AUSTRALIAN FOLKSONG SCHOLARSHIP -- SOME PROBLEMS

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> Around the more or less naive vocal compositions held to qualify for the title "folksong" there has gathered an accretion of manifest nonsense for which one needs to search the fields of theology or economics to find a parallel.
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> --Oscar Mendelsohn, A Waltz With Matilda, p. 118.

If we view the development of folksong scholarship in America as being essentially either the English study of American materials or the American study of British-derived materials, then we can hold this development in mind as a certain coherency, that for reasons to be explained, never took form in Australia. There was never any question or doubt in England as to the cultural validity of the songs, ballads, broadsides, etc. that the British scholars-cum-literarians were unearthing and restoring. There was a certain pride in finding these sometimes ancient or archaic pieces in circulation. If nothing else, these works provided a positive affirmation of the strength and resilience of the English culture (whatever the personal prejudice, Anglo-Saxon or Norman). No matter how rude or crude the peasant hut, how tattered and abused the village green, how poor, ill or ignorant the singer, the thread to the past ran straight and comparatively true, at least from where the collector sat.

It was this initial emphasis on survivals and relics that has caused much of the later confusion. In America, studies at first centered around the British materials, collected mostly in Britain. Of this period Child's work is undoubtedly the most famous. Then came Cecil Sharp, with his prestigious beating of the Appalachian bushes, and problems began (unnoticed) in earnest. Whether Sharp was the first to use the Child-and-other method of indexing is not here important. What is significant, is that collectors in America, and England for that matter, began to note a dichotomy between the strict reflections of the English popular ballad, a la Child, and a whole body of other materials. The broadsides, play-parties, songs, lyrics, sentimental ballads, hoedowns, etc. that Sharp noted here were for the most part related to British materials either in content or in form, yet they had become noticeably changed in fitting to the American milieu.

The logical extension of all this is Coffin's The British Ballad in North America and Laws' American Balladry From British Broadsides and Native American Balladry. Phillips Barry, Henry Belden, A. P. Hudson, John Cox, Roy Mackenzie and scores of others who need not here be named expended the time and talents of many a printer, not to mention their own lives, in the gleeful identification of British immigrants found hiding on American soil, plain dressed or fancy.

These obviousities have a purpose. The major criticism leveled at these early scholars is that a total attention to the artifact, in this case the song, can only set us on a path composed of a chain of interconnecting circles. Yet, despite all the discussion of the failures and foibles, no one ever accused his colleagues of wasting their time on non-indigenous material.

To understand what has happened in folksong and folklore scholarship in Australia we have to return to that mental attitude common in American scholarship around 1920. To that not-so-distant past when the fields abounded with the choicest artifacts and collectors bounded Child-like, nets in hand to capture and compare. A small matter only that the collections of amazing numbers of songs, texts, and jury tests (to use Phillips Barry's euphemism) proved to be terminal. We have to again capture that same perspective that dominated the Anglo-American stage, that passion for the artifact that caused Archer Taylor to remark in retrospect,

> Significant achievement has been regrettably small, and worse than that, it has preferred to remain in narrow ruts -- the collection of texts and the endless dispute over ballad origins -- without looking right or left.[1]

Nevertheless we have to gain this frame of mind because it was with this concept that folksong scholarship that was recognizable as such began in Australia.

In looking back, it seems incredible that a country with an English-speaking population twice as large as that of Ireland, a country geographically as large as the United States, a country socially and politically intertwined with America, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England should have been so utterly and completely ignored by folklore scholars of all countries, including her own. No Child arose to codify and canonize. No Sharp arrived to rediscover and inspire. No body of university sponsored or independently financed collectors sprang to the challenge; no dabblers, no dilettantes. Nobody, it seemed, really cared.

While this academic isolation left Australia far from the scholars and collectors of other countries, it at the same time left Australia free from the so-called Ballad Wars and the contortions and contusions that both preceeded and followed these literary battles. However, like its unique flora and fauna, this isolation produced a distinctive and peculiar pattern of development in folksong studies in Australia.

It will be possible within the scope of this paper to view this development chronologically. While academic work does not always fall in neat synchronic patterns, it will be less confusing to approach the problem this way.

First, we have to probe the intriguing dormancy of folksong study in Australia. From there we can go on to examine the developments. Although an historical analysis of the Australian culture is not my purpose here, I think a few points from such an analysis will be pertinent.

Australia's history has, even more than America's, been constantly defined in terms of its apposition and opposition to England. While America experienced a psychic break away from the paternal and maternal dominance of England by declaring independence and revolting, Australia remained the stifled younger sister as it were, largely unnoticed and even as late as the First World War dealt with as a colony.[2]

The individual in the culture felt an ambiguity as to his own self-image, nationality or even basic identification. It became very difficult to answer the question "who am I" or "who are we." The bulk of the population had emigrated from England for the widest variety of motives, but in contrast to America, the settlers for several generations considered themselves as British and "for Gawd's sake," not Australian.[3]

To be an Australian was by definition inferior. This the citizens were reminded of constantly. Newspapers, magazines, books, entertainers, artists, all participated in ceaselessly browbeating the populace into a neurotic love-hate relationship with England. There remains to this day a mutual contempt, if not hatred, between the British and Australian classes.[4]

These feelings of inferiority make themselves visible in the arts, literature, entertainment and other high style areas. For an Australian to be accepted in Australia as talented, he must first have his work accepted and praised in England and, to a lesser extent, in the United States. (The U.S. is still viewed by most Australian journalists as a cultural -- that is, high style -- wasteland.[5]) Alan Moorehead, Patrick White and Albert Namatjira to mention only the barest few, who have gone like prophets, were unheard and unsung in their own country until recognized in England. This is all the result of almost a hundred and forty years of English apathy, antipathy and antagonism.[6]

All of the colonies suffered similarly. Canada managed however, through economic independence, to define its position in the commonwealth at an earlier date. Geographically closer, Canada also had the additional assets of sharing a border with America, and perhaps most important to national image, never had the penal colony stigma.[7]

And so it was that no one cared to investigate any areas other than the gold fields. The folksong fields mayhap contained gems of inestimable value, but of course, we will never know.

Such maudlin sentiments aside, folksongs, bushsongs, bush balladry, or whatever one chooses to call them remained unexamined until after the Second World War -- with one exception.

A. B. "Banjo" Patterson was a ballad writer cast in the same mold as Bret Harte and Robert W. Service. Journalist, correspondent in the Boer War, essayist and poet, he was a word-smith of good-to-mediocre talents. His work is well known and affectionately regarded in Australia but rarely mentioned in the same sense as "literature." Probably his best known work in Australia is his poem, "The Man from Snowy River," a tale of runaway horses and their capture. In 1905, he published a curious volume entitled Old Bush Songs, a collection of poems (no music) some of which, in the fashion of Burns, he had collected and reworked, some he had written himself, others he simply claimed. Oriented towards a geographically defined area, Patterson gave a picture of the bush comparable to Service's Yukon or Harte's California. It is doubtful that Patterson had any ideologic axe to grind. He was simply presenting entertainment as he saw it.[8] It is unfortunate however that bush and outback poems formed the bulk of his publication, for it seems to have set the model for all the collecting, studying and publishing to follow.

It is hard to call the recent surge of interest in Australian folksong that for the most part began around 1955 a folksong "revival" in the same sense that that word has been used in England or America. The word revival connotes a torpid condition, a vestigial remain that exists to be reawakened. The better word for the Australian condition would probably be "recognition." About 1955 various people involved in more or less academic pursuits came to the realization that Australia had a folksong tradition. This recognition was not due to any belated interest in Banjo Patterson's lonely volume, but rather it seemed to be a thing whose time had come.[9]

Several things occurred almost simultaneously: the formation of the Bush Music Club, the organization of Wattle Records, the start of Russell Ward's grant to write a social history based on song and ballad, the publication of Singabout, the arrival of Dr. Kenneth Porter from the U.S.A., and the timorous establishment of the Australian Folk Lore Society.

The Bush Music Club grew as an extension of John Meredith's "Bushwackers" bush band. When the band was forming in 1954 the idea had been for Meredith and a few friends to dress in 19th century clothing and present bush songs that they themselves had collected in the outback (shades of Frank Warner). They enjoyed by Australian standards not inconsiderable success. But each time the group played, members of the audience would approach with the desire to join in, at least on the lagerphone or the bush bass.[10] Meredith finally set the stage limit at seven and in response the club was born.[11] A statement of goals and purposes was drawn up that was later published as a guide:

> The Bush Music Club was formed with an aim of repopularizing Australian folksongs and encouraging the composition of new songs, contemporary in theme and traditional in style.[12]

Shortly thereafter, Wattle Records, an economically more successful venture, was formed. Their first record, "The Drover's Dream," was sung by the popularizer and collector Allan Scott and sold over 20,000 copies, a sort of antipodal "Tom Dooley."[13]

20,000 copies in Australia had about the equivalent impact of the Weavers' recording of "Goodnite Irene" in the U.S.

A less successful enterprise was the Australian Folk Lore Society. For reasons that remain unknown, it died a quiet and apparently unmourned death in 1958.

Then enters upon the Australian scene the first of the well-intentioned Fulbright Scholars from America. Creating unwarranted impact in areas of study often far beyond their own disciplines, these fellows all too often fit precisely Melville Jacobs' classic reproach of folklorists as "Bunglers." Of course, we have an equally classic example.

Dr. Kenneth Porter, Professor of Business and History, spent some twelve months during 1954-55 at the University of Melbourne. Dr. Porter will probably be best remembered for his definitive History of the Humble Oil and Refining Company, but there is also his modest article published in Western Folklore entitled "A Ballad of the Northern Territory," which purports to be a comparison between a recently collected (by him) Australian bush ballad and the praiseworthy (by G. L. Kittredge) American ballad "The Buffalo Skinners."

After noting that the only similarity between the two songs is the general hunting theme, Porter then proceeds for six pages to prove the relative ease of getting a folklore fieldwork article published.[14] His only other contribution is to label as heroes the white Americans who cut the skin from Tecumseh's body to make souvenir razor strops.[15]

The song itself is an interesting piece of current Australiana:

"Down on the Daly River, O"

Now come all you sports who want a bit of fun,
Roll up your swags and pack up your gun.
Don't forget some flour, some sugar, some tea,
And don't forget a gallon of the best whiskey of Gordon's O.P.
Now crank up your Lizzie and come along with me
And I'll show you such sights as you never did see
Down on the Daly River O!

There was Wallaby George and Charley Dargey,
Old Skinny Davis and Jimmie Pan-Quee
Bigger Mouth Charlie and Old Paree,
The Tipperary Pong and Jimmie Wilkie
Now come along with me
And I'll show you such sights as you never did see
Down on the Daly River O!

I saw a buffalo bull and a fat Chinee
Run a dead heat to the foot of the tree
The Chinaman flew but he never felt the ruts
And the buffalo stopped with a bullet in the guts
The wild birds flew at the sound of the gun,
The water dropped a foot in the silver billabong
With the quacks and feathers you couldn't see the sun,
Down on the Daly River O!

While the buffalo kicked we poured in the lead.
We killed him ten times to make sure he was dead.
We drew out our knives and all hopped in --
Three whites, four Chows, two bucks and a gin.

We tore off his hide and ripped him up the guts
And took out his tit-bits and fancy funny cuts.
We cranked up the Lizzie and shouted "Right-O"
All aboard for the Daly River O!

Now I saw a nigger sitting in an old gum tree
The crows had pecked his eyes out so he couldn't see.
Never and never a word spoke he.
He was dead as dead can be.
His arse was sticking out like a horse with the piles
He was so high you could smell him for miles
Dargey threw a gibber and hit him in the mush.
The nigger went whoooooh...and we all went bush,
Down on the Daly River O!

Porter quotes Dr. Russell Ward as saying that the song "makes me rather ashamed to be an Australian," though he does not say why. There is no indication that Dr. Porter's article ever saw light in Australia but his methods and attitudes must have been very influential as we shall later see. This influence could stem from no better reason than his Ph.D., a degree John Greenway, for better or worse, has described Australians as being in awe of.[17]

Early in 1956, Dr. Edgar Waters, an Australian historian, published some guidelines on folksongs and their collecting in Australia. Based on discussions he had in England with Alan Lomax and English scholars, he tried somehow to pin down Australian folksong by using the (unknown to him) errors of others. His work, when strongly taken to task by Hugh Anderson, showed really not so much his mistakes, but rather the heretofore unnoticed ethnocentric positions of his mentors.

The notions Waters brought back are from the American viewpoint almost predictable. Waters stated as fundamental that folksongs are made by the folk. They must involve oral transmission and change. The music of the songs uses archaic devices (modal scales) not found in high style music. The songs must be quickly collected and studied so as to preserve them and then return them to the folk with a high quality of performance. He summed up his position with the amazing observation that, "It is quite evident that there has been little development or creativity in our folk music over the last forty or fifty years. It is well worth our while to pick up this tradition."[18]

This last interesting little bit of intellectual and cultural masochism is of course consonant with the aforementioned national feelings of inferiority.

Waters' ideas were published in February; in July, Hugh Anderson went on the attack. Those who have thrilled to the years of witty, urbane and sophisticated dialogue between Max Müller and Andrew Lang captured in Richard M. Dorson's The British Folklorists are in for a bit of a disappointment here. The arguments are more reminiscent of Child's broadside dictum, "Veritable dunghills, in which, only after a great deal of sickening grubbing, one finds a very moderate jewel." Anderson, an author, editor, journalist and unblushing folksong enthusiast, began a running fight with Waters and later with Ward, that has continued grimly (in print, at least) to this date.

Anderson's analysis was published in Overland as "A Reply to Edgar Waters." To us his criticisms may seem amusing but it is this published dialogue that has defined the character of Australian scholarship. Anderson discerned that folksong definitions based on Sharp's outline of folksong form, which was in turn based on English materials, would not work for Australian materials. Waters' emphasis on modal scales had little relation to the songs the collectors were bringing in. Unfortunately, instead of realizing that the word folksong was going to require an inclusive definition, Anderson placed the blame for Waters' confusion on the uniqueness of the Australian materials. "Mr. Waters and his fellows are collecting not folksong proper but the memories of popular song. In actual fact our songs are mostly bastard offspring from the popular ditties of the last century,"[19] that is to say, Australian songs now being collected are not folksongs. Instead of determining whether Dr. Waters held apples or oranges, Anderson decided that he was not in the orchard, which is of course the answer to a different question.

Anderson received some unexpected support from the English folksong enthusiast A. L. Lloyd, who did a review of Anderson's Colonial Ballads, in the Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Bert Lloyd had spent nine years as a youth working in migrant labor in Australia and had even recorded a couple of albums of Australian songs. Although intended as a mild criticism of Anderson's use of Charles Thatcher's songs,[20] Lloyd seemed to support Anderson's contention that Waters was not dealing with folk songs. Lloyd wrote:

> The weakest part of tradition -- and precisely the part most publicized -- is much affected by vaudeville melodies and magazine verse. Indeed, this interpenetration of popular author-made material with the stuff of oral tradition presents special problems to Australian folklorists that they are far from solving yet.[21]

It is worthwhile to note that by this time the whole question of defining the word folksong was being swept under the rug and it is also noteworthy that the entire body of Australian folksong materials had slithered under the appelation "bush." Lloyd, who should have known better, was certainly as guilty as anyone of encouraging this confusion.

Lloyd continued later in the review:

> It may be that only the debris of Australia's folksong tradition survives. Nevertheless, the many fragments of that tradition that have recently been recorded from authentic bush singers...should, when published, give us at least a notion of what Australian folksong really sounds like.[22] [my emphasis]

The users of the terms were beginning to talk past each other and the reader was now directed to hang his apple on a tomato plant.

The next year saw republication of Patterson's Old Bush Songs. Banjo had produced a second edition in 1930, adding a small amount of new material. It is generally felt that one of the reasons for this second edition was pressure from the "Waltzing Matilda" controversy that will be studied below. The new editors of Banjo's book, Douglas Stewart and Nancy Keesing, apparently felt a need to reveal to the reader their own ideas regarding material in the collection. They accept as given that folksong in Australia means of or about the colonial period. The songs themselves are valuable only as documents of literary anachronisms.[23]

The preface begins with the by now predictable disclaimer and apology for the humble crudeness of the materials. "As to the intrinsic literary merit of the old Australian songs, no one would make very high claims for anything as naive as:

> There's a bloke on board and I heard him say
> I couldn't shear a hundred sheep in a day
> But some fine day I'll show him the way
> And prove I'm a ryebuck shearer.[24]

Without bothering to connect bush songs, bush ballads and folksongs, the editor still eventually found it necessary to give some definition to the word folk.

> One wonders whether a particular work can be properly classified as a folk song; but certainly no item could be remotely considered which lacked the unmistakeable qualities of simplicity of form, the pace and pulse of being lived and a certain constant attribute of singable enjoyment.[25]

This edition however, like Patterson's earlier ones, contains no music, so the editors "singable" criteria is spurious. The authors admit, in fact they boast[26] of, searching hundreds of books and articles in order to develop and present the finest composite texts. This notion perhaps springs from Waters' inference above that the folk have somehow lost their esthetic sense and it is the folklorists' duty to revitalize the folk. This concept, sad to say, gained strong support.

So, along with the undefined term folksong and the catchall word bush, two other beliefs were added to the cognitive bundle Australian folksong scholars had to carry: texts were essentially meaningless until padded out from literary sources; and secondly, the job of the folksong scholar was to collect and learn a "vanishing" (see Lloyd above) tradition and protect that tradition's vestal virginity until some time as the folk were again ready to accept it. When Waters returned to the fray, he did little to dispell these evil humors.

Waters reviewed The Queensland Centenary Songbook in Overland in December of 1959. He felt the little songbook would have been put to better use in New South Wales or Victoria where the folksong tradition "is almost dead," than in Queensland where he found the tradition to be "alive and kicking." His pedagogic perspective again comes to the fore:

> Many of the texts are composite, put together from several different sources. This is a practice frowned upon in the best folksong editing circles but only a pedant would object to it here. I have the unhappy feeling however, that one or two of the tunes may have received some silent editing and that is something altogether to be reprehended.[27]

Reprehensible, supposedly because it obviates the folklorist's function as teacher of the pure and virginal and allows corruption into the folksong world.

A few months later an anonymous review in Overland struck much the same tone. Wattle Records had released an album by the "Fossickers" (fossick -- to prospect, search about) entitled Australian Goldrush Songs. While the reviewer did not care for the Fossickers he did feel that "the idea of the record was fine: to put back into circulation the songs of the goldfields."[28]

Then for a while, things moved to the back burner. John Manifold, a poet and musician, published a few essays, most notably his The Violin, The Banjo, and The Bones: An Essay on Bush Instruments. These were light, breezy pieces but based on poetry and fiction for their data and of little other than entertainment value. However, in 1964, he published a critical work that once again underscored the realities of Australia's geographic and intellectual isolation. Who Wrote The Ballads? (even the title is an archaism) is a well intentioned but sorry resurrection of the Ballad Wars of fifty or sixty years previous, overlaid with a faint Marxist tone. Endless arguments for communal and dance origins -- the whole range of absurdities put painfully to pasture by Louise Pound, and later Phillips Barry, many years before. Fortunately, Manifold's book has stayed an uninfluential curiosity. One shudders to contemplate the chaos and confusion, had anyone in Australia taken up Manifold's arguments.

The enormous economic success of tradition-based materials in the American entertainment market was quickly followed by similar musical developments in Australia.[29] Journals devoted to helping the young enthusiast become a successful performer were founded along the lines of the then-successful Sing Out. Some of the younger writers and singers perceived that something was amiss. The earlier claims of a dying tradition proved to be greatly overestimated. As MacKenzie had earlier discovered in Nova Scotia, the number of singers seemed to be constant.[30] There had to be other explanations for their preconceptions about folksong. In their heart of hearts they knew that antiquity and bush could not be the only criteria.

An editorial in Australian Tradition stated,

> We feel that folksongs owe their vitality to the fact that they are a part of the everyday life of ordinary folk and that a tradition that isn't going anywhere is a dying thing. Some say like American folklorist, John Greenway, that age is not vital: "A folksong is a song concerned with the interests of the folk and in complete possession of the folk.[31]

The Australian acceptance of Dr. Porter and later of Dr. Greenway as authorities in the folksong field certainly helped to clear away some of the old conceptual deadwood -- but only to replace it with new deadwood. Admittedly the Australian authorities were perverse and unclear, but the Americans only served to sidetrack the issue with the weight of their academic positions. A good case in point is the so-called Great Waltzing Matilda Controversy.

Oscar Mendelsohn, an Australian composer, author and literary detective, brought forth in 1966 an amusing and enlightening study called A Waltz With Matilda, an investigation into the actual origins of the song, considered by most Australians as their only folksong. The song had gained a measure of popularity in northern Queensland in the years just before the First World War. In 1917, Banjo Patterson published a collection of ballads entitled Saltbush Bill which included for the first time anywhere the song "Waltzing Matilda."[32] In later years many theories were put forward to explain the origin of the song but it was always believed that no matter where the tune came from, the words had originated with Banjo Patterson. Then in 1943, the curator of the museum in Sydney, M. H. Ellis, a forceful and commanding writer, made the assertion in the Bulletin that "Waltzing Matilda" was in fact a corruption of the well-known British military marching song, "The Bold Fusilier." According to Ellis, the words ran:

The Bold Fusilier

A bold fusilier cam marching down through Rochester
Bound for the wars in the low country
And he sang as he came to the Old Bull at Rochester
Who'll be a sojer o' Marlbro wi' me

Who'll be a sojer, who'll be a sojer
Who'll be a sojer beyond the wide sea
Wi' his pack on his back
And his Bessie for a sweetheart
Who'll be a sojer o' Marlbro wi' me.[33]

In 1957, A. L. Lloyd pointed out that if there was such a "well-known" song as "The Bold Fusilier" it existed in no other place in the world but in the pages of the Bulletin. It had never, ever, been collected anywhere, in any form. However simple it would have been for an Australian, or an American, to simply peruse the collections, it took a voice from England to lay the old Fusilier in his grave. Almost. In 1959, John Greenway made a record in the U.S. for Folkways Records entitled Australian Folksongs and Ballads. In his scholarly notes to the record,[34] he sends the old campaigner to the front again. "The tune must have come first, because the 18th century military song, 'The Bold Fusilier,' provides the prosody and the syntax for the chorus."[35] As recently as last spring, in spite of Mendelsohn's irrefutable identification of Harry Nathan as the author of both the words and music, the debate reappeared in the pages of Meanjin. Frederick T. Macartney wrote to announce his sudden discovery that Banjo Patterson and Christina McPherson must have used parts one and two of the "Craigielea March" as a basis for "Waltzing Matilda." Macartney claimed to have recently heard a recording of "Craigielea" which obviously uses "The Bold Fusilier" as the second part. Obviously that is, because it sounds much like "Waltzing Matilda."[36]

Mendelsohn replied in the following issue, setting the record straight but as he pointed out, all the interest and confusion in and about the song stem from its commercial value and its certain nationality. The claims and legends will be believed by those who want to believe them.[37]

While the Matilda controversy rattled about on one level, the Australian urban folksong movement, bolstered by its journals chased other will-o-the wisps. Singabout, an acknowledged copy of Sing Out, noted that Wattle Records' release, Australian Traditional Singers of Victoria, provided a booklet with the complete musical and social background of each song intended for use by collectors and "dedicated folksingers"[38]--a reaffirmation of Waters' earlier plea for high standards of performance to re-teach the folk.

A noted urban singer of traditional material, Miss Glen Tomassetti, apparently felt some unease in theoretic discussion which prompted her to write a short article, "Some Remarks About Folksinging." Miss Tomassetti was mostly concerned about the dichotomy obvious to persons defining themselves as traditional folksingers and yet singing more contemporary material. She chose a variant of Anderson's 1950's position that the word folksong has little or no meaning in Australia:

> Folksongs defy definition because the people who make songs, the circumstances which inspire them, the conditions which favor their survival, or revival, the subject matter, the kind of language are all extremely various.[39]

In the same issue, Dr. Ian Turner, professor of history in Melbourne, wrote a superficial survey of Australian folklore studies. The article was justifiably short, there being little to survey. Turner did have some good ideas towards bringing order to chaos. He cited the basic need for a central archives and for co-operation, not hostility, between researchers. Continuing to emphasize the artifact, he unfortunately lost all sight of the folk. His summation still seems to call from thirty or forty years before:

> The significance of folklore studies lies not merely in recording and classification of material from the past, but in the living growth of a tradition. Folklore can ensure that the material is available -- after that it is up to the folk to make of it what they will.[40]

Anderson continued his cause in 1962 with the second edition of his Colonial Ballads. His last chapter is an essay titled "Folksong in Australia." He provides here a convenient summation of the battle, free from the flash and the noise. Russell Ward is, perhaps rightly, characterized as still thrashing about in fields full of folk, watching for an act of communal creation. For Ward, what the folk accept must be folksongs.[41] Manifold is seen searching for analogues to British materials. Bush songs based on English songs are folksongs, if they are anonymous.[42]

Anderson himself retains his old view that bush songs are not folksongs since their origins can be more or less ascertained.

The word folksong apparently denotes to Anderson and the others a certain necessary ethnocentric myopia. All the collections, all the articles and all the enmity refer to a body of materials almost singularly unique to Australia. I for one, had assumed that the songs that had brought Cecil Sharp scurrying to these shores had withered in the phthisic Australian climate. There remains in all the available published material to 1965, not so much as a hint that the greater body of British balladry might exist there. Then a sign! In an offhand remark to her review of John Manifold's The Penguin Australian Songbook, Maryjean Officer lamented that Manifold had not seen fit to include a few of the old favorites such as "Barbara Allen" or "The Golden Vanity" -- songs current in Australia, according to her, for well over a hundred years. "It is a pity these songs...are not yet deemed part of our heritage. The Americans take a broader view."[43]

With reflection, it will be observed that this situation is the direct result of the feelings of cultural inferiority mentioned at the start of this paper. Not that the British ballads themselves have any greater intrinsic value than any other song in the milieu, important here is the manner in which folksong scholars and collectors blanked Britain from their minds, and as a consequence, saw and heard only what they preconceived that they would see and hear. How many dark ships in the forest?

As the years went by, tempers mellowed and a friendly interchange began. John Meredith, of Bush Music Club fame, requested Hugh Anderson to assist him in editing his collections for publication. Meredith was among the first to use a recording machine for field collecting in Australia and had spent every free moment collecting with an ever-increasing sophistication of field technique. His collection numbered over a thousand items. The major problem was how to organize and present the material and by the most fortuitous bit of good sense, they decided to arrange the forthcoming book Folksongs of Australia (1968) by singer! Oh, frabjus day. The book should have been more correctly titled Some Older Traditional Singers of New South Wales but it marks such a serendipitous happening that one hesitates to quibble.[44]

Meredith and Anderson selected by personal choice eighty-two informants for the book and tried to give what they viewed as a representative sample of each singer's repertoire. Even with their pro-Australian bias, they discovered as Herbert Halpert had many years before them,[45] that the singer often appreciated the very doggerel scorned by the collector. Such gems as "Dogs Concert (p. 160)," and "Mary's Ass (p. 158)," and similar pieces make us realize how restrictive the previous scholars had made the study. The book however, does have its problems. Both Anderson and Meredith seem largely unaware of the published collections of England and America. For Meredith, the man with the machine, this is perhaps excusable; but for Anderson, a glance at his own publications will show that it is not. The notes are warm, cordial sketches of the recording location coupled with sympathetic, short biographies of the singers, the emphasis being on where and how the singer learned the song. Meredith's informant data are helpful but, unlike Halpert above, he neglected to ask what we view as the proper questions. For informant data he wanted age, sex, place and date of birth, residence, family history and then a complete rundown on how the song was learned and finally, date and place of recording. Meredith also felt that the folksong was disappearing and must be gathered "before it is too late."[46]

And so here we have them, still unsure as to what it is they are all concerned about. For what it may be worth, Meredith defines folksong as "one composed to describe some happening or some aspect of the life of the singer and written purely for the purpose of self-expression or commemoration."[47]

They all seem to recognize what it is they are dealing with but they are unable to describe it. The musty poking about of Anderson and Ward in old song books will not provide the answer, nor will the pedagogy of Manifold and Waters help either. What needs to be done is to cast aside all the labels and prescriptive devices and take Meredith's work that one step further and view the song-singing phenomena as a piece of culture and then determine where that piece fits in the Australian cultural patterns.

In 1964, Eric Wolf accused American anthropologists of neglecting the individual artist and his relation to his audience, in favor of studying technique and artifact. "Americans have deserted the problem of creativity for the more mechanical study of the products of creativity."[48]

It seems that finally the Australians have caught up to our problems.

NOTES

1. Archer Taylor, JAF XLV (1932), p. 271.
2. Manning Clark, 1969, p. 201.
3. Russell Ward, 1963, p. 40.
4. Werner Friederich, 1967, p. 95. See also The Webb's Australian Diary 1898, ed. A. G. Austin. Melbourne: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1965.
5. See Craig MacGregor's People, Politics & Pop: Australia in the '60's. Sydney, 1968.
6. See Sidney Rosenberg's"Black Sheep and Golden Fleece." Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1954.
7. John Pengwerne Matthews, 1962, Chapter One.
8. Douglas Stewart and Nancy Keesing, 1957, pp. i-xix.
9. John Meredith and Hugh Anderson, 1968, p. 16. The influence of left-wing political activity in fostering this "recognition" can not be discounted but remains to be investigated. See Richard A. Reuss' "American Folklore and Left-Wing Politics 1927-1957" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Indiana University, 1971), for a lucid discussion of some analogous American developments.
10. The lagerphone is a stick covered with beer bottle caps. The bush bass is a stick, string and tea tin affair. See John Manifold's The Violin, the Banjo and the Bones. Ferntree Gully, 1957.
11. Meredith and Anderson, p. 16.
12. Singabout, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 9.
13. Meredith and Anderson, p. 16.
14. Western Folklore, October, 1955, p. 274.

15. op. cit., p. 275.
16. Ibid., pp. 276-7. Porter in his article provides a glossary and some comparison with earlier texts. The version given here should not be accepted as definitive.
17. John Greenway, Notes to Australian Folksongs and Ballads. New York, 1959, p. 1.
18. Overland, February, 1959, p. 23.
19. Overland, July, 1956, p. 28.
20. Thatcher was a goldfields entertainer and song writer.
21. Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Vol. VIII, No. 1, p. 50.
22. Ibid.
23. Stewart and Keesing, p. vii.
24. Ibid., p. viii.
25. Ibid., p. xix.
26. Ibid., p. xviii.
27. Overland, December, 1959, p. 36.
28. Overland, August, 1960, p. 40.
29. See, for example, John S. Patterson's "The Folksong Revival and Some Sources of the Popular Image of the Folksinger 1920-1963." Unpublished M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1963.
30. D. K. Wilgus, 1959, p. 338.
31. Australian Tradition, July 1964, p. 2.
32. Mendelsohn, 1966, p. 70.
33. Ibid., pp. 22-23.
34. John Greenway, 1961, p. 160.
35. Greenway, 1959, p. 6.
36. Meanjin, January 1970, p. 143.
37. Meanjin, March 1970, p. 377.
38. Singabout, October 1964, p. 15.
39. Australian Tradition, June 1966, p. 7.
40. Ibid., p. 21.
41. Anderson, 1962, p. 247. This book was reissued in the U.S. in 1970 by Oak Publishers with the title The Story of Australian Folksong, but with little other change.
42. Ibid., p. 253.
43. Overland, March 1965, p. 52.
44. Meredith and Anderson, pp. 5-20.
45. Wilgus, p. 340.
46. Meredith and Anderson, p. 20.
47. Ibid., p. 8.
48. Eric Wolf, 1964, p. 48.

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