

Traditions in Exile: Canada, Australia, and (the Recording and Collecting of) their Own Countries' Folklore Disciplines *

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ABSTRACT: All folklore, be it familial, communal, or national, needs watchers/ recorders/ outsiders of percipience. Both internally and comparatively, these two nations have offered numerous insightful perspectives for World Folklore, both in their own country and much further afield. As ex-colonial and watcher nations from the periphery, they have proved to be significant players on and clear-sighted [migrant] interpreters of much larger stages, as well as their own.

At an earlier 'external' Canadian Studies conference that I attended at the University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, in July 1989, several eminent Canadian folklorists came to participate particularly in a one day seminar largely organised as an expression of their country's wish to pay tribute to the by then Emeritus Professor Russel Ward (1914-1995). He was, of course, the eminent author of the classic study of the colonial period in Australia, *The Australian Legend* (1958), with its special emphasis on the mores and values of the colonial age's wandering itinerant workers in 'the bush'. He fascinated the Canadians, and they him.

His so often re-printed volume, one much fêted in North America and elsewhere, was particularly concerned with the earlier new, and non-Indigenous, settlers in the vast continent of Australia, and with the social place and base for so much of its developing lore, and for its often re-fashioned and re-interpreted content. His book still remains a seminal study of an ever adapting Europe-derived, if more complex, sprawling national identity, Ward's 'legend', so intriguing to the ever-evolving 'general' Canadian psyche, despite the considerable areas of difference between the two nations, notably the earlier French presence, and

* This is a modified version of an address to a Canada-Australia Conference held at the University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, in the winter of 2010. It was a form of sequel to a similar address at the same venue almost exactly twenty years before. Both conferences attracted both Canadians and 'Canadians-in-exile' (i.e. working in Australasia), while those present in 2010 endorsed the views as are now expanded on here.

continuing ‘enclave’ in Canada, and from its vast Arctic zones. However, in stark contrast to the longer Europeanised Canada, Australia—another earlier and largely Britain-derived culture—possessed a vast, semi-arid hinterland, and an Indigenous and ancient hunter-gatherer First People.

More meaningfully to my present reflections, it was found that the group from Canada, and notably Carole Carpenter and Gerald Pocius, had now discovered, first-hand, the recently formed notion that their patterns of research outlook and work were remarkably similar to the emerging tradition of teaching, codifying and interpreting our country’s folklore in several of our Australian universities.¹

This present brief exposition of a longer and more detailed comparative thesis is particularly concerned to identify ways in which the two countries’ scholars, like their ‘little people’, have

- maintained their own cultural perspectives on their hard-won and emancipated Canadian/ Australian ‘colonial’ identity, even as they and the students and scholars of such matters have, both,
- coped well with, or resisted, the juggernaut bodies of prestigious, canonised folkloric theory and scholarship that have come at them from Europe, or, more overpoweringly² in the case of Canada, from the United States of America.

Further, the folklorists of Canada have long retained the ability to look back insightfully to Western Europe to reflect on many other/ antecedent cultures, and notably through—

- the significant link with the University of Sheffield in the post World War II Institute for Folklore Studies in Britain and Canada (IFSBAC) there, within what was then the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT) ;
- their various dialogues with the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh, which have provided a direct means of exchange of perspectives, even as, reciprocally, the Memorial University of Newfoundland’s Department of Folklore would take over the Britain-based journal, *Contemporary Legend*, as will be explained below; and

¹ At this time, there would have been recently-formed small cells and similar academic groups in Curtin University, Monash University, and perhaps both Melbourne University and Deakin University (in Victoria), and certainly the University of New England (in New South Wales).

² Thus the various Canadian voices are largely overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of papers, in their hundreds, offered from the U.S.A. in the annual autumn meetings of the American Folklore Society. While many of the Society’s Presidential Addresses do seek to include the Canadian patterns and scholars, they, a tiny minority, can scarcely stand out there.

- the interesting Canadian participation³ in the 2007 International Interdisciplinary Conference, ‘The Voice of the People. The European Folk Revival, 1760 -1914’.

The re-discovery and re-validation of the ‘culture of the people’, even in the more gentlemanly Antiquarian Societies of a more spacious age, had been a defining feature in the societies of nineteenth and late eighteenth century Europe, this investigation and retrieval underpinning many of the ideological tendencies of the times. For this movement and activity were articulating the inadequacy of cosmopolitan rationalism by espousing the cultural productions of ordinary (uneducated, rural) people, as significant repositories of pre-rational truth and of authentic experience. This nostalgic imitation, collection and study of folksong, folktale, folk custom, and folk belief which this movement engendered became a process of linguistic, historical and mythical identity, with powerful political consequences.

The Study and Recording of Folklore in Canada

But to return to the steady progress of folklore studies in Canada: Canada has been able—more than might have been expected—especially through its vantage point of the first Elizabethan Age British landfalls in the ‘Maritime Provinces’, and its folkloric-distinguished Memorial University Newfoundland (MUN) located there—to trace meticulously the whole progress of white settlement in colder North America, especially from the time of Cabot. Equally interestingly, it has respected tactfully and positively the continuing minority of the French-descended and their influence and presence.⁴ As Carole Carpenter has nicely pointed out,⁵ the activities of the Folklore Division of the National Museum (now the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies) and its Director, Marius Barbeau, encouraged all Canadians to recognise folklore. A like driver

³ While the then participation from the USA would be minimal, Canada would be represented by Renata Schellenberg of Mount Allison University, New Brunswick’s: ‘The Impact of Ossian: Herder’s Literary Legacy’; Jacqueline Leung of McGill University’s ‘A cry for Lithuania’, Alfred Cortot’s Edition of Chopin’s ‘Fourth Ballade’, etc.

⁴ A nice instance of this form of tolerance is the title and format of the national journal in the folklore field, with the tactfully spelt title, the reverse side of the cover being titled thus: *Revue publiée par l’Association canadienne d’ethnologie et de folklore/ Journal published by The Folklore Studies Association of Canada*. Similarly its Board of Management is given under the heading: Bureau de direction de l’ACEF / FSAC Executive. And where necessary, key phrases are given, first in French, and then in English, with a certain number of articles in every issue being in French, while Abstracts/Résumés are given for every paper at the end of each volume.

⁵ Notably in *Many Voices: Folklore Activities in Canada and their Relation to Canadian Culture* (1979).

was the fine work, from the 1950s on, of Edith Fowke,⁶ who had endeavoured to document the folklore of all Canadians across the country through the use of the media, by collecting songs, such as those of the Central Canadian lumbercamps, and then publishing the same, as in her *Canada's Story in Song* (1960) and *Folklore of Canada* (1976).

Since the late 1960s, depth scholarship of specific regions has been notable, as in Newfoundland and Labrador in particular, and also work on ethnic groups and their links with Western Europe, as well as producing so many 'fresh' appraisals in the Canadian setting. While many books stress the significance of the social mores presented by such writers as Margaret Lawrence, Alice Munro, or Robertson Davies, perhaps much of the engaging appeal of these comes from the way in which they illuminate folkways by treating of family legends, of emigration, settlement, and of 'making Canada home'. In these ways, Australia may well seem to have as yet much progress to make in the matter of the foregrounding of its own 'settlement literature'.

But to turn to the progression of folklore in Australia itself: in most folk life matters, after the burst of investigation of nationalism from the late nineteenth century, and the post-1945 rise of bush music and the simultaneous collection of ballads and yarns, through to the present, this development may perhaps be deemed to be, similarly, reliant on two or three later twentieth century schools of training and reflective folkloric thought here:

A: A later twentieth century myth- and folklore- conscious cluster of scholars, especially those earlier taught in Oxford by the iconic and inspirational Old Norse and Old English scholar, J.R.R. Tolkien, including

- Winifred Trindade (from Oxford to Monash, and then to the University of Melbourne);
- Stephen Knight (from Oxford to Sydney, and then back to England, and then to Wales), both these teachers long working in Australia, but English born and nurtured;
- John Widdowson (from Oxford to Leeds, and so to Memorial University, and then duly back to Sheffield, and then for frequent returns to Memorial), he an advocate of the work of Curtin University's Graham Seal, author of the first theory and practice book on Australian culture, *The Hidden Culture*;

⁶ See also her fine earlier essay in Klinck's *A History of Canadian Literature* (1967), or Carole Carpenter's essay, 'Folklore (Canada)', in *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English* (ed. Eugene Benson and L. W. Conolly), 1994, vol. 1, pp. 519-521); and her book, *Many Voices* (1979).

- The present writer⁷ also, and so to a possible lineage moving from the University of New England to other English-speaking countries, in the fullness of time.

And perforce, these scholars, with this training, may also function in/ return to work in Australia;

B: These ‘New Australians’ own cohorts of post World War II teachers/ graduates, especially in the last forty years, such as Gwenda Davey, Susan Faine, and also Graham Seal (born in Kent and to return to the UK, to the University of Leeds, for his initial folklore training),⁸ and

C: Those Australia-born collectors and interpreters of both bush and industrial song and poetry, working with Hugh Anderson, perhaps the last living member of the Manning-Clark/ Russel Ward circle of fine folklorists and folklore-sympathetic historians living and working in Melbourne after World War II.⁹

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Interestingly, and a corollary to the above, Tolkien,¹⁰ born in South Africa to a modest banking official stationed there, and with distant Czech antecedents, could be said to have built his academic and writing career in England almost single-handedly, he becoming in the process one of the greatest folkloric-story-teller figures even produced in the British Isles. In a similar way, John Widdowson has worked over many years in the Canadian context, inspired by the similarly culturally-displaced and energised American scholar, Herbert Halpert—who was of

⁷ The ‘standback’ (i.e. reflective and comparative perspectives of both Knight and Ryan then may be illustrated by their early and comparative placing in the programme and proceedings of the seminal 1986 National Folklore Conference held at the then Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education, and issued in the bulky volume, *The Possum Stirs*, published in 1987. (This last large format volume of 559 pp. was subtitled ‘Record of Proceedings for the Australian FolkTrust’s 2nd National Folklore Conference...held on October 17-19, 1986’.)

⁸ The long-established training record in dialect, custom, and the like at the University of Leeds dates back to Joseph Wright, and, in a small measure, to Tolkien himself, for he was in Leeds from late 1920 to the beginning of 1925, prior to his first professorship in Oxford.

⁹ This would of course include the Professor ‘Bill’ Scott (who moved from the University of Melbourne to Monash University soon after it was founded), the younger Manning Clark, and others.

¹⁰ Like the (A) group just cited.

Hungarian stock,—and who built his so impressive career at the Memorial University of Newfoundland.¹¹

In short, we are dealing with the fascinating linkage or ‘chaining’ process, a cultural phenomenon of the formative links in the lives of so many significant key colonial and regional folklorists, as they move from place of birth and training to further fields, this next major experience giving both objectivity and illuminating their scholarly research. And so there would arise the passion to train more researchers in their fresh further countries of work, and to share the insights that can come from birth in one country, training in another, and/or living and teaching in a third.¹²

Hence the emerging/discernable paradigm may now be articulated:

- Very likely, a modest place/class of birth, and a powerful loyalty to those ‘folk’ antecedents;
- Professional and rigorous higher education, especially ‘different’, challenging and eye-opening for a first generation at the tertiary level;
- Further training, often far away from one’s ‘roots’; and so to
- Fieldwork and teaching in another land or culture and thereby ‘explaining’ their own/ a proximate culture to a new group/ generation, this to be assisted by a clearer perception of the scholar’s own identity: he/she further enfranchised, and more determined that all shall realise and feel comfortable with their birth/true identity, rather than be imprisoned in one dictated by fashion, parental snobbery, or a tragic and ingratiating wish to obliterate the self.

An Axiom of Relevance

It is always the case that ‘the outsider has the best view’, and it is a truism that most, perhaps all, of the successful and influential (English-

¹¹ Much of his writing would include memories of his nurture in New York, as well as fine studies of Canadian lore. Interestingly, Paul Smith, the pioneering scholar with Gillian Bennett in the field of ‘contemporary legend’, who were both at the University of Sheffield, would also become a professor at MUN, and in due course, Gillian Bennett would both edit *Folklore* and pioneer another folklore studies ‘colony’ at the then very new Manchester Metropolitan University.

¹² This pattern is certainly true of the present writer, moving as he has done from the University of Otago, to Oxford, to the University of Nottingham, to the University of New England, in New South Wales, and then with further sojourns and folkloristic observations in Cambridge, Sheffield and elsewhere. See his paper on this matter of the somewhat belated shaping and sharpening of his core New Zealand Scottish/ Celtic identity, which is outlined in *Australian Folklore*, No. 24 (2009), 235-246: ‘By the Burn’s Side: or, An Attempt to create a Mid-Twentieth Century (Family) Legendary from Scottish Southern New Zealand’.

speaking) folklorists outside the U.S.A. have worked in several cultures in the course of their nurture and training in both observation and formal studies. Axiomatically, such a person is intensely aware of the unfamiliar, of that which is different from her/his own background, even as they reflect on the significance of the differences from their own birthplace and nurture, while being fully aware of the contents of their accompanying 'suitcases'.

There is another powerful axiom to remember here, namely that wives, mothers, 'gossips' ('kin in God'), and women generally, are more perceptive than their menfolk in any community, folk, village—be they humble, most sophisticated, or richly trained. Such an honest and self-aware scholar is thus likely to be the most perceptive of fresh and subtly different mores, and so is arguably the most dynamic in her/his presentation of further insights, in her/his teaching in the new land, and in the sharp perception of the freshly perceived, if now surrounding, lore's subtleties and distinctiveness.

In Due Course

Other versions of this thesis might be illustrated by various clusters of names, and favoured topics, and they would note how these two countries have been able to provide slim but strong bridges to mutual understanding for so many other countries in the earlier, emerging, shared folkloric scholarship. Thus Australia has been able to do this modestly and effectively for such major cultures as those of India,¹³ Japan,¹⁴ China, Indonesia;¹⁵ 16 the non-sacred beliefs and customs of the Aboriginal people or, for example, the Maoris, and other Polynesian nations; or scholars at MUN for aspects of difference defining the Inuit.

¹³ This has been obvious in the last two to three years, in the wake of the breakdown of mutual respect between the two countries, after tragic incidents involving Indian students studying in Australia (see the article 'Violence and the Damage Done' by Julie Hare in the journal *Campus Review*, Vol. 20, No.11, 8 June, 2010, 5), or in the realm of international cricket. Actual overtures of the wish of India for a deeper understanding with Australia had long been obvious, in the world of 'story' dating from the 1963 visit of Professor C. D. Narasimaiah of Mysore to the University of New England, where he would work with Russel Ward to produce the classic volume, *An Introduction to Australian Literature*. As might have been expected, Ward's essay on Australian culture in it contains some of the most powerful writing in this seminal collection of 'identity' essays.

Similarly, the Indian presence at the 2001 gathering in Melbourne of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research was challenging, exciting and influential. Since that time there has been an ever-increasing volume of Indian cultural materials available in Australia.

¹⁴ Australian Jesuit professors would long be the editors and the wide ranging driving force behind the prestigious *Asian Folklore Studies*, for many years edited from the Anthropological Institute, Nanzan University in Nagoya, Japan.

¹⁵ Dr Ismet Fanany at Deakin University is a fine example of Indonesian outreach to Australia. As might be expected, his work has appeared in issues of *Australian Folklore* in recent years.

The final speculation, indeed positive assertion, is that the body of Australian folklore, in its theory, research and practice, is one of the areas where the United Nations/ UNESCO has perhaps had its greatest and most modestly priced of its successes. No more is this so than through the work of Keith McKenry, as Australia's representative on UNESCO Committees and so he drafting of so many of its protocols -- in the insights proffered and sheer attractiveness of his recommendations for the preservation of folkloric materials. These have far outdone the Smithsonian Institution at the level of powerful international ideas, if not in their Washington Exhibitions that are such a tourist Mecca for those visiting the American capital. And, likewise, it may be argued that the American outreach in the field, as to Hawaii, is so much more dramatic than the more 'passive' Washington presentations by the Smithsonian Institution.¹⁶

And so to the folklore and folklorists at the heart of this international sharing and the builders of so many splendid 'bridges to understanding'. This comparative and insightful field of folkloric service, teaching and research may be defined as the chronicling and interpretation of the unofficial practice and expression of distinctive social groups sharing common interests, and tending to persist, continuing within a culture as a 'tradition (i.e. 'gift handed down from the past'), even when the impulses and contexts that originally gave rise to it have long disappeared, or are fast disappearing. Thus past and present are continually drawn together in all more recent world folklore, a discipline that is more than ever at the core of human relations, and its dramatic outreach goes far to explain culture's functions in all Canadian and Australian traditional and 'ethnic' groups, for its meaning and appeal are helpfully evident in such a wide range of post 1950s writings.

But, a momentary retrospective: in Australia, the earliest serious collection of such materials appears to be the work of 'Banjo' Paterson who, collecting for what would become his anthology, *Old Bush Songs* (1905), was seeking to salvage the remnants of what he saw as a bygone or fast fading way of life, the mores of the shearers, goldminers and overlanders. This influence would lead to the considerable burst of deliberate collecting after a time of irreversible change after World War I. The next burst of 'salvaging' research and performance, beginning

¹⁶ Even more intriguing is the fact that the Maori soldier, doctor of medicine and anthropologist, Sir Peter Buck, perhaps did his best work on New Zealand's races and mingling cultures while he was, very objectively, the curator of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu.

Another important Pacific figure was Epeli Hau'ofa (1939-2009), with his ability to move between and assist perceptions of identity in Australia, New Guinea, Tonga, Fiji, and Hawaii. The late Sir Thomas Davis from the Cook Islands was a similar figure. In a quieter and more medical sphere, Dr Margaret Spenser (1916-2011), the malaria researcher and social observer, did a similar service of interpretation and understanding in her fine books, *Doctor's Wife in New Guinea*, *Doctor's Wife in New Britain*, etc.

in the 1950s, had caused a concentration on the Anglo-Celtic aspects of bush life, and particularly on (the British antecedents of) Australian folksong, music, and dance.

Since the 1970s, considerable investigation of the various 'ethnic' traditions has occurred, both in Canada and Australia. This expansion also coincided very fruitfully with the developing trend in both of these medium-sized countries for folklore to become synonymous with the whole of folklife,¹⁷ which, now and for a generation and more, has embraced material forms such as arts and crafts, foodways, cuisine, costume, customs, and beliefs. Similarly, there has arisen a powerful desire to understand the culture of proximate nations, and/or those from whom the flow of refugees now comes. There has also emerged a fruitful awareness of folklore as a historical continuum, a continuing and infinitely flexible tradition in which the forms may change, but the process remains the same, and its manifestations stay around one and so are oddly comforting.

It would be presumptuous for me to make a sweeping analysis of Canadian folklore here, and so I will focus, and especially for Canadians and comparative scholars, on the folklore-shaping perceptions and events leading up to the Bicentennial of European Settlement in Australia. For, on 26 March, 1986, when the then Minister for the Arts, Heritage and Environment had announced the establishment of The Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia, an event which explains why all Australians and Canadians, like innumerable folk investigators, owe so much to Keith McKenry. For his ideas, however aborted in reality in the teaching offered in tertiary institutions in Australia, would move out to so many countries, due to his drafting of policies that would be endorsed by the United Nations.

As I have noted elsewhere,¹⁸ in 1993 there had been published a milestone volume, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore*, edited by Graham Seal and Gwenda Beed Davey. This influential compendium had followed hard upon the first issue of *Australian Folklore: A Yearly Journal of Folklore Studies*, edited by Graham Seal and David S. Hulst, in 1987;¹⁹ the various biennial folklore conferences of the Australian Folk

¹⁷ Interestingly, perhaps the first, and certainly the most significant, folk museum in the Southern hemisphere was created in Armidale, New South Wales, in the late 1950s, by a Teachers' College lecturer and historian of the Australian Gold Rushes, Eric Dunlop, who had been inspired to do so by his travels in Scandinavia, experiences of similar museums in Yorkshire, and from his awareness of the role that such buildings and collections had long played in the lives of the rural people, both in Norway and in Denmark.

¹⁸ The following discussion, preceding the final section of this paper, was originally published as 'Australian Folklore Yesterday and Today: Definitions and Practices' in *Folklore*, the online journal of the Estonian Folklore Institute, Vol. 8, December 1998, 127-134. It is reproduced here, with minor revisions, by kind permission of the editors.

¹⁹ The work contains a number of signed articles from sympathetic scholars of both perceptiveness and a certain bold authority, as with their pieces on Russel Ward; on the

Trust; and the appearance of Graham Seal's *The Hidden Culture: Folklore in Australian Society* (1989; reissued with some slight expansion in 1993). This slim publication was the first attempt to provide a textbook on Australian folklore, and the first full-length analytical volume on Australian folklore as a whole. June Factor's earlier and deservedly famous study *Captain Cook Chased a Chook* (1988) had confined its analysis to children's folklore in Australia. Seal, in this book, has argued that folklore is best understood as a historical continuum, a continuing and infinitely flexible tradition in which the forms may change but the process remains essentially the same.

Meanwhile, on 26 March, 1986, the then Minister for Arts, Heritage and Environment had announced the establishment of the Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia. The minister had then appointed to the committee Hugh Anderson (folk publisher and scholar of ballads); Gwenda Davey (folklorist of early childhood and lecturer on folklore); and Keith McKenry (folk musician and folk poet). This world-travelling and consulting group tabled its incisive and passionate report, *Folklife: Our Living Heritage* on 14 August, 1987, covering the designated tasks of surveying in some depth:

- the nature, diversity and significance of Australian folklife;
- existing (institutional) arrangements for safeguarding that folklife; and
- the need for new arrangements for (a) collection, documentation and dissemination of folklife materials; (b) support /development of folk arts, etc.

It had agreed not to report on traditional Aboriginal ceremonial and belief but to address such other aspects of Aboriginal folklife as craft, contemporary folklife, both urban and rural; and the present and non-sacred slow intertwining of Aboriginal folklife with that of other communities within Australian society.

This report had preferred the term 'folklife', which related 'more directly to living culture' as its main designation of the field, following recent American and UNESCO practice, and argued that folklore/folklife—the terms were used interchangeably—'... performs many important social functions related to group identity, release of cultural tensions and ambivalences, entertainment and education (*Folklife: Our Living Heritage*, 1987, p. 65).

¹ 'Australian folk speech'; on enclaves Greek and Italian, as well as Chinese; on the 'Yarn'; on motifs, etc.

It also produced its own splendid definition of folklife:

Folklife is a tradition-based and/or contemporary expressive culture repeated and shared within a community, and accepted as an adequate reflection of its cultural and social identity. It embraces a wide range of creative and symbolic forms such as custom, belief, mythology, legend, ritual, pageantry, language, literature, technical skill, play, music, dance, song, drama, narrative, architecture, craft. Its expressions are mainly learned orally, by imitation or in performance, and are generally maintained without benefit of formal instruction or institutional direction.

The Committee then rejected the hitherto prevailing Anglo-Celtic tradition as the sole focus (*Folklife: Our Living Heritage*, pp. 140, 170, etc.) and expressed its positive interest in all immigrant materials, however difficult of collection, or seemingly peripheral to simpler societal conceptions/understandings.

The document was to some degree at the mercy of the input groups, more than 150 in all. This makes the un-indexed text hard to read as it endeavours to specify the likely needs of such areas as dance, music, bushcrafts, musical instrument making, song writing, union/ street theatre, National Trusts, Ethnic Community Committees, museums of many kinds, (State) Libraries, or such distinctive activities as the Tamworth Country Music Festival (see *Folklife: Our Living Heritage*, p. 41).

While this noble compilation has continued to be largely ignored in the political and funding areas, it has still much sound advice to offer students of music, dance, or manual crafts, and to those associated with regional museums. For its enduring importance lies in its honest and generous analysis of, and deep sympathy for, the contemporary “folklife” scene. It has already done much to nurture the “folkways” which make up both our personal and national sense of identity and understanding of customary lifestyles.

Folklife: Our Living Heritage may also be taken into our consideration together with its almost exact contemporary companion and a survey of where tertiary education might well move, the important investigation *Windows Onto Worlds*. That work’s pivotal perception was that Australians want their education to give them a firmer and sharper sense of their own place and culture (*Windows*, p. ix).

In its chapter on ‘Humanities’ there was much stress on the need for more Australian studies in the disciplines of history and literature, while in the section on Heritage and Cultural Resources (*Windows*, p. 195, ff.), there is repeated the charge that traditional educationalists were

neglecting areas of popular interest, leading to the writers' claims that 'new disciplines' be established:

For instance, a wealth of material for Australian studies has been collected and conserved for many years by individual folklorists and folk societies. Folklorists claim that this material, which offers extensive and unique insights into ways of living in Australia, has been ignored by traditional scholars and by collecting agencies ... Folklore studies have been developed in part because established disciplines have not responded to the ways in which the community has looked at itself. Scope exists within anthropology, history and literature departments to use folklore material more fully than was done in the past. (*Windows*, pp. 201-202)

It is to be noted that Australia had input into and continues to seek actively to endorse the noble definition, much shaped by Keith McKenry, and adopted enthusiastically by the UNESCO Second Committee of Governmental Experts on the Safeguarding of Folklore meeting in Paris in 1985:

Folklore (in a broader sense, traditional and popular folk culture) is a group-oriented and tradition-based creation of groups or individuals reflecting the expectations of the community as an adequate expression of its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms include, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture, and other arts.

This same definition, very pleasingly, was used by the Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia. Still, they had then modified it to exclude 'tradition based', and they had also excluded 'literature' as a form of folklore. This decision tended to put university-type institutions on one side of the folklore continuum, and museums and heritage centres on the other. However, this seeming dichotomy was soon to be reversed—theoretically—with the July 1989 inclusion of all tertiary education into the Unified National System (i.e. the 'Dawkins' reforms that drew the Colleges of Advanced Education into the national universities system).

What Lessons are There Here for Both Canada and Australia, and Particularly for the Mindsets in the Various Proximate Countries Eyeing Them?

Of course, this Australian tale of struggle and slow re-growth to an international empathy may well seem quaint in the Baltic, Scandinavian, Celtic and (North) American countries, where the battle was won long

ago, but, in Australian universities, folklore is still a newcomer. Formal instruction at the coursework stage was offered only in Curtin University of Technology (from the late 1980s), in some antecedent institutions of the to-be-created University of South Australia in the 1980s; Colleges of Advanced Education (in New South Wales in the 1980s), Monash University (the 1990s), and the University of New England (in New South Wales, from 1998).

From Retrospectivity to a Move to Neighbouring/ Global Compassion?

'Banjo' Paterson had actively solicited folk ballads for the anthology *Old Bush Songs* (1905), seeking to capture one aspect of the passing and endangered lifestyle of goldminers, 'overlanders' (i.e. those droving cattle), and shearers. His efforts were continued in the 1950s, with the then busy collecting activities and analyses that would focus almost entirely on 'bush life', and on its songs, music, and dance, most of Northern Hemisphere origin, however much adapted to the new setting and climate. Equally important was the focus on the analysis of the deeper significance of the yarn, as in the classic volume *The Australian Yarn* by Ron Edwards (1977).²⁰

And so it may be argued that there have been three periods of folk activity and of scholarly endeavour at its recording in this continent since the white settlement which began in 1788:

1. The urgency of the Federation time (1901), when the various separate states came together to form the Australian nation, and a feeling at that time that the pastoral bush age was passing, with the focus then on the urban lifestyle.
2. The period c.1945-1960, with the emphasis the largely on the desperate salvage activity, the collecting of folksong and music from older informants, and the new/ fresh oral performance of these songs and similar material, largely outside tertiary educational institutions. This last emphasis was probably due to a suspicion that their treatment there would separate folklorists from their community sources. In this period, folklore was often equated in the community—indeed, as it still is—with legends, myths, or with received knowledge of a 'collective consciousness', it so causing this 'folklore' to be largely associated with only the oral forms of transmission.

²⁰ Reprinted in paperback, 1996.

3. The period from the mid-1980s²¹ to the present. This phase of developing and promoting all aspects of the discipline was one much stimulated by the intense preparation for the Australian Bicentennial in 1988. A characteristic of this period is that imported mass culture has seemed to threaten, if not overwhelm, folk or popular culture, and another that folklore had then been extended as a concept to embrace much of folklife or traditional culture, as well as to accept the mood swings and fresh contents of the closer 'present' in both time and space.

In the last quarter century or so, the accepted folk traditions of multicultural Australia have been much explored, and folklore developed to embrace material forms such as: crafts like quilt- or whip-making; foodways; hybrid traditions of many complex forms; customs, beliefs, and superstitions; urban legends;²² (political) gossip; memorates; oral history; and many other forms of joke, anecdote, graffiti, rumour, etc. which shed a wry light on our socio-cultural processes. And compare the increasing slyness of the overrated '7.30 Report', a prestigious and influential news commentary on the National Television/ the Australian Broadcasting Commission stations on weekdays. However, these programmes are so much more cognizant of smaller countries, the plight of the wretched in many lands, and of the 'little people' of Australia itself.

Indeed, we may well agree with Graham Seal's account of more recent folklore (i.e. that concerned with tale, idiom, etc.) that, although seemingly (superficially?) localised in place and/or characters, and frequently sharply anti-authority, racist, sexist and scabrous,

Its [folklore's] enormous popularity in Australia confirms the country's status as a typical, polyethnic, overwhelmingly urban-dwelling, industrial/ technological modern nation state. (Seal, 1994, p. 519)

It may also be noted that in Australia, as in many other countries, anthropology²³ has been re-appraising its position. It has largely left the 'primitive', and is, nowadays, endeavouring to assist the public's coping with 'a social world which has changed almost out of recognition in a

²¹ This phase was influenced by U.S. Public Law 94-201, which invoked the American Folklore Preservation Act of 1976.

²² While many contemporary—and world widely recorded—legends are heard in Australia, such as the 'baby train' which has British, American and other antecedents, there is one which is uniquely Australian: the late W.B. (Bill) Scott's tale of the pelican kidnapping (swallowing?) a chihuahua dog. See his 'An Australian Contemporary Legend?', *Australian Folklore*, No 11, 1995, pp. 213-218.

²³ See the review-discussion by the present author of Akbar S. Ahmed and Cris Shore (eds.), *The Future of Anthropology* (1995), in *Australian Folklore*, No. 12, 1997, 112 ff.

few short years'. Thus it is becoming more focused on its own country in the (close) present. And so 'Anthropology' today is concerned to "conserve the spice of marginality" [Seal's words], as well as to study tourism, nostalgia, organisational rituals, and many other 'internal' manifestations of the home culture.

The eminent British folklorist and longtime editor of the British journal *Folklore*, Jacqueline Simpson, had argued, and very helpfully, that during the period of her own editorship in 1968 to 1992, and then in her editing of the *FLS Newsletter*, that the international journal *Folklore* had been concerned to represent meaningfully

'a steady broadening of the subject, a growing preference for precise documentation ... a more realistic appraisal of historic and social factors, a greater diversity both of the genres and of the social groups studied ... [and] an equally strong concern with the present' (Simpson, 1994, p. 16).²⁴

The present writer (in *Australian Folklore*, in 1995) had then argued, similarly, that the by then annual Australian volume,

Australian Folklore, endeavours to reflect the widely recognised diversity of discipline, ... endeavouring to cultivate links with other disciplines, and not to commit itself to propagating any one school of thought, simplistic definition of the field or arbitrarily limited time period ... especially as 'the whole dynamic of the past re-asserts itself as a new re-experiencing of the past in the new found vitality of ethnic, racial and nationalistic developments in the folk cultures that they drive and motivate'. (Browne and Ambrosetti, 1993).²⁵

In keeping with these exhortations, it may be noted that all these 'new' matters, amongst many others, have been addressed more and more in recent years in the Australian journal, much as they have in Canada's *ethnologies*.

In Australian universities to date, perhaps the most successful presentation of folklore to intending students was the Monash Graduate Diploma in Australian Folklife Studies, offered in the 1990s, and a qualification which had as its core these subjects:

²⁴ This is in her 1996 book, edited with S. Roud, and entitled *An Index to Folklore*, Vols. 79-103, London, The Folklore Society, 'Introduction', pp. 9-16.

²⁵ See Ray B. Browne, and Ronald J. Ambrosetti, eds., *Continuities in Popular Culture: The Present in the Past and the Past in the Present and Future*, Bowling Green, Ohio, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993, p. 1.

- Australian Folk Culture: A Multilingual Perspective;
- Cultural Mapping and Oral History: Methodologies for Community Study;
- Popular and Vernacular Culture in Australia;
- Material Culture: Theory and Practice;
- Cultural Tourism.

Such a course has still to attract numbers and so be offered in a regular cycle to students or the community, especially through distance education.

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Not a Conclusion

The core purpose of this selective account of the recent and more visible place of folklore in daily life in both Canada and Australia in the global age is to extend the term to embrace the reflective investigation of ethnic traditions, both of long standing and of more recent accessibility. In both countries, music, song, and dance traditions, material forms of creativity—such as arts and crafts, cuisine, costume, and behavioural forms—are very much to the fore, despite this age being one of ease of international travel and of holidaying, as well as of massive computer-presented cultural detail.

Yet, while the last mass of transmitted material and attitude is overwhelmingly urban-focused and industrial, there is an ever stronger urge escaping from one's 'garrison mentality' (Tolkien's term),²⁶ for a refreshing savouring of the traditional, the 'different' and the personal, the community elements—as of the festival—the 'ethnic' cuisine, and the behaviour and craft forms in situ, where they have long been maintained and developed. Quite certainly Australians and Canadians in the twenty first century have a passionate wish to be both 'located' and understood, and 'free',²⁷ however complex the patterns of their fellows' mores may well be.

For them and for us all, folklore—and the distinctive patterns of thought and behaviour—alike permeate the fiction, the colour, poetry, and texture of our daily lives, be they urban, rural, or regional. And, as this musing has sought to indicate, each nation of these two well nigh continents needs folklore, thrives on it, and shows continually that wise

²⁶ With this, compare his 'the escape of the prisoner' discussion, as in his *On Fairy Stories*, a famous tract of the 1960s, but originally drafted just after the pre-war tragedy at Munich.

²⁷ In Herman Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, Toronto, Anansi, 1971.

outsiders—seeming “strangers”—are often the most understanding of its individuality. We do well also to recall the famed essay of Carmen Blacker (1924-2009), entitled ‘The Folklore of the Stranger: A Consideration of a Disguised Saint’. Perforce we are reminded of ‘the other’, of her/his necessary perception/ of all ‘fables of identity’, deeply compassionate and spiritual’. For this deeply compassionate and spiritual insight into the nature of mankind is at the core of all folklore. And I aver, with the deeply religious Herman Northrop Frye (1912-1991), that folklore is the way of salvation for besieged Western man, since it offers all men and women the most profound perceptions of their role and their destiny, and so, perforce, of their individual meaning, their ‘identity’.

This last word, as in *Fables of Identity*—for this phrase forms the title of this most distinguished Canadian’s finest book and scholarly vision of and for his nation and people—was also the title of my address to the previous Canadian comparative conference held at the University of New England some twenty years ago. And it is hugely significant to me, and I believe to reflective Canadians and Australians, that Northrop Frye had been taught at Oxford by J.R.R. Tolkien, even as he would later come on sabbatical, to live and work a few feet from the master, in Fellows Quad of Merton College, in that university. For both famed ‘colonial Christians’ and Mertonian friends were acutely sensitive to the mother country, to personal identity often too close to a negative and so inhibiting man’s common community, and to the deepest messages from the past, the wellsprings of their being. The idyllic time for both was spent, however, in the paradoxical place of the ancient Oxford ghetto brutally razed there at the beginning of the thirteenth century. For our culture and (our particular) memory are the great shapers of the meaning of human life for every one of us.

For them both, and for me, another and similar colonial sojourner in the Western tradition, and that same place, the whole heritage of the place, its culture’s inherited identity, constituted the core experience of our studies. And so for us—and all at various times in their lives—there could be, at least for a brief period, a place of calm, an archetypal place where verbal and social processes, where involuntary gleams of insight, could combine to achieve “a completely incommunicable intuition”. This last is another, like phrase, in the second essay, ‘Formal Phrase: Symbol as Image’ in Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957)—both of them reminding us as to man’s true purpose in his every waking hour.

Such an integration is the ultimate goal for every man and woman, whatever their country or the age of their mortal flourishing.

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