

Editorial

It is now inevitable that most journals in the field of folklore should refer to the ever changing nature of their discipline in recent years, this almost inevitable since the world's smaller countries' populations are scarcely able to remain history-remembering and regional, or cohesive and firm in their culture; nor are they found to be clear in their conceptions of their own inherited identity, or of the issues that are truly central to the thoughts and anxieties of their current society and so much more mixed peoples /races. Interestingly, too, so many hitherto quietly distinct regions are now become both seemingly new and even permanent locations and places of refuge for very different ethnicities and cultures, and this to an extent not encountered earlier. Further, so many of 'our people' have travelled remarkably far—whether for education, for pleasure, or from the need to escape intolerable stresses and oppression. Accordingly, it is very much the case that that this journal is now offered for due consideration very many research papers that cover issues and themes that may well be regarded as, variously, proximate to our 'Australian' title /focus and location in the world. However, they often seem helpfully informative in their content for those concerned with the mores and lore to be encountered ever more frequently in 'Australia'.

No example of this convulsion /breaching of all the walls of earlier narrowness of focus is more relevant than that offered by the recent book,¹ *Outlaw Heroes in Myth and History*, by the doyen of current Australian folklorists, Professor Graham Seal—for he, English by extraction, has been engaged in producing a career-endorsing work which treats of his chosen theme across hundreds of years and, as, he has noted it, in operation in a range of countries and cultures. Interestingly, this work of his reminds us of the fine and comprehensive /outreaching and relevant recent paper by Professor Elliott Oring, of California State University, entitled 'Legendry and the Rhetoric of Truth'.²

Another aspect of this breadth of view and comparison or now inevitable 'internationalism' in Australia's folkloric research perspectives and publication is the individual mindset and (comparative) recall of so many contributors of their own experience and insights /perspectives into their now surrounding lore. Inevitably the writings of our authors /scholars as represented in this issue—and all are now

¹ It is reviewed below, pp. 59,ff.

² This is to be found in the *Journal of American Folklore*, 121 (2008), pp. 127-160, where the writer avers that legend is concerned with 'matters of truth' (p. 128), even as it should also have 'an emotional resonance' (p. 157) for those telling it, and for those 'hearing its rendition'. The argument fits this case in all its essentials.

regarded as ‘Australian by long domicile’—were born in countries as diverse as England, Holland, Norway, Indonesia and Chile. For it is indeed the case that they, by their writings, illustrate the connection between role identity, cultural mixing, researches and personal social position, the whole impacting powerfully on their own observations and life philosophy, and so on the style of their investigations and scholarship. They, and we readers /observers, must assimilate this complex in their /our own ideology. An obvious example of this seeming to be sprawling nexus is that our parent journal, *Folklore*, still issued from London, is to have in its impending issue an article on ‘Popular Scottish Song Traditions at Home (and Away)’, a nice instance of the when - an – adult location of the researcher, Australia, the original home of the writer, and the cultural material, a body of song, namely, Scotland; and the ‘suitcase of belongings’—these severally playing against /illuminating each other, whether the writer wishes it or no.³

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We note with interest, too, an earlier instance of this process - the South Australia-initiating /enforcing contribution reported here—as for the 19th century revival in England of English folk song—and so we look to hear more of this in our next volume. And at the same time, it is exciting for us to have a well-informed account of the impact of the more recent Australia-led and more ‘regional’ archaeology that has produced such world interest in the ‘Little People’ of Flores, in Indonesia, if already fanciful. And there is already an engaging link of sorts with the Tolkienian fictions as to the character of such (imaginary /unlikely?) persons whom historical time and important races would seem to have forgotten long ago.

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A further complication as to the nature of our field today arises from the fact that, as so much of the research material is close field observation of a more recent period, and so several folklore journals have more recently re-badged themselves as ‘Anthropological’. This term may be well ‘scientific’, but it gives little emphasis to the fact that ‘folklore’ reaches very far back in its content, and so it is always to be seen as ‘the oldest of the humanities’⁴; and, accordingly, it will always be that much more subjective and appraising in its content than its only being concerned with current reporting dispassionately, as in the mode of the social sciences.

³ This article by Josephine Dougal—she being of a migrant family to South Australia, and here analysing her own and their Scottish traditions in Australia—has just appeared in *Folklore*, 122.3, pp. 283-307.

⁴ This was also the title of a paper presented at the biennial Association of Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association meeting in Sydney, as in November, 1999. (See the *Proceedings*.)

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As in several recent issues, we again ponder aspects of the distinct Celtic influence and nature to much of our Australian thought, reading, and observed national character, as we look more closely at the almost ‘plantation’-like /deliberate settlement of Celts at the higher altitudes of the inland portions of northern New South Wales.⁵ We do this without apology, since it must seem that, apart from the Kelly tales of northern Victoria, or the ‘Celtic’ thought and scholarly musings of Bill Wannan and, perhaps, of Les Murray, both of these reflecting on this strand in the whole—the considerable Celtic element in our population prior to Federation needs much more subtle and sensitive and regional exploration. And so, appropriately, the ‘northern’ tale of the Standing Stones—as both project and proud and significant achievement—has a poetic /defiant ring for all who watch the various blows⁶ at home as given the national confidence of ‘the English’ in the last decade or so. Further, this same ‘New Caledonia’ /‘New England’⁷ has given Australia a nice set of subtle variations on: the clashes between the centre and the Celts, and the persisting and powerful influence there of both Presbyterianism and Catholicism. Accordingly, in some form of just development to our identity studies, with we hope most fervently that degree courses in Celtic Studies will soon appear in some of our universities much as they have done already in several of the older New Zealand ones in the last decade.

And we note with satisfaction the impending bi-centennial in February 2012 of the birth of Charles Dickens, whose Australian-set periodicals, reports and stories⁸—especially his *Great Expectations*—focussed the world’s attention on the two perceived hallmarks of the earlier British presence here, prior to Australian nationhood—convictism and the ‘emancipating’ discoveries of gold, and so the linked and consequent rushes of the free settlers.

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It is also interesting that someone with those mentioned ‘New Caledonia’ regional and Scottish antecedents, Professor Donald Aitkin, has given us his mature perspective on the appropriate /future sort of governmental support for the Arts in this nation. While this is most

⁵ In this context, there is an obvious link with the earlier case-studies work, *Place and People: New Dimensions in Regional Research*, by Stephen Smith and Graham Seal (Perth, WA: Curtin University of Technology, 2007).

⁶ Are they perhaps a form of nemesis for the centuries of repression of the Picts, Celts, and other dwellers in the British Isles ?

⁷ See the toponym map and the article on this in *The Union Record*, 7, 1963 (Armidale, NSW: University of New England).

⁸ This matter was discussed in some detail in *Australian Folklore*, 7 (1993).

interesting in itself, it focuses attention on the underpinning questions of recording /supporting our perceptions of (Australian) national identity, as a necessary amalgam of our history and heritage, of global location and of likely future social and political scenarios. Even more interestingly, this allows us to emphasise for our readers the folklore-like mantra that is now widely accepted by so very many of our field's scholars the world over for our investigation, namely . . .

HERITAGE > < MEMORY AND IDENTITY.

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The Rise of the International Journal, Memory Studies in 2008

[This is another very folklore-relevant journal for which Australia may be proud of its own considerable contribution at all levels, not least in that two of its three main editors,⁹ Amanda Barnier and John Sutton are from Macquarie University in New South Wales.]

This exciting journal may be said to afford clarification, recognition of, and direction to work in this nascent field, it also providing a forum for dialogue and debate on the empirical and methodological issues central to a collaborative understanding /recognition of (the operation) of our (social) memory today.

In amplification of these issues, we can do no better than refer our readers to an article put out early in the journal's second year, namely Christian Pentzold's 'Fixing the Floating Gap: The Online Encyclopedia Wikipedia as a 'global memory place', in *Memory Studies*, 2.2, pp. 255-272. There the reader is offered an exciting and illuminating discussion of the four related issues of social memory studies: collective memory, communicative and cultural memory, 'memory places', and the 'floating gap'. Consequently a comparison is made between the potential of the World Wide Web as cyberspace for collective remembrance and of the obstacles that stand in the way of this. Thus the article argued that Wikipedia presents a global memory place /series of 'national' encounters, where memorable elements are negotiated—with complex processes of discussion and article creation, these duly constituting a model of the discursive processes that create /fabricate /ultimately achieve a form of consensus for matters for firming impressions of our culture's 'memory'. In the process, the Wikipedia can and does afford us ample illustration of the expansion of 'impression' into a dialogued mass /version of a situation, personality, or a clearer image of an event actually occurring.

⁹ Its principal editor is Andrew Hoskins of Glasgow University, and the third editor is Wulf Kansteiner, State University of New York at Binghamton, U.S.A.

Thus we can all contribute to a serious and plausible version of /explanation for a happening—i.e. participate in a ‘great conversation’ where one can make calm assessment of the factors seemingly in play. Key factors here are: (1) the fact that anyone [interested] can contribute; (2) the entries are incremental, despite the uneven flow of refinements; and (3) organic, in that they can be edited and evolve considerably; and they are so observable to all, as the process continues.

Significantly the Wikipedia process (or ‘great conversation’) began at the start of the millenium, in January 2001, aims to be available in all languages,¹⁰ and sees that its function is to offer a global memory place. Current responses to this are that it involves four appropriate steps to its nature, function, and, duly, its effect. Australia has reason to be proud of its significant leadership here.

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Another Very Relevant and Recent Endeavour

And so to the other significant catalyst to the unlocking so much of our untapped lore—and so making it available for similar re-analysis and thus to expanding the resources of our (as experienced) culture, namely the spread of serious writing throughout our society, and now in all levels of education, with the encouraging local catalysts of the numerous writing seminars, and the like that are available in so many locations, both urban and ‘regional and remote’ .

Writing

It is also a real pleasure to be able to have in our columns some current reflections on the process of (personal) ‘Writing’, which, with ‘Memory’, constitutes the manner and the place where most folklore /folkloric process or activity is likely to be stored for further reference, classification and analysis, and then that so often to be able to be stored electronically and accessed again and again with reflection. Accordingly, it is most appropriate that a challenging new book, *Negotiating the Personal in Creative Writing* (and coming from Multi-Lingual Matters) is reviewed closely by your editors, they responding to it in the light of their personal experience and teaching this same activity.

This provocative work is very close to the purposes of the dynamic Australian journal, *Life Writing*, the first periodical on autobiography studies to be published outside Europe and the United States. It had been launched at Curtin University, Western Australia, in February 2004, by

¹⁰ It is now expressing itself in well over 270 languages, and it offers a low cost and international /folklore-like activity discussion place.

Professor Sally Morgan, one of the best known Indigenous writers and exponents of the genre that this country has produced. That same new journal itself considers all aspects, and meanings, of the contemporary life narrative, for, as its editors aver,

We recognise that the growing field of autobiography is one in which anthropology, history, cultural studies, literature, philosophy, psychology, sociology and visual studies are all contributing exciting and revisionary writing.¹¹

This last Australian development of particular interest to us is to be related to new work in organising the teaching and scholarship of (personal) writing, the which activity is particularly close to folklore, and it is much focussed on memory of individuals of their experiences in /while watching groups. While it is not necessarily included here, all these processes and ideologies include positions on, inter alia, human nature, mother nature, risk and caution, freedom, justice, equality, coercion, status and blame /guilt.¹²

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Another helpful perspective, as on the British /European field of folk /community theory and practice of heritage, is the quietly persistent serial, the *SHC News: The Newsletter of the Social History Curators Group*. This periodical, of various lengths and formats, and which, like its parent group, had its 35th anniversary in July 2009, thus indicating that it had begun in the summer of 1974—not so long after the rise of (1) a wider professionalism in museum work in the British Isles; (2) the foundation of the Folk Life Society, in 1961; and (3) the further close work in regional studies in a number of British tertiary institutions. Further, this museum movement has always been characterised by a host of creative ideas, inspiring case studies, and remarkable achievements in recording, and this from very modest resources bases. Its format in recent years has included a fine newsletter, friendly, attentive, and like, the group itself, formed to ‘improve the status and provision of social history in museums, and the standards of collections, research, display, and the related interpretation’.¹³

¹¹ The journal had had a special issue on cultural hybridity and ‘mixed race’ matters, in 2007.

¹² These clusters and summaries are taken from the closely related thought of Dr Michael Pepperday, Honorary Associate of the University of New England. See this paper of his at: www.une.edu.au/humanities/pdf/identity-and-ideology.pdf.

¹³ Compare the title of the 2010 SHCG Annual Conference, held in July 2010, in both Birmingham and Coventry, with the title ‘More for Less: Big Impacts with Small Resources’. A memorable—and typical—item there was the highly responsible and compassionate address by Anthony Kimber of the Rye Art Gallery, Trust, with the title: ‘Enhancing Heritage Buildings on a Budget: A Cost Effective Approach to Achieving Improvements to Infrastructure’.

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The Expanding World of Folk and Heritage Studies

Very clearly, the area of folklore and folklife that is to be studied by academics and reflected on is one becoming more recent in time, more probing as to its manifestations, and more revelatory to the historical sociology of our lives, to its continuity and change, all of which is transforming both our society and our understanding of individuals, groups, and cultures worldwide. For, just as the world of work has been transformed, so has capitalist industrialism moved closer to massive technological and organizational change. In this process, alienation, de-skilling, de-standardization, unemployment and deprivation will all have their place—the whole to (re-)shape /modify our folklore and re-focus it towards the more sensitive consideration and understanding of the changes and of their impact on so many in all societies. Here we need only refer to the massive recent changes to British ‘culture’ that are also producing pain, resentment and the sorts of public violence, as were seen so widely in the United Kingdom this year.

It is also likely that the ongoing political unrest in the Middle East is not completely distinct from these found across Europe, and in the U.S.A. in the last year or so. In both countries (more) internal regional severance is again mooted, as are separate British regional parliaments, something fascinating to Australia since this same movement here would appear to have collapsed more than 40 years ago.

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On a much happier note, we refer to the ‘green’ plans for the expanding of the visionary Woodford Folk Festival for 4-6 May, 2012, it again to be held at Woodford, in Southern Queensland. It is to be styled ‘The Planting’, and we quote from the advance notices:

We intend to keep improving the festival—finding new ways to participate, seeking out those special musicians, artists and thinkers to inspire us and create beautiful spaces to keep the festival fresh and surprising; we aim to plant 3,732 patron-sponsored trees and other flora species. It is a special celebration this year as we will be planting the 100,000th tree since the start of the Forest Woodford Project.

(Bill Hauritz, on behalf of the Woodfordia Organising Group)

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And the Ever-developing Nature of the Discipline ?

If we look at the British scene—surely one most influential for developments in our Australian tertiary institutions—we note in particular the considerable expansion of our field the with the rise /scholarship and enlightened professionalism of these more specialised journals: *Anthropology and Medicine*; *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*; *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*; *Food and Foodways*; *Identities*; *Mortality*; *Postcolonial Studies*; *Storytelling, Self and Society*; *Religion, State and Society*; and *Visual Anthropology*.

In a comparable fashion, we may note the new and personal memory-based¹⁴ conspectus on our field in this country, namely—*Antipodean Traditions: Australian Folklore in the 21st Century*, and which is to be reviewed in *Australian Folklore*, 27 (2012).

It is with much pleasure that we have assembled this issue and we wish to indicate our concern to get back to the Spring launches of further issues, as indicated by the floral motif on our covers.

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Australian Folklore wishes once again to acknowledge the invaluable cooperation of many cultural organisations, libraries and individuals, including: the executive of the Australian Folklore Association, as well as of several similar bodies in North America and in the United Kingdom; the various referees consulted; the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of New England; the Heads of the Schools of Humanities and of Arts in the same institution, as well as its Library and University and Regional Archives officers, in Armidale, New South Wales; and a similar gratitude is expressed to the Head of the School of Education at Southern Cross University in Lismore; and to innumerable workers in the Australian field for many acts of reference and information. It is equally our pleasure to thank Mark Moravec for his dedicated keeping of records, and also the Australian and overseas subscription agencies who serve our discipline so well.

J.S. Ryan, and Robert James Smith

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¹⁴ Despite the large number of its contributors, there was little indication of conflict in the contents. In this respect, the whole was not unlike the style of the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*, with its organic structure where the content is capable of editing and of evolution.