 1965), a Kirghiz–Russian dictionary which would prove invaluable for his later scholarly endeavours.

Hatto was a scholar of prodigious energy. In the same year as his *Nibelungenlied* translation appeared he also published *Eos: an Enquiry into the Theme of Lovers' Meetings and Partings at Dawn in Poetry* (The Hague, 1965), the fruit of his first large-scale collaborative enterprise, involving over fifty specialists, which had occupied him since about 1952. He himself, as general editor, contributed the masterly 'general survey' (pp. 17–102), the chapter on Mediaeval German (pp. 428–72), and the appendix on imagery and symbolism (pp. 771–819). His interest in the dawn song can be traced back at least to the early 1950s when he published his short articles 'On beauty of numbers in Wolfram's dawn songs' and 'An early *Tagelied*' in *The Modern Language Review*. That the volume took so long to appear was principally due to the difficulty of finding a publisher for so large an enterprise; that it appeared at all was thanks to a substantial subvention from UNESCO, arranged through the good offices of Louis L. Hammerich, Professor of German at Copenhagen. This taught Hatto a painful lesson: that without patronage scholarship would inevitably wither.

Although Hatto was a professor of German and is undoubtedly best known to the general public as a translator of medieval German poetry, his real interests lay in a much broader field. Indeed he described himself as 'a student of archaic poetry masquerading as a Professor of German', and after his retirement from the Chair at Queen Mary College in 1977 he rarely published on medieval German literature again, in 1981 even declaring himself to be 'thoroughly out of touch with Mediaeval European

studies'.[28] 'What has dominated my life of scholarship', he wrote in his own unpublished memoir, 'is a preoccupation with the Archaic Imagination, with its fresh, direct, compelling because profound traditional imagery of flora, fauna, luminaries, places and numina.' Already in *Eos* he had written pieces on Turkic and on the Dyak of Borneo, and from the later 1960s the proportion of his output devoted especially to Asian heroic narrative increased markedly—to the somewhat bemused admiration of the one-subject orthodoxy then prevailing in academe. His Asian interests were, in fact, of long standing, as is evident from his recollection of having given a paper on Yakut tales at Frederick Norman's folktale seminar at University College just before the war, the argument of which, he remembered, Anna Freud had summarily dismissed with (in Hatto's opinion) an appallingly inapt reduction of the tale's brother–sister protagonists to oedipal types.[29] Hatto's interest in the mythological and cultural aspects of the heroic poetry of the Yakuts, cattle-rearing Turks who had migrated to high northern latitudes, was long-lasting, as may be seen from several of his papers.[30] These essays represented the fruits of his having been awarded a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship following his retirement from Queen Mary College in 1977. This enabled him to devote himself single-mindedly to the study of heroic poetry in Central Asia and Siberia, especially that

[28] Letter to W. J. Jones, 5 June 1981. Nevertheless, in 1994 he did publish 'The secular foe and the *Nibelungenlied*', in the Festschrift for his colleague Roy Wisbey (Professor of German at King's College London, 1971–94), in which he showed that the key to the problem of the emergence of the 'friendly' image of Attila in German heroic poetry lies not in tribal history but in the dynamics of epic structure. This essay, he told the editors at the time, he believed was his best piece on the subject.

[29] This reminiscence is found in a revealing 'personal note' in 'Xara Kɯrčɯt—An enquiry into brother–sister relations in Yakut epic poetry', *Zentralasiatische Studien*, 14/1 (1980), 109–37, here p. 127. Norman had set up his Seminar on the Comparative Study of Folktales in 1936, not least, apparently, to enhance his bid to succeed Priebsch in the Chair of German but also because his young daughter had an insatiable appetite for fairytales and folktales. In particular it was concerned to investigate brother–sister relationships. While several of Norman's pupils, including Kenneth King, Peter Magill, and Maurice Walshe, were entrusted with the tales of European countries, Hatto was charged with gathering material from non-European areas. (Most of the material collected was later destroyed in an air raid on University College.) Reading in the library of the Folklore Society, housed at University College, Hatto revelled in the writings of Arthur Waley on Chinese and Japanese. Waley, along with Norman and Firth, Hatto regarded as the three most formative academic influences on his young life.

[30] For example, 'Zwei Beiträge zur oloŋχo-Forschung: I. Das Oloŋχo und die benachbarten Überlieferungen; II. Xān Jargistai—a Yakut epic trilogy', in W. Heissig (ed.), *Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung*, III, Asiatische Forschungen, 91 (Wiesbaden, 1985), pp. 446–529, 'Shamanism in the Yakut epic trilogy "Xan Jargistai"', *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher*, NS 5 (1985), 146–67, and 'On some Siberian and other Copper-Crones', *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*, 85 (1994), 71–105.

of the Yakuts, for which he went to Helsinki to obtain material. He never ceased to be grateful to Lord Leverhulme who had had the imagination to perceive the needs of elderly scholars suddenly cut off from their privileges at their universities.

It is astonishing with what sureness but lightness of touch Hatto displays in his various writings his profound knowledge of the folklore of unfamiliar peoples such as the Selkups, the Ostyaks, the Kets, the Ewenki, indeed the whole of the wider Siberian and Far Eastern world down to the Orotschon and the Ainu on the edge of the Pacific Ocean. Already in the early 1950s Hatto appeared in a list of colleagues that includes leading figures in Oriental studies in the preface to Arthur Llewellyn Basham's monumental *The Wonder that was India: a Survey of the Culture of the Indian Sub-continent before the Coming of the Muslims* (London, 1954). Although it is not clear what Hatto had done to deserve this acknowledgement, it seems almost uncanny that Basham, the SOAS guru, should already be in this curious Germanist's debt. Clearly, he was already becoming noticed there—and indeed elsewhere. Papers he presented to the Mycenaean Seminar at the Institute of Classical Studies in 1959 and the African History Seminar at SOAS in 1960 would eventually form the basis of his foreword to Henry Francis Morris's *The Heroic Recitations of the Bahima of Ankole* (Oxford, 1964), in itself a *tour de force* as a wide-ranging disquisition on the cattle-raid as one of the most fertile themes of epic, from the Iliad to Wild West tales: he ranges over Greek myth, the Rig Veda, the Old Irish 'Cattle-raid of Cooley', and the legends of the Narts and Ossetes. Morris's book concerns the poetry in Runyankore (a Bantu language) devoted to the lifting and defence of the beautiful cattle of the Ankole district of Uganda, so greatly cherished by the aristocratic and warlike Bahima. What attracted Hatto about this material was 'the metrical boast of deeds done about the herds, in a language thick with kennings' (p. v).

Already during the war Hatto had taught himself Greek in order to be able to read Homer in the original. But what he regarded as 'the most important freely considered step' in the whole of his career was his resolve, at the age of about fifty, to teach himself Russian to overcome his frustration at his inability to access writings on ethnography and epic poetry written in that language. This would occupy him between the hours of 11 p.m. and 2 a.m., over a period of some two years, after his normal academic and domestic duties had been done. Having mastered Russian, he had then taught himself Kirghiz. These endeavours enabled him to expand enormously his knowledge of oral epic poetry. His efforts received support and encouragement from men like Arthur Waley, the Turkologist Sir Gerard

Clauson, the Mongolist Charles Bawden, his friend from his Bletchley days Bernard Lewis, and—from a distance—the Kazakh academician Älkey Margulan. He acquired an excellent reading knowledge of Kirghiz but, to his regret, was unable to speak it fluently—he was, as he himself admitted, essentially a deskbound ethnologist though he would have dearly loved to have carried out fieldwork in Asia. Nevertheless, it gave him much delight to try out what he called his 'Latin Kirghiz'—learned like a dead language—'after hours' at a conference at Turku in 1996.

He began publishing extensively on Kirghiz poetry, in a series of essays, all of them highly original, in the late 1960s.[31] Kirghiz material featured prominently in the Foundation Day Lecture he gave at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1970, and in 1976 a lecture he gave to the Royal Asiatic Society was also devoted to it. For the SOAS lecture, later published, he chose as his subject *Shamanism and Epic Poetry in Northern Asia*—he had already tackled the subject of shamanism in an earlier essay exemplifying his organic approach to the art of archaic societies.[32] In the Foundation Day Lecture, he perspicaciously discerned links between shamans and bards as lying 'in the excitement bordering on ecstasy of

[31] They include: 'The Birth of Manas: a confrontation of two branches of heroic epic poetry in Kirgiz', *Asia Major*, NS 14 (1968–9), 217–41; 'Almambet, Er Kökcö and Ak Erkec', *Central Asiatic Journal*, 13 (1969), 161–98; '*Kukotay* and *Bok Murun*: a comparison of two related heroic poems of the Kirgiz', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 32 (1969), 344–78 and 541–70; 'Köz-Kaman', *Central Asiatic Journal*, 15 (1971), 81–101 and 241–83; 'The Kirgiz original of *Kukotay* found', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 34 (1971), 379–86; 'Semetey', *Asia Major*, 18 (1973), 154–80 and 19 (1974), 1–36; 'The catalogue of heroes and heroines in the Kirgiz *Joloi-kan*', in W. Heissig *et al*. (eds.), *Tractata Altaica* (Wiesbaden, 1976), pp. 237–60 (this volume was a Festschrift for the distinguished Hungarian-American Professor of Central Asian Studies at Indiana University); '"Ak saraylap, kök saraylap" in Kirghiz epic poetry of the mid-nineteenth century', in R. Dor and M. Nicolas (eds.), *Quand le crible était dans la paille…: Hommage à Pertev Naili Boratav* (Paris, 1978), pp. 255–65; 'The attitude to nature in the mid-nineteenth-century Kirghiz epics', *Materialia Turcica*, 4 (1978), 22–7; 'Zyklische Anspielungen und Epitheta in der altkirgisischen Heldenepik', in W. Heissig (ed.), *Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung*, I, Asiatische Forschungen, 72 (Wiesbaden, 1979), 217–30; 'Das Pferd in der älteren kirghisischen Heldenepik und in der Ilias', in W. Heissig (ed.), *Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung*, II (Wiesbaden, 1980), 178–201; 'The marriage, death and return to life of Manas', *Turcica*, 12 (1980), 66–94 and 14 (1982), 7–38; 'Jantay. A Kirghiz lament for a chieftain, dated 1867–1869', in K. Sagaster and M. Weiers (eds.), *Documenta Barbarorum*, Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica, 18 (Wiesbaden, 1983), pp. 186–95; 'Mongols in mid-nineteenth-century Kirghiz epic', in W. Heissig and K. Sagaster (eds.), *Gedanke und Wirkung. Festschrift zum 90. Geburtstag von Nikolaus Poppe*, Asiatische Forschungen, 108 (Wiesbaden, 1989), pp. 140–5; and 'Die Marschrouten in der älteren kirghisischen Heldenepik', in W. Heissig (ed.), *Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung*, V, Asiatische Forschungen, 120 (Wiesbaden, 1992), pp. 331–42.

[32] 'The Swan Maiden: a folk-tale of North Eurasian origin?', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 24 (1961), 326–52.

improvisation; in a dream- or trance-like style of first-personal narration; in a narrative content in the form of initiatory tests and heroic journeys to the Otherworld, marked by battle with spirits and monsters or by other encounters by land, air or water' (p. 3). His range of reference was breath-taking: the Sumerian poem 'Gilgamesh and the Huluppu Tree' (2000 BC), the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Greek *Odyssey*, the Old English *Beowulf*, the twelfth-century Russian *Raid of Igor*, the Finnish *Kalevala*, the epic of the Ostyak and Vogul, the 'songs about giants' and the 'laments' of the Samoyed, the cosmos of the Yakut, Tungus heroic poetry, the Ainu of north Japan who referred to death as 'space for thought' and whose epic *Kutune Shirka* Hatto, 'in respectful disagreement with Arthur Waley', held to be partly shamanistic, and concluding with discussion of the Kirghiz oral heroic tradition, the most important living specimen of the genre. Of this he wrote, 'Desire for a national epic in the grand manner has led in the twentieth century to the triumph of cyclic tendencies already marked in the nineteenth. Highly gifted bards [...] have played their part in this decline with their vast inflation of motifs, with their Pan-Islamic moralisings or their class-conscious twists' (p. 17). The national hero Manas had all but engulfed Kirghiz folk-tradition—half a million lines of *Manas* were said to have been recorded.

Editing *Eos* had demonstrated what could be achieved by collaboration on themes and genres of international interest, and now, fired by his enthusiasm for heroic narrative, Hatto embarked on a still more ambitious project. In his view, Maurice Bowra's *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1952) had taken the subject as far as one person could: it was time to pool expertise. In 1964 the London Seminar on Epic was formed, a joint venture between Queen Mary College and SOAS, bringing together a hand-picked elite of some two dozen leading specialists. Whereas the dawn-song project had been conducted through correspondence between the contributors and the editor, the members of the Seminar on Epic, their numbers sometimes fortified by visits from distinguished guests from afar such as Viktor Zhirmunsky, met regularly about six times a year until 1972 and gave papers on their field, followed by mild conviviality (at Hatto's suggestion, the reader of the paper rewarding his listeners with liquor as near as feasible to that drunk by the audiences of the epic tradition in question) and intensely focused discussion. The result was the monumental two-volume *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry,* issued under Hatto's general editorship.[33] To

[33] *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry. Volume 1: The Traditions* and *Volume 2: Characteristics and Techniques*, Publications of the Modern Humanities Research Association, vols. 9 and 13

Volume 1 he contributed chapters on Medieval German (pp. 165–95) and Kirghiz (pp. 300–27), and to Volume 2 on epithets in Kirghiz epic poetry (pp. 71–93) and the enormously influential essay 'Towards an anatomy of heroic/epic poetry' (pp. 145–294), in which the context-sensitive programme foreshadowed in Bowra's best writing reached maturity as a many-sided conversation, markedly ethnographic in character, involving the bearers of the traditions themselves, the discerning scholar, and his expert interlocutors in the Seminar.

There is a consensus among specialists that Hatto's most important contribution to theory about heroic and epic poetry was his concept of 'epic moments', about which he wrote eloquently in his 'General introduction' to Volume 1 of *Traditions* and in his 1990 lecture *Eine allgemeine Theorie der Heldenepik*,[34] in both places acknowledging his indebtedness to his Munich colleague Hugo Kuhn (1909–78) for the kernel of the idea.[35] In his 'General introduction' Hatto observed that 'Epic poetry is apt to condense long-drawn tensions into brief scenes of dramatic power enhanced by visual magnificence, that is, "epic moments"' (p. 4) and, after two pages of illustrative examples, then adds: 'Epic moments are highly charged narrative ganglia, and it is suggested here as one of the fruits of comparative study that possession of them in memory confers power on the mature bard to build up an episode or even a string of episodes. In other words, it is suggested that epic moments, in addition to being great poetry are mnemonic elements of epic of an order altogether superior to that of "themes" or "formulae", now so well-discussed: and that they will therefore mark or help to mark the structures of epics' (p. 6).[36] We can follow Hatto working his way towards the concept of 'epic moments' when he writes: 'Such exciting epic-dramatic plots knitted into veritable ganglia of wills convey high points in the lives of a multiplicity of heroes with shared fates [. . .].'[37] And again, somewhat later: 'A tense ethos, however

(London, 1980–9). A sketch of the history of the Seminar is given by J. B. Hainsworth in *Traditions*, vol. 2, pp. 307–11.

[34] *Eine allgemeine Theorie der Heldenepik*, Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G, Heft 307 (Opladen, 1991).

[35] See Hugo Kuhn, 'Über nordische und deutsche Szenenregie in der Nibelungendichtung', in Hermann Schneider (ed.), *Edda, Skalden, Saga: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Felix Genzmer* (Heidelberg, 1952), pp. 279–306, and reprinted in Kuhn's *Dichtung und Welt im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1959), pp. 196–219.

[36] It is characteristic of Hatto's modesty that this major theoretical innovation, which was certainly all his own work, was 'suggested here as one of the fruits of comparative study'.

[37] 'Plot and character in mid-nineteenth century Kirgiz epic', in W. Heissig (ed.), *Die mongolischen Epen. Bezüge, Sinndeutung und Überlieferung* (Wiesbaden), 1979, pp. 95–112, here p. 96. This

well heroes may disguise it with nonchalance and courtesy, surely breeds laconism and pregnant "moments" in which visual gestures condense much action?'[38] Hatto's concept of 'epic moments' has since been fruitfully taken up and developed by Daniel Prior who argues that epic moments can be used as diagnostic, diachronic indicators of the 'heroic' in an epic tradition.[39] Likewise, John D. Smith has demonstrated how a Rajasthani oral epic was structured in such a way that a series of 'epic moments' signalled the enactment and discharge of the narrative 'contracts' that constituted the plot.[40] Scholars such as Smith, Prior and Reichl[41] are not the only ones who regard the concept of 'epic moments' as the most significant contribution to theoretical writing on the topic since Milman Parry's work in the 1930s. Yet even so the idea has not yet gained the broad attention it deserves, partly no doubt because the comparative study of epic traditions is still strongly influenced by Albert Bates Lord (1912–91) and his book *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA, 1960). For his part, Hatto always distanced himself from the 'oral-formulaic theory', much in vogue when the London Seminar was operating but which he considered too mechanistic: his concern was rather with illuminating aesthetic and ritual peculiarities and their comparison.[42] Members of the London Seminar had already recognised that Lord's desire to impose his Serbo-Croat model on all traditions, not least the Homeric, was misguided if only because the Serbo-Croat tradition of heroic poetry took the form of ballads and lays, not epics. In any case, Hatto's own approach to the subject was developing

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paper was largely based on the lecture he had given to the Royal Asiatic Society in June 1976. See also *Traditions*, vol. 2 (1989), pp. 145–306, here pp. 172, 178–80.

[38] 'What is a lay? Reflections on the Germanic, Serbo-Croat, and Fula', in M. Branch and C. Hawkesworth (eds.), *The Uses of Tradition: a Comparative Enquiry into the Nature, Uses and Functions of Oral Poetry in the Balkans, the Baltic, and Africa* (London, 1994), pp. 123–34, here p. 125.

[39] See D. Prior, *The Twilight Age of the Kirghiz Epic Tradition*. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2002; and his essay, 'Sparks and embers of the Kirghiz epic tradition', *Fabula*, 51 (2010), 23–37. Prior also makes use of the concept in his edition of *The Semetey of Kenje Kara: A Kirghiz Epic Performance on Phonograph* (Wiesbaden, 2006).

[40] See J. D. Smith, 'Where the plot thickens: Epic moments in Pābūjī', *South Asian Studies*, 2 (1986), 53–64; also his 'How to sing a tale: Epic performance in the Pābūjī tradition', in *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry*, vol. 2, pp. 29–41, and *The Epic of Pābūjī: a Study, Transcription and Translation* (Cambridge, 1991).

[41] See Karl Reichl, *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 2000). For all that the importance of Hatto's work has been recognised in western scholarly circles, it has so far had little impact among native Kirghiz scholars, whose preoccupations are generally with the folklorised Manas versions of the twentieth century.

[42] For Hatto's views on Lord see his paper 'What is a lay?'.

before Lord's book appeared. Rather he took the work of scholars such as Sir Maurice Bowra (particularly his *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1952) and *Primitive Song* (London, 1962)) and Viktor Zhirmunsky and his book *Narodnij geroicheskiy epos* (Moscow, 1962) as his models.

The Kirghiz material became an abiding passion with him, from the 1960s through to the 1990s. He gave many lectures, chiefly at symposia organised by the Mongolist Walther Heissig (1913–2005) at Bonn, where together with like-minded colleagues (experts in Mongolian, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Buryat, Tibetan, and Sinologists with knowledge of the archaic minorities of China) he would engage in productive and enthrallingly fascinating debate. He came to be admired as above all a remarkably well-read, observant interpreter of texts, who always had something new and fresh to say. More significantly, he produced editions of Kirghiz material which were models of their kind, setting new standards and showing him to be a first-rate philologist. These were the *Memorial Feast for Kökötöy-khan* in 1977,[43] and in 1990 the *Manas* of Wilhelm Radloff (V. V. Radlov, 1837–1918), with its parallel Kirghiz text and English translation.[44] With them he had edited the entire corpus of mid-nineteenth-century Kirghiz epic poetry on Manas, the supra-tribal hero of the Kirghiz. Evaluating them, Daniel Prior has written: 'The editor's hand, steadied by long experience in the mature field of medieval textual criticism, reveals not only an original scholar, but also—in its assiduous mediation between predecessors' flawed efforts, the needs of his contemporaries, and the oral artistry of the bards—a scholar's scholar.'[45]

Altogether, with his many books and articles Hatto established himself firmly in the growing world of solidly language-based comparative study of poetry from archaic heroic cultures, a field to which he himself, following the inspiration of tutors and writers alike but against the mainstream of self-contained specialisation, had contributed so much by participation, encouragement, and example. Among his many essays, especially 'Towards an anatomy of heroic and epic poetry', *Eine allgemeine Theorie der Heldenepik*, and his 1993 Bonn symposium paper on the possibility of

[43] *The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy-khan (Kökötöydün ašı): a Kirghiz epic poem, edited for the first time from a photocopy of the unique manuscript with translation and commentary by A. T. Hatto*, London Oriental series, 33 (Oxford and New York, 1977). The original Kirghiz text is in the archive of the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences at St Petersburg.

[44] *The Manas of Wilhelm Radloff, re-edited, newly translated and with a commentary by Arthur T. Hatto*, Asiatische Forschungen, 110 (Wiesbaden, 1990).

[45] Personal communication.

developing 'ethnopoetics',[46] are perhaps his finest: not only do they embody scholarship of the highest order but they are also extraordinarily stimulating in their breadth and depth.

In 1999, pioneering still towards the end of his ninth decade, he did the characteristically unexpected thing and published *The Mohave Heroic Epic of Inyo-kutavêre, reappraised and further interpreted by Arthur T. Hatto; on the basis of the edition of A. L. Kroeber and consultation of his field record*, (Helsinki, 1999), a study of an almost totally forgotten Native American epic on the basis of a record of a near-simultaneous English translation of a live performance, written down in the field by Alfred Louis Kroeber (1876–1960) in 1902. Kroeber, then twenty-six and teaching at the University of California, was determined to record as much as possible of the ways of life and languages of the Native Americans, including the Mohave, at the edge of Arizona. He found an informant, Inyo-kutavêre, who told him, however, that he had never told the story of his people from beginning to end. Kroeber and his interpreter listened to three or four hours of narration, and as many of translation and writing, over each of six days without reaching the end. Inyo-kutavêre thought one more day would suffice, but Kroeber was overdue at Berkeley. He promised to return by the next winter, and did, but by then Inyo-kutavêre had died. Kroeber did not bring the material to publication until 1951,[47] since when Inyo-kutavêre's narrative had lain largely unnoticed. Hatto had no doubt that it belonged to the genre of heroic epic. It had the high seriousness demanded by Aristotle, a firm structure, which Hatto believed to be inherited, not improvised, and an almost perfect purism as to time. It was a stirring story of leaving a valley promised by the source of the Mohaves' way of life, Mastamho, then fighting to regain it, first with failure, then with success. There are protagonists and antagonists, heroic warriors and fatal combats between equals. And here again there were 'epic moments'. Hatto's book is an important stimulus to thinking about the Mohave and neighbouring traditions, and to thinking about Native American narrative more generally.

The turn of the millennium saw Hatto immersed in the heroic epic poetry of a north-west Siberian people, the Obugrian Ostyaks (or Khanty), on whom he had already written in 1970. His last book, *The World of the Ostyak Epic Hero Princes*, is currently being edited for publication. The

[46] 'Ethnopoetik—Traum oder Möglichkeit?', in W. Heissig (ed.), *Formen und Funktionen mündlicher Tradition*, Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 9, 1995, pp. 11–25.
[47] A. L. Kroeber, *A Mohave Historical Epic* (Berkeley, CA, 1951).

monograph is based on eighteen epics, totalling some 22,000 long epic lines, recorded mostly in 1844 with the remainder from the end of the nineteenth century. Hatto regarded these epics as of unusually high quality. The singers were obviously intelligent and perceptive. Their epics are firmly existential and supported the ethos of communities which had mastered the harsh Ob-Irtysh environment and had courageously maintained their animistic beliefs under long persecution by the czar's servitors. To his mind, the corpus of Ostyak heroic epic poetry comes nearest of all the better known oral traditions to that of the Ionians, as one may imagine it at its still fully oral stage. Through the involvement of two different generations of singers one can even see how formulae and themes grow and are varied through time. The book, which is believed to be the very first attempt to open the way for Ostyak folklore traditions to reach international recognition, provides a meticulous analysis of the 'world' of the Ostyak Hero-Princes, which, like that of other heroes of epic, is a web of fact and fiction. No attempt is made to unravel that web, but often, where he scents useful data for archaeologists and other historians, Hatto marks them clearly in his footnotes and elucidates wherever he can.

To the very end of his long, uncommonly rich life Hatto thus remained intellectually active and buoyant. His life of study, as he put it, 'had been one long romp'. His zest for learning knew no boundaries, and he was ever generous in the help he offered to others. He had a breadth of interest, scholarly curiosity and sympathetic understanding that seemed to have an almost Victorian quality. Indeed, he had been born in the Edwardian era, but it was never easy to remember this when confronted with someone so mentally agile and so young at heart (for many years he drove a white sports car which, with his fondness for animal imagery, he called 'the white wolf' and referred to deprecatingly as 'a *boy's* car'). He was a scholar of massive erudition who wore his learning lightly and who was able, with the lightest of touches, to illuminate empirical thoroughness with gentle flashes of theory; an urbane gentleman with an impish sense of humour; a man who hated pretension and would always expose it with old-world politeness. He hoped that posterity would recognise, first, that, in *Eos* and *Traditions* he had laid the foundations of what he called 'ethnopoetics' and, secondly, that with his general theory of epic heroic poetry he had formulated an oral and universal approach, to be set beside Aristotle's textually enshrined and parochially Greek study.

Arthur Hatto was elected a Senior Fellow of the British Academy in 1991. He was also a Fellow or Honorary Fellow of three colleges of the University of London: King's (1971), the School of Oriental and African

Studies (1981), and Queen Mary (1992). In 1978 he had become a Corresponding Member of the Finno-Ugrian Society and, in 1984, a Foreign Member of the Seminar for Central Asian Languages and Cultures in the University of Bonn. Though he gave up active research in 2005, he developed a lively interest in the study of English social history, and was still reading in Russian until early 2009. He died on 6 January 2010. A service of thanksgiving for his life was held on 26 January 2010 at the church of St Leonard at Flamstead, the Hertfordshire village where he had made his home since moving from Mill Hill in 2004.

JOHN L. FLOOD
University of London

Note. This account owes much to Arthur Hatto's own 'Guidance for a sympathetic Obituarist', a typescript he completed on his eighty-third birthday, the property of the British Academy, which has been generously made available to me. Professor Hatto's daughter, Mrs Jane Lutman, has also generously provided me with much personal information about her father, and I have also benefited from the obituaries in *The Times* (19 March 2010), by Dr Daniel Prior in *Fabula*, 51 (2010), 1–4, and by Dr Katalin Uray-Kőhalmi in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 63 (2010), 383–6. Mrs Lutman also very kindly supplied me with her father's own fairly full list of his publications. A list of his publications (excluding his reviews[48]) from 1934 to 1976 was published in the Special Number of *German Life and Letters*, ns 30, 2 (January 1977), 172–6, but as far as I am aware, no published list of his many writings from 1976 to 2010 has appeared, a deficiency I have attempted to make good in the foregoing pages. I am grateful to Mrs Calista M. Lucy, Keeper of the Archives at Dulwich College, for information about Arthur Hatto's schooldays. For personal reminiscences, expert opinions, and additional information I am greatly indebted to the following: Dr Daniel Prior (Columbus, Ohio), Professor Karl Reichl (Bonn), and Professor John D. Smith (Cambridge), as well as to Dr Tony Grenville (London) and several former colleagues in the University of London, especially Dr Rosemary Combridge, the late Professor F. M. Fowler, Mr Martin Jones, Professor William Jervis Jones, Professor Silvia Ranawake, Professor Ian Short, Dr Adrian Stevens, Professor David Wells, and Professor David Yeandle.

[48] *German Life and Letters* alone carried thirteen reviews from his pen between 1957 and 1976.