

# The Significance of the Work and Collections of the School of Scottish Studies from a Scandinavian Perspective

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Folklore as a subject grew out of national romanticism in the mid-nineteenth century, closely related to Herder's search for the *volksgeist*, the national spirit that he and others believed could be found in the comparatively uncorrupted poetry of the people of the countryside (see further Leersen 2006). Similar ideas are found in the Grimms' original appeal of 1815, which hoped to find material that would help scholars understand the 'old and true origins' of German literature, history and language.<sup>1</sup> A similar focus was expressed in the Grimms' introduction to their influential *Deutsche Sagen* from 1816, which clearly states the

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1 "... ohne es genauer zu erforschen, vermögen weder unsere poesie, noch geschichte, noch sprache in ihren alten und wahrhaftigen ursprungen ernstlich verstanden zu werden" (Grimm 1864–1890: VII, 593).

essentially national value that the brothers saw in the material they were collecting, which is recommended first and foremost to:

*... devotees of German poesie, history and language and hope that it will be welcome to all as purely German fare. For it is our firm belief that nothing is as edifying or as likely to bring more joy than the products of the Fatherland. Indeed, an apparently insignificant, self-occasioning discovery and endeavour in the study of our own indigenous culture can in the end bring more fruit than the most brilliant discovery and cultivation of foreign fields* (Grimm 1981: I, 11).<sup>2</sup>

As the Grimm ripples travelled north, similar ‘national’ ideas began appearing in the titles, formats and contents of the succeeding collections of folk tales which were coming off the presses in northern Europe: Thiele’s *Danske Folksagn* from 1818–1823; Crofton Croker’s *Fairy Tales and Legends of the South of Ireland* from 1825; Samuel Lover’s *Legends and Stories of Ireland* from 1831; Andreas Faye’s *Norske sagn* from 1833 and 1844; Asbjørnsen and Moe’s *Norske Folkeeventyr* from 1841–1844; Robert Chambers’ *Popular Rhymes, Fireside Stories and Amusements of Scotland* from 1842, George Stephens and Hylltén Cavallius’ *Svenska Folk-Sagor og Æfventyr* from 1844; Asbjørnsen’s *Norske Huldreeventyr og Folkesagn* from 1845–1848; V. V. Hammershaimb’s *Færoiske sagn* (1846); and Magnús Grímsson and Jón Árnason’s *Íslenszk æfintýri* from 1852, the introduction of which is still underlining how:

*these folk tales are the poetic creation of the nation*<sup>3</sup> [...] *They are the creation of the naivety that the nation experiences and experienced. In*

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2 “... empfehlen unser Buch den Liebhabern deutscher Poesie, Geschichte un Sprache und hoffen, es werde ihnen allen, schon als lautere deutsche kost, willkommen sehn, im festen Glauben, dass nichts mehr auferbaue und grössere Freude bei sich habe als das Vaterländische. Ja, eine bedeutungslos sich anlassende Entdeckung und Bemühung in unserer einheimischen Wissenschaft kann leicht am Ende mehr Frucht bringen als die blendendste Bekanntwerdung und Andbauung des Fremden” (Grimm 1976: 17).

3 It might be noted that the word “*þjóðarinnar*” (lit. “of the nation”) is used here, rather than *alþýðunnar* or *fólksins*, both of which would refer directly to “the people”.

*them we see both the nation's longing for history and the special feel that the nation's narratives tend to be veiled in ... the folk tales are very important for the history of our nation's education (my emphases).*<sup>4</sup>

John Francis Campbell's key collection of Scottish folk tales, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* I-II, which appeared in 1860–1862, reflected many of the same national concerns.

Considering the reasons for this tsunami of folk-tale collection, it is worth bearing in mind that the countries mentioned above were all engaged in attempting to gain some degree of national independence or unity. The wave of folk tale collection was accompanied by the appearance of new national histories; new dictionaries; calls for national museums, national galleries, national theatres; and demands that artists, playwrights and writers should make use of the newly published folk materials to find motifs that reflected and summed up the national spirit. It is noteworthy that there are no English or French national collections of folklore during this period (see further Gunnell 2010; and forthcoming).

Nonetheless, by the time of the appearance of Campbell's *Popular Tales*, it was becoming clear that the various collections were not only helping people become aware of national differences, but also of the fact that numerous similarities existed in the material that had been collected in neighbouring countries (see further Gunnell 2010: 14–16). Such observations were encouraging the evolution of a new folkloristic approach. There was a growing awareness of the fact that the borders that early folklore collections had been highlighting were largely *created* borders, in other words frameworks, many of which were neither recognised nor truly understood by the people from whom the material was being collected. The broad picture had its values, but was rarely understood

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4 “Þessi ævintýri eru *skáldskapur þjóðarinnar*. Þau eru búningur hinnar einföldu hugsunar, sem *þjóðin* lifir og hefur lifað í. Þar kemur *sögulöngun hennar* fram og hinn einkennilegi blær, sem frásögur hennar eru vanar að vera hjúpaðar í... Í þessu tilliti eru því ævintýrin harla markverð fyrir menntunarsögu *þjóðar* vorrar” (Jón Árnason and Magnús Grímsson, 1852: 3). (My italics).

by the majority of people in the countryside, who had no experience of the wider worldview offered by Google, Sky News or the World Wide Web, but mostly saw the world in terms of the valley they lived in, or the island they lived on, and the day to day travails of trying to survive the winter. In short, the 'national' folklore approach had obvious political value, but it largely ignored *local* identity, placing material from Unst, Uist, and the Borderlands together within the same sack. All of this had value with regard to identifying the fact that folklore spread and travelled, but it ignored another fact that *other* frameworks could be construed, containing, for example, material from Unst, Bergen, Reykjavík and Co. Mayo, which would reflect other cultural entities well understood by the local people, but less important for the politicians. The key feature that was becoming recognised was that folklore is not determined by purely political (or even linguistic) boundaries. It moves freely over time and space, *connecting* people in other ways than those decided by politicians. Indeed, as all Shetlanders and Orcadians know, even the sea cannot be seen as representing a borderline between cultures. Far from it: the sea is actually a main road which connects Shetland to Norway, Scotland, the Faroe Islands and Ireland, and when it comes down to it, for Shetlanders, Bergen is a great deal closer than London.

In short, by the time institutions like the Department of Irish Folklore and the School of Scottish Studies came into being in the twentieth century, while their institutional names underlined essentially national affiliation (for logical reasons), their activities were also firmly rooted in the newer ideas of international comparativism. In short, they were also well aware of their potential *international* role, which will form the main focus of this article. Nonetheless, in spite of the natural cultural associations with France which the Gaelic language and culture might have suggested, it is noteworthy that from the start, both departments set up very firm connections with the Nordic countries, and especially Sweden and Norway (see further the articles by Margaret Mackay and Cathlin Macaulay elsewhere in this volume). This needs some explanation.

In the case of Scotland, it might be said the sense of Nordic connections with Gaelic culture had been noted and fostered at an

early point by John Francis Campbell. Indeed, Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* had been directly inspired by Sir George Dasent's English translation of Asbjørnsen and Moe's collection of Norwegian folk tales, *Popular Tales from the Norse* (1858), the introduction of which (by Dasent) had underlined the need for similar collections to be made in the British Isles (see further Gunnell 2010: 17–21). Dasent, who had also translated Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* and *Njáls saga* from Icelandic, was particularly attracted to Scandinavian culture. Like Rasmus Rask, the Grimms and Jørgen Moe before him, he was also attracted to the 'really big' picture in the shape of the Indo-European culture which many saw as lying behind the shared linguistic and narrative features that the new folklore collections were constantly revealing (see further Wawn 2000: 142–152). Dasent's introduction to *Popular Tales from the Norse* (like Moe's own earlier introduction) demonstrated that the international historical-geographic method of folk narrative analysis (which traced the development of folk narrative over time and space) was well on its way.<sup>5</sup>

In his introduction, Dasent had stressed that "*The first authentic history of a nation is the history of its tongue*" (1859: xix, echoed on xx); and with regard to this, underlined that English and Norwegian are "*nearly allied, both in vocabulary and construction*" (Dasent 1859: clx), the suggestion being that the Anglo-Saxon and Norse Indo-European elements live and thrive within the British as much as they do in the Norwegians. In both, he felt, one could spy the "*bold, outspoken, and humorous, in the true sense of humour. In the midst of every difficulty and danger arises that old Norse feeling of making the best of everything and keeping a good face to the foe.*" [...] Dasent adds, with regard to Asbjørnsen and Moe's folk tales: "*these*

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5 It might be noted that in his earlier Preface to *Popular Rhymes, Fireside Stories and Amusements of Scotland* (1842), Robert Chambers was already noting that "In some instances, a remarkable resemblance is made out between rhymes prevalent over Scotland and others which exist in England and Germany", and encourages further comparative work to be carried out especially within those nations "containing a Teutonic population" (Chambers 1842: 3). For understandable linguistic reasons, nothing is said about Scandinavia at this point.

are tales of 'hempen homespuns', of Norske bonder, who call a spade a spade, and who burn tallow, not wax ..." (Dasent 1859: cl–clii), and suggests to his readers that very similar tales could be found in Scotland. As he stresses:

*The wonderful likeness which is shown between such tales as the 'Red Bull of Norway' in Mr Chambers' collection, and Katie Woodencloak in these Norse Tales, is to be accounted for by no theory of the importation of this or that particular tale in later times from Norway, but by the fact that the Lowland Scots, among whom these tales were told, were lineal descendants of the Norsemen who had either seized the country in the Viking times, or had been driven into it across the Border after the Norman conquest* (Dasent 1859: cxlv–cl).

There was thus excellent logical reason for placing Scottish and Norwegian material side by side in folktale analysis.

John Francis Campbell went on to accompany Dasent on two trips to Iceland in August 1861, and July and August 1862. However, by this time, Campbell had already established his own Nordic networks. He made eleven trips to Scandinavia between 1849 and 1873, which had encouraged him to detect potential (if somewhat odd) links between the Sami language and Gaelic (Dorson 1968: 393–401; Olsen 2005; Gunnell 2009). He also had his own direct contact with Peter Chr. Asbjørnsen in Norway, among other things about the shared features of the heather ale folk legend Campbell had encountered in Scotland, and similar accounts found in Old Icelandic literature (Gunnell 2010: 21 and 33–36). It is nonetheless worth noting that when he came to Iceland in 1861 and 1862 (at precisely the same time he was putting the final touches to the first volumes of his folklore collection), Campbell seems to have made no contact with the main Icelandic collector of folklore, Jón Árnason, who was working overtime on assembling the first real collection of Icelandic folktales, inspired by the German scholar Konrad Maurer (Gunnell 2010). While in Iceland, rather than discussing folk tales, Campbell seems to have been spiritually preparing himself for his later work for the Coal

Commission.<sup>6</sup> In his book on the trip, *Frost and Fire: Natural Engines, Tool Marks and Chips with Sketches Taken at Home and Abroad by a Traveller* (1865), Campbell praises the island as being first and foremost a kind of “*Wolverhampton of the North*”. For him, Iceland is a very large “*cinder heap*”, but:

*the lesson which it teaches is well worth the cost. Hecla may only be one large valve in a great caloric engine; but it is not too large to be seen, and it is well worth looking at. [...] These twin giants, Fire and Frost, Heat and Cold, are as busy near Hecla as at Wolverhampton or Coatbridge, and their work is alike at home and abroad* (Campbell 1865: 2).

For John Francis Campbell, the values of Scandinavia were clearly many and varied.

Campbell may nonetheless be said to have set the tone and forged the academic folkloric connections between Scotland and Scandinavia which were later to be more firmly developed after the First World War, and particularly in the twenties and thirties when the work between the Irish and Swedish folklorists Séamus Ó Duilearga and Carl Wilhelm von Sydow led to von Sydow’s colleague, Åke Campbell, joining the Swedish-trained Calum Maclean to carry out fieldwork into *clocháns* and shielings in the Hebrides in 1939 and 1948, on Ó Duilearga’s advice (Bringéus 2008: 107–112).<sup>7</sup> As is noted in the articles by Margaret Mackay and Cailean Maclean elsewhere in this volume, this work led in turn to Åke Campbell meeting up with not only H. J. Rose and Robert Kerr at

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6 Campbell became Secretary to the Mines Commission in 1863, and Secretary to the Coal Commission in 1866 (Dorson 1968).

7 It might be noted that even earlier than this the Norwegian ethnomusicologist and folk song collector O. M. Sandvik had carried out collection work during a very brief trip to Barra in September 1927, at the encouragement of Ó Duilearga and the Norwegian folklorist, Reidar Christiansen, who had his own interests in Celtic/Nordic connections: see Ó Catháin, forthcoming, and Christiansen 1959. Concerning Christiansen’s own fieldwork in northern Scotland and the Hebrides in the 1920s, see Rogan 2012: 107–108.

the Scottish Anthropological and Folklore Society in Edinburgh,<sup>8</sup> but also John Lorne Campbell in Canna in June and July 1948 (Bringéus 2008: 111). However, before this point, when travelling home from Ireland in 1935, Campbell had taken part in another meeting with the society (with Rose and G. R. Gair among others) about the possibility of Scotland setting up its own archive (something von Sydow, Rose, Gair, Kerr and Campbell had previously proposed at the first meeting of the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in London in 1934) (Bringéus 2008: 91–92 and 118–123). There was also on-going talk about the possibility of an international conference of folklorists and ethnologists being held in Scotland in 1936, something which was seen as a means of encouraging the establishment of such a Scottish archive (Bringéus 2008: 119–122). As Campbell noted in a letter to the Danish folklorist, Hans Ellekilde in July 1935, cooperation between the Nordic countries and Scotland in forwarding such an institution would be fruitful in various ways, and not least as an answer to the way Germany was currently underlining the firmly nationalistic aspects of folklore:

Campbell writes:

*In Scotland, one hopes (like in Ireland) to tighten the connections with the Nordic countries. Everyone in Ireland and Great Britain is now looking towards the Nordic area: Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, the Faroes, Finland are the countries which are mostly considered. As a result of Germany's move away from the disciplined scholarly route and its reluctance for non-prejudiced international cooperation, people in western Europe are looking for better connections in the scholarly field. The North and Irish Sea appear to be kind of mid-point for a*

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8 The society had been formed in 1934 as The Scottish Anthropological Society (becoming the Scottish Anthropological and Folklore Society in 1936). Prof. H. J. Rose was President, Kerr (of the Royal Scottish Museums) was Hon. Secretary and G. R. Gair (later Robert Gayre of Gayre) served as Hon. Editor: <http://www.therai.org.uk/archives-and-manuscripts/archive-contents/scottish-anthropological-and-folklore-society-a109/> last accessed 21st January 2013.

*circle of people closely related to Nordic culture, who need each other on the academic plane. I believe I spoke warmly and in some detail about the Danish folklore research at a meeting which was arranged in Edinburgh by the Anthropological Society which was discussing Duilearga's, von Sydow's and my plan for west and north European cooperation (Bringéus 2008: 121).<sup>9</sup>*

Elsewhere in this letter to Ellekilde, Campbell once again urges that the next International Folklore Conference in 1936 should take place in Edinburgh rather than in Lübeck, Germany, and that Denmark should also be actively involved in these moves, not only because of its ancient cultural connections to Britain, but also because of the value that the comparative material in Danish archives would have for folklore studies throughout Britain and Ireland (Bringéus 2008: 121–122). Similar ideas are reflected in various other letters that were going back and forth between Nordic and Irish folklorists during this period, all of which underline their joint desire for the establishment of a Scottish archive like that being developed in Dublin. They also underline the hope that Nordic folklorists had for continuing close cooperation between the Irish and Scottish archives and scholars in the Nordic countries (Bringéus 2008: 118–123).

The planned folklore conference in Edinburgh, which focused on archives and translation, was delayed until 1937 (and it is noteworthy that the Germans, highly offended at the rejection of Lübeck as a venue,

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9 My translation. The original text (given in Bringéus' book) runs as follows: "Mann ville i Skottland (liksom i Irland) knyta förbindelseerna med Norden allt fastare. Hela Irland-Storbritannien söker sig nu mot Norden: Danmark, Sverige, Norge, Island, Faröarna, Finland voro nu de länder som närmast kommo i åtanke. Genom Tysklands avfall från den strängt vetenskapliga vägen och dess obenägenhet til fördomsfritt internationellt samarbete har man i Västeuropa måst se sig om efter vetenskapligt sett bättre förbindelser. Nordsjön-Västerhavet synes nu bli ett medelhav för en krets av nära besläktade nordiska kulturfolk, som behöva varandra även på vetenskapens område. Jeg tror at jag talade mycket utförligt och varmt om dansk folkminnesforskning på det möte som anordnats i Edinburgh av Anthropological Society för att diskutera Duileargas-Sydows-min plan om väst- och nordeuropeiskt samarbete."

did not attend: see interview with Campbell in *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, 1937). The resulting steps towards the eventual establishment of the planned archive and the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1951 are given in some detail in another article by Margaret Mackay elsewhere in this volume, and will therefore be passed over here.

It is nonetheless very clear that by the time the School was opened, an individual bridge between the School of Scottish Studies and the Nordic countries had been firmly established by both John Francis and Åke Campbell. That the bridge in question was seen as having enduring value, is demonstrated by the way in which it has been nurtured and maintained during the 60 years that have passed since the School's founding.

The School's underlying sense of international awareness is demonstrated in numerous ways, and not least in the school's individual library. Indeed, the early connections between the various Nordic, Irish and Scottish departments of folklore noted above resulted in the Library of the School of Scottish Studies quickly amassing a rare and valuable range of Gaelic and Nordic monographs and journals which go back some way in time. One sincerely hopes that the authorities of the University of Edinburgh will have the sense to realise the value of allowing this unique library to retain its present independence and unity. It is still not too late to learn from the experiences of other university libraries like the Brotherton Library in the University of Leeds where a range of previously easily accessible treasures from the old individual folklore and Nordic libraries have found themselves dispersed amongst various rows of dark basement stacks and guarded special collections.

Scandinavian books, however, have not been the only Nordic arrivals to come through the doors of the School of Scottish Studies over the years. Ever since its inception, the school has welcomed a constant stream of academic visitors from the Nordic countries coming in search of the valuable comparative material the School houses (as von Sydow and Åke Campbell had hoped). One of the first of these visitors was, quite naturally, Åke Campbell, who, in October 1955, in recognition of his supportive work, became the first visiting lecturer at the newly established

department (Bringéus 2008: 183).<sup>10</sup> This followed two visits made by the School's secretary and archivist Stewart Sanderson to the folklore archive in Uppsala in 1953 and 1955 (Bringéus 2008: 184).

Campbell has since been succeeded by numerous other distinguished Nordic visiting lecturers, many of whom have come as part of the University of Edinburgh Northern Scholars Scheme. Established in 1956, the main purpose of this scheme is:

*to foster co-operation between scholars of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden, and colleagues in the University of Edinburgh, in linguistic, historical and other cultural studies which are common to these countries and to Scotland and in particular to sponsor visits by scholars of the member countries to Edinburgh.*<sup>11</sup>

Of the roughly 250 Northern Scholars that have so far visited the university as part of this scheme (which, as can be seen above, includes several Baltic countries), 40 have been invited by the School of Scottish Studies, five coming from Latvia and Estonia (Margaret Mackay: private e-mail: 28th June 2011). Many of these visits have resulted in new international connections and the establishment of long-lasting networks, something which has naturally helped provide students both at home and abroad with invaluable international perspectives. According to Margaret Mackay (private e-mail: 28th June 2011), the scholars in question have come

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10 Campbell had also spent time in Scotland between 30th September and 15th October 1953, holding lectures not only at the School of Scottish Studies, but also at the International Conference on Celtic Studies at the University of Glasgow. Campbell stayed in Edinburgh in his role as Visiting Lecturer for five or six weeks in October and November 1955. Following a reception which was held for him (with 25 guests) and an initial lecture, he travelled to the southern Hebrides with Stewart Sanderson, and went on to hold further lectures at the School on Archive Work and Methods, Folk Museums and Folklore Studies, and Culture Zones in Sweden. On his return to Sweden, he wrote a detailed report on the School's activities (25th February 1956), underlining that considering the present situation there was a need to prioritise fieldwork, recording and archiving (Bringéus 2008: 186–187).

11 <http://www.nsc.hss.ed.ac.uk/remit.cfm>: last accessed 21st January 2013.

from a wide range of fields ranging “*from place-names and dialect studies to museology and material culture, song and instrumental music, narrative, social organisation, cultural revivals and religious ethnology*,” something which not only underlines the range of the holdings of the department library and its various archives (which have been the key attraction for the scholars in question), but also the interests and international connections of the various lecturers that have worked at the department (who have often encouraged the international visitors to come).

Other Nordic scholars have come to the School of Scottish Studies for longer periods in the role of Visiting Lecturers or as guests of the university’s Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities.<sup>12</sup> Such scholars include Bjarne Stoklund from Denmark; Nils-Arvid Bringéus from Sweden; and Åse Enerstvedt, Anne-Berit Borchgrevink and Venke Olsen from Norway. Many of these scholars have carried out not only archival research but also field work dealing with essentially Scottish topics or other areas of study involving Nordic-Scottish connections or parallels, Anne-Berit Borchgrevink researching boundaries and Venke Olsen the earlier-noted Nordic associations of John Francis Campbell. Worth particular note in this context is the Danish ethnomusicologist Thorkild Knudsen who first came to the School as a Northern Scholar in the early 1960s and went on to hold an ethnomusicological appointment at the School later in the decade, before eventually being succeeded by Peter Cooke. Knudsen’s valuable field work in Skye can be heard on one of the Scottish Tradition CDs issued by the department: *Waulking Songs from Barra* (Scottish Tradition Series: vol 3: CDTRAX9003 (1993)).

Yet further Nordic connections have been established and underlined by the series of Celtic-Nordic-Baltic Folklore Symposia which were originally set up by the School of Scottish Studies and The Department of Irish Folklore in Dublin in 1988, the direct fruit of the early cooperation between Scotland and Ireland and the Nordic Countries noted earlier.<sup>13</sup> Its roots in the International Congress of the Folk Epic, which had been

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12 See <http://www.iash.ed.ac.uk/>; last accessed 21st January 2013.

13 Regarding these conferences, see further Gunnell 2008b: 17–20.

hosted in 1985 by the Department of Irish Folklore, and had brought a new generation of Nordic scholars into renewed contact with their Irish and Scottish counterparts across the North Sea, the first of these symposia took place in Dublin in 1988. Centring around papers presented by a number of like-minded lecturers and students from Edinburgh and Dublin, the 1988 conference set the tone and focus on legend and belief that most of the symposia have since followed, the 14 papers at the first symposium focusing on '*The Supernatural in Irish and Scottish Migratory Legends*'. Nordic scholars were not personally involved in the first gathering (with the notable exception of the key figure of Bo Almqvist, who was head of the Department of Irish Folklore at the time, and an organiser of the conference), but Irish and Scottish connections with the Nordic world and Nordic folklore scholarship were well apparent in the emphasis that was placed on migratory legends, within which Reidar Christiansen's index of migratory Norwegian legends served as a key point of comparison (Christiansen 1958). Both Almqvist and Donald Archie MacDonald engaged themselves in placing Scottish and Irish legends within this Nordic framework, noting parallels, and also establishing lists of suggested particularly Irish and Scottish types of the migratory legend (Almqvist 1991 and MacDonald 1996), types which were also becoming clear in Alan Bruford's earlier lists of Scottish Witch and Fairy legends (see also Bruford 1967).

The next symposium held in Galway in 1991 was devoted to a similar theme ('*Migratory Legends on the Supernatural*'), but was on a much larger scale. Now directly involving the Nordic countries for the first time, it included not only academics and students from Ireland and Scotland, but also delegates from other universities teaching folkloristics in neighbouring countries, and in particular those in Scandinavia. The names of the participants once again underlines the international breadth of the networks that people like Bo Almqvist, Séamas Ó Catháin, Alan Bruford, and Donald Archie MacDonald had forged during this period, including Hilda Ellis Davidson and Jacqueline Simpson from England; Bengt Holbek, Iørn Piø and Michael Chesnutt from Denmark; Olav Bø and Reimund Kvideland from Norway; Bengt af Klintberg from Sweden; Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson and Gísli Sigurðsson from Iceland; Eyðun Andreassen from the Faroe

Islands; Irma-Riita Järvinen, Pirkko-Liisa Rausma, Marjatta Jauhiainen, Jukka Saarinen from Finland; and Samuli Aikio from the Sami territories.

Other Celtic-Nordic Folklore Symposia which touched on other folklore genres (such as proverbs and riddles, children's rhymes, traditional prayers, wedding songs and death laments) but concentrated on legends and belief were held in 1993 and 1996. After a break, the symposia were revived with another meeting which took place in Reykjavík in 2005, the plenary lectures on the present state of legend scholarship once again stressing the breadth of the Celtic-Nordic-Baltic folkloristics network.<sup>14</sup> Those presenting plenary lectures now included Ulf Palmenfelt and Bengt af Klintberg from Sweden; Arne Bugge Amundsen from Norway; Anna Leena Siikala and Ulrika Wolf Knuts from Finland; Bo Almqvist and Séamas Ó Catháin from Ireland; Jacqueline Simpson from England, John Lindow and Timothy Tangherlini from the United States; and John Shaw from the School of Scottish Studies (who incidentally also served as the fiddle player in the conference band, The Northern Stars).

The legacy of these conferences is manifest. As Bo Almqvist underlined in his opening address to the Reykjavík symposium, the previous four conferences had resulted not only in two central indexes of migratory legend types coming into existence in Ireland and Scotland, but also “*publications amounting to more than 1600 pages, some 100 papers of well integrated solid scholarship, which have elucidated, and will continue to elucidate, connections and similarities as well as regional characteristic traits in the Celtic-Nordic-Baltic areas.*”<sup>15</sup> The recently published material from the Reykjavík conference

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14 Since the Shetland conference on which this present book is based, a further legend symposium has been held in Tartu, Estonia in 2012.

15 The papers from the first conference were published in a special *Béaloidéas* volume, *The Fairy Hill is on Fire* (1991: ed. Almqvist, Ó Catháin and Ó Héalaí), which has since sold out. The papers from the following conference appeared in *Béaloidéas*, 1992–1993 (ed. Almqvist and Ó Héalaí 1992), and 1994–1995 (ed. Almqvist and Ó Héalaí 1996); *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore*, 47 (1991), and 49 (1993); and *Folklore*, 104 (1993) and 105 (1994). Some of the material from the third conference appeared in *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore*, 51 (1995), while that from the fourth conference appeared in Lysaght, Ó Catháin and Ó hÓgáin 1999.

brings the number of published pages up to roughly 2000.<sup>16</sup> There is clearly good reason for maintaining this particular series of international symposia which among other things have served to underline the key role that the scholars at the School of Scottish Studies have played in developing and maintaining international scholarly cooperation. They also point to the valuable living legacy of the folk tale research carried out by Alan Bruford, Donald Archie MacDonald and their colleagues at the School.

Involvement in symposia of this kind; hosting Visiting Lecturers and researchers; taking part in international conferences (like those run by SIEF [The International Society for Ethnology and Folklore],<sup>17</sup> ISFNR [International Society for Folk Narrative Research], and the *Kommission für Volksdichtung*);<sup>18</sup> and participating in the teaching at the international Folklore Fellows Summer School in Finland<sup>19</sup> are just several of the sides of the international cooperation that has been built up over the last 60 years by the members of the School of Scottish Studies with other European universities, and particularly with those Nordic institutions where folkloristics/ethnology is taught. Another important link of this kind has been the EU Erasmus teacher and student exchange programme<sup>20</sup> which has been built up over the last ten years or so between the School of Scottish Studies and the University of Iceland. For the fledgling department of Folkloristics (*Þjóðfræði*) at the University of Iceland where I teach, this mobility programme was a godsend: when I began teaching at the university in Iceland in 1998, the number and range of courses available to our students were highly limited. Numbers of students were comparatively low, and there was only one full time member of staff. The Erasmus agreement set up between the two universities in 2001 has enabled lecturers from

16 See Gunnell 2008a.

17 Emily Lyle has played a key role in the establishment of the SIEF Ritual Year group which meets annually.

18 Here, too, Emily Lyle has played a key role from an early point.

19 John Shaw played a key role in the FFC summer school in 2007.

20 See further [http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc72\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc72_en.htm), last accessed 21st January 2013.

the School of Scottish Studies to come to Iceland to teach short intensive courses every two years, John Shaw teaching a course on Immigrant Folkloristics; Gary West teaching two courses on heritage (in addition to holding a bagpipe concert); Katherine Campbell presenting a course on Scottish ballads; Neill Martin teaching twice on Scottish Supernatural; and Emily Lyle teaching a course on Traditional Cosmology.<sup>21</sup> In return, a number of teaching visits have been made to Edinburgh by myself (three times), and my colleagues Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, Kristin Schram, Katla Kjartansdóttir, and Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir. The net result of this activity has not only been the development of some close research networks, but some great and lasting friendships. I think it is also fair to say that the role of the School of Scottish Studies in assisting and encouraging the development of Folkloristics at the University of Iceland has been in many ways the equivalent to that played by the Swedish departments of folklore in the development of folklore studies in Ireland and Scotland. In 1998, the Department of Folkloristics was taking in perhaps 5 or 6 new students a year at the BA level. This year (autumn 2012), the equivalent figure was closer to 70, along with c. 15 entering the MA line.

So much for the *official* connections between the School of Scottish Studies and the Nordic Countries past and present. It is pertinent to add a few personal words about the intrinsic value that the School of Scottish Studies and its archives have for Nordic folklorists like myself. Here I will be centring on two examples from my own experience, both of which relate to ethnological research concerning Shetlandic culture (Shetland offering a natural cultural bridge between Scotland and the Nordic countries). The examples in question are my own research into international guising traditions (see Gunnell 2001 and 2007a and b); and, more recently, the research carried out by an excellent MA student of mine, Vilborg Davíðsdóttir, which deals with the legendary narratives and beliefs of Shetland, and in particular the legends told by Brucie Henderson and Tom Tulloch on the island of Yell (see Vilborg Davíðsdóttir 2011).

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21 Margaret Mackay made use of a similar grant to visit Denmark in the 1980s to learn about the BA programme run in Copenhagen.

As suggested above, it might be argued that the only way to decide what is 'national' and unique about national folklore is to compare local folkloric material with that found in neighbouring countries. If the local material is different, one has to consider how and why it came into being locally (and not in other countries). If it is similar, there is good reason to consider how and why it might have come to exist in two different situations, and then how and why the material in question should have adapted itself to the local surroundings. In short, some degree of comparison is central for all of the studies we carry out, and as noted above, in terms of comparative research into the North Atlantic communities, Shetlandic culture is very important indeed. Indeed, the material collected in Shetland (and Orkney) by Scottish ethnologists like Alan Bruford demands careful consideration by anyone working on Nordic, Scottish, English or Irish folklore, not least because it contains traces of all of these cultures. It also contains material that seems to have very early roots, material which has often adapted in quite original ways to the particular geographical, social, linguistic and cultural environment of Shetland. The Shetland legendary and guising traditions that Vilborg and I have examined are perfect cases in point. In both cases, our work would have been impossible had it not been for the invaluable services and encouragement of both the Shetland Museum and Archive, and the library, archives, and staff of the School of Scottish Studies.

As noted above, my own contacts with the School of Scottish Studies began at a comparatively late point, in 2000. My earlier research into Nordic folk drama, festival traditions, and folk legends and belief (see, for example, Gunnell 1995), had made me aware that one of the central problems for Icelandic folkloristics was the way in which, in spite of publishing numerous collections of folk tales and legends, the Icelanders had shown little interest in placing their traditions, narratives and beliefs in either an immediately local or a wider international context. Everything tended to be introduced as being essentially 'Icelandic'. At that time, there was no folk narrative archive, and little or no use was made of international classification, or comparison.<sup>22</sup> Most of the key projects we have since

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22 One reason for this was that Iceland's desire to achieve independent nationhood was not fulfilled until 1944.

been working on, including our folk legend databases,<sup>23</sup> our national belief survey,<sup>24</sup> and the building up of international teaching exchanges, have all been aimed at remedying this situation, and creating internationally minded folklorists who are interested in both the past and the present. The department has also done its best to give Icelandic students of Folkloristics some insight into Nordic, British and Gaelic folklore past and present (alongside their own), as a means of enabling them to judge objectively what can be said to be truly Icelandic and what not.

It was obvious that if the Department of Folkloristics at the University of Iceland was to be built up, an examination needed to be made into how the subject was being taught elsewhere. For this reason, during my first few years of teaching, I paid visits to numerous other successful folklore and ethnology departments in Dublin, Edinburgh, Oslo, Visby, Helsinki and Turku in Estonia, partly for this purpose, and partly to establish research networks. It was completely natural that I should spend my first sabbatical in 2001 at the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh. Over and above my own personal long-term interest in Scottish history, culture and landscape, I had recently begun working with the Danish ethnologist, Carsten Bregenhøj on a large international project on Nordic guising traditions which eventually resulted in the publication of the book, *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area* (Gunnell 2007a), another work that had the deliberate aim of underlining the inherent weakness of studying folklore by individual nation. Up until that point, one regularly heard Nordic scholars of the past talking of 'their' 'individual' 'national' disguise traditions. Few had attempted to look at the ways in which these traditions cross borders and form wider cross-border patterns, or considered looking at them in this wider context. It was for this reason that those involved decided from the start not to limit themselves to the Nordic countries, but also to bring in the customs of many neighbouring areas, such as Estonia,

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23 See <https://notendur.hi.is/terry/database/sagnagrunnur.htm>, last accessed 21st January 2013, and Gunnell 2010.

24 See Ásdís A. Arnalds, Ragna Benedikta Garðarsdóttir, Unnur Dilja Teitsdóttir 2008.

Greenland, and especially the Northern Isles of Scotland. It was clear that guising traditions similar to those known all over the Nordic countries had also existed in Shetland, and that they lay behind the customs which developed into Up-Helly-Aa. It also seemed apparent that the Shetland traditions were old, and that they were directly related to those known in Iceland, the Faroes and Norway (see Gunnell 1995: 161–179; 2001; and 2007a and b). At the first available opportunity, I therefore came over to Scotland, first visiting Shetland in 2000 in order to carry out fieldwork into the traditions in question (with the assistance of Ian Tait and Brian Smith at the Shetland Museum and Archive), and then later staying for six months as a visiting academic at the School of Scottish Studies during my sabbatical in the spring of 2001. This visit was extremely fruitful, not only for my own research, but also for our department and our students. As noted above, it also led to the forging of some very firm and lasting friendships.

Housed in a small room at the top of one of the winding staircases that run through the School in George Square, and regularly fed with tea, biscuits and conversation in the staff tearoom in the basement, I became aware of a strong sense of affiliation with the rest of the staff in the department. Unfortunately too late to meet people like Hamish Henderson, Alan Bruford, and Donald Archie MacDonald, I soon became acquainted with the richness of their work. Preparing to teach a course on Gaelic folklore in Iceland, I sat in on a course taught by John Shaw on Scottish Narrative, and was soon engaged in deep conversations with Emily Lyle about Galoshins and other Scottish disguise traditions and games, something which led to her writing a chapter on Galoshins in *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area* (Lyle 2007; see also Lyle 2011), and to my own involvement in the international SIEF Ritual Year conferences that Emily was organising. With Ian Fraser, I discussed Nordic place names in Scotland, and with Gary West, the development of Scottish heritage and bag-pipe traditions. At the department's Burns' Night, one also became aware of the wealth of rare musical talent contained within the School, something that has continued to grow over the years. In addition to Gary West's pipes, John Shaw's fiddle and the dulcet tones of Morag MacLeod

that I encountered in 2001, one also got to know in more recent times the fiddle and voice of Katherine Campbell, and Neill Martin's keyboards, guitar and hurdy-gurdy. Viewing these figures as a kind of musical ensemble, one somehow started seeing Margaret Mackay in the role of band manager, and Emily Lyle as an enduring spiritual Muse.

Alongside the personal connections and inspirations that came from the members of staff, there were the aforementioned rare and valuable attractions of the School of Scottish Studies Library and archive holdings. These provided the perfect follow up to what I had managed to find during my fieldwork activities in Shetland in 2000 and 2001, and not least in the form of the contextual materials that had been collected in Shetland by Alan Bruford and others, and then all the sound recordings, films, photographs and other materials contained in the archives concerning other Scottish guising traditions, all of which have been not only invaluable for Scotland and Scottish ethnologists, but also for those from northern Europe as a whole – as scholars like Carl von Sydow, Åke Campbell, Reidar Christiansen and O. M. Sandvik had realised they would be. It cannot be stressed enough that the folklore library in the School of Scottish Studies is one of the best in the British Isles, largely as a result of the school's aforementioned international connections. Here one has access not only to most of the key folklore journals of the past and present, but also a wide range of rare material old and new, concerning both Scotland and Ireland, and also the rest of Europe. It was an honour for me to be able to add new materials (from Shetland) to those already contained in the School.

It also soon became clear to me exactly how valuable the materials contained in the School of Scottish Studies archives were not only for Nordic guising research but also for a range of other fields which underline the close cultural connections that have always existed between the Nordic countries and Scotland. As the work of Emily Lyle, Francis Fischer and others have shown, this is particularly evident in the Nordic parallels to Scottish traditional ballads (such as '*The Douglas Tragedy*', '*Lord Ronald*', and '*The Two Sisters*');<sup>25</sup> in a number of wonder tales found in both the Nordic

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25 See Lyle 1994: 13; Fischer 2007; and McAlpine 2007, 309.

and Gaelic traditions, like those earlier researched by the Norwegian scholar Reidar Christiansen (Christianen 1959); and in other traditions connected to the ritual year. Other obvious connections can be seen in music and children's games like those researched in Aberdeen by Erik Kaas Nielsen and Alistair Roberts (see Alburger 2007: 264; and Roberts 2007: 496–498). There is particular value in the very rich collection of Scottish legends which have been collected over the years for the sound archive by people like Calum Maclean, Alan Bruford and Donald Archie MacDonald, and can now be accessed in the *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches* database.<sup>26</sup> It was for this reason, among others, that I advised the Icelandic author Vilborg Davíðsdóttir to take part of her MA study in Edinburgh, following in the path of another student of ours, Kristinn Schram, who completed his PhD on Icelandic identity at the School of Scottish Studies in 2010 (see Schram 2010) adding yet further close connections between the two departments.

Vilborg Davíðsdóttir had wanted to research the degree to which the legends told by people reflected their social and geographical environments, the degree to which they can be said to reflect personal and local world view, and at the same time, the degree to which it is possible to rebuild a performance context for them, a 'thick corpus' like that called for by the Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko (Honko 2000). Having written a novel about the Scottish isles in Viking times, Vilborg chose to concentrate on the legendary material collected over the years from the Yell storytellers, Tom Tulloch and Brucie Henderson, using not only all she could find of the treasure trove of stories collected by Calum Maclean, Peter Cooke, Alan Bruford and Tadaake Miyake for the School of Scottish Studies in the 1950s and 1970s (until 1980), but also other legends recorded for the BBC and the Shetland Archive by people like Tom Anderson, Laurence Graham, Archie P. Lee, Andy Gear, Bobby Tulloch, Jonathan Wills and Robert L. Johnson (see further Vilborg Davíðsdóttir 2011).

Since an overview of the wide range of Shetland material contained in the archive of the School of Scottish Studies is given in another

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26 See <http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/>, last accessed 21st January 2013.

chapter by Cathlin Macaulay, my discussion of Vilborg's work here will be limited to a brief summary of the international value of the archive materials she has examined, and not least the way in which the various recordings of Brucie and Tom's legends over the years (often involving the same stories, told individually or by both men) demonstrate how their storytelling develops; how they themselves develop individual legends; how they tell these legends differently for different sets of people; and (considering especially those stories both men tell) the way in which each man has his own particular approach to the material, related perhaps to the fact that the two storytellers had slightly different backgrounds, one (Brucie) learning his material largely from men and the other (Tom) from women. Indeed, it is also clear that even though both men have backgrounds within the same tradition, they clearly have different interests and approaches to their material. Considering the background material that Vilborg has assembled on the world of Yell, there is little doubt the material in question is distinctly Shetlandic. However, there is equally little doubt about the fact that this material has direct relation to both the Nordic, Scottish and Gaelic traditions. The Nordic connection is clearly reflected in Shetlandic legends about changelings (F61–70; cf. ML5085<sup>27</sup>); the *kelpie* or water horse (like the Nordic *nøkken*: F57, 58, 68, 94/ MLSIT 4086–7); the *selkie* (or seal man or woman cf. ML 4080); the brownie (like the Nordic *nisse* or *tomte*) (F120/ 121; cf. ML 7000–7020); and the general form of the trows (like the 'hidden people' in both Norway and Iceland, and the Irish fairies [Bruford 1997]). Connections are especially clear in the well-known Yell legends of the '*Trow of Windhouse*', which seem directly connected to a Per Gynt legend about a huge shapeless troll, '*Den store Bøygen*', which was told to Peter Chr. Asbjørnsen in Hallingdal, Norway in the nineteenth century (Leistøl 1941; 1948; Bruford: 1982, 80–84; and Gunnell 2004). On the other hand, it is equally apparent that Shetland legends about ship-sinking witches would seem to have firm

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27 On the various types of legend and the symbols (ML: Migratory Legend; MLSIT: Migratory Legend Suggested Irish Types; F: Fairy Legend Type; W: Witch Legend Type), see further Almqvist 1991; MacDonald 1996; and Christiansen 1958.

roots in Scotland (W40A-B; MLSIT 3036), while the Rip van Winkle-like accounts of fiddlers entering hills (F22 and 24) seem to be part of a general Gaelic tradition.<sup>28</sup> In short, Vilborg's work shows exactly why there is good reason for scholars interested in Nordic legends to examine the material contained in the Scottish archives (not least with regard to dating and motifs). It also demonstrates what Scottish scholars working in the same field can gain from taking note of the work of Nordic scholars: John Francis Campbell and Åke Campbell clearly knew what they were doing when they constructed the scholarly bridges that continue to exist between Scotland and the Nordic world.

Vilborg's thesis nonetheless has another important message for all of us. It underlines the key general importance of maintaining and developing the old archives which some had talked of relegating to cellars, or even burning in the 1970s (Wilgus 1973: 244–245),<sup>29</sup> on the basis of the fact that past collection had different standards to those of the present. The thesis clearly demonstrates that inherent value of all of the old archives, even in an age of performance studies which tends to concentrate on the present, the immediate (rather than the international), and the film (rather than the sound recording). It shows how careful and combined use of the wide range of materials available in the archives (used alongside those materials relating to social history), and especially those contained in the School of Scottish Studies still enable the creation of thick corpuses about the storytellers of the past and enable researchers to analyse their narratives within a social context, much as one does with living fieldwork. It underlines that archives like those contained in the school remain a largely unexplored treasure-trove not only for folklorists but also for social historians, anthropologists, scholars of literature, musicians and more, and not only for scholars from Scotland, Ireland and England, but from also the Nordic countries.

As this article has shown, the present flourishing ties between the School of Scottish Studies and the Nordic countries are built on deep roots

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28 Naturally, the Shetland changeling, brownie and kelpie legends are also influenced by Gaelic forms of the same legends and beliefs.

29 I am grateful to Vilborg for finding this reference for me.

which in fact go back to the early connections between the two areas in Viking times. They bode well for the future, and further cooperation at the level of both staff and students. One hopes that these connections will continue to flourish and grow in the years to come, watered by the Carrying Stream that encourages us to work together.

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