



Who Owns Culture? The David Buchan Lecture 2016

In the Internet age, culture moves quickly, with stories, news, jokes, songs, and music being made available worldwide within minutes of their creation. But who owns culture? Whose right is it to broadcast it? Who, if anyone, can or should make profit from it? These and other questions will be addressed in this year's David Buchan Lecture, on 10 November at the King's College Conference Centre, given by Professor Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, president of the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF), former chair of UNESCO's Icelandic Commission, and Professor of Ethnology, Folklore, and Museum Studies at the University of Iceland. With a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, he has gone on to publish widely on folklore, intangible cultural heritage, heritage politics, cultural property, and copyright in traditional knowledge.

The talk grapples with representations of creative agency – such as authorship and tradition – that are endowed with the



force of law through the copyright regime and Hafstein asks complicated questions about tradition: 'Should we copyright culture? How can one compose a one-hundred-year-old traditional lullaby? Who owns Cinderella? And what would the

Brothers Grimm say?' And while we may not answer all these questions, the talk will explore current thinking about creativity and agency in contemporary culture.

Professor Hafstein's aim is 'to understand the dichotomies that shape understandings of creativity so that we will be better placed to undermine them, to liberate our imagination from their powerful hold, and to imagine creativity in alternative terms.'

In a digital age, such acts of liberation and imagination are badly needed; creativity is still enclosed in categories

from another era and bogged down by the weight of nineteenth-century romantic ideals about the author.

Thomas A. McKean

AFS/ISFNR Joint Meeting in Miami

The Elphinstone Institute was well represented at the October 2016 joint meeting of the American Folklore Society (AFS) and the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) in Miami, Florida. We sent four delegates: Thomas McKean, Nicolas Le Bigre, Sheila Young, and Athanasios Barmpalexis, and we were lucky to be joined by former student Maia Daniel.

Director Thomas McKean's paper, 'Oil Wives', discussed the lives and narratives of the spouses of oil workers in Scotland, and the coping strategies that various families create to deal with the challenging working schedules of oil workers. Nicolas Le Bigre's paper was entitled "I Was Waiting and It Was June and the Warmth Never Came": Immigrant Reflections on Life in North-East Scotland', and discussed the recent 'Brexit' referendum and immigrants' perspectives on integration. Sakis Barmpalexis's paper, 'People, Land, Spirit: Contemporary Shamans in Modern Scotland', considered different academic definitions of shamanism and looked at contemporary shamans in Scotland. Sheila Young's paper was called "Networks of Love": From Community to Competition in Women's Prenuptial Rituals in Northern Scotland', and it examined elements of cooperation and competition in contemporary Scottish hen nights. Sheila also participated in a book workshop with the Folklore Studies in a Multicultural World programme, in which she presented parts of a manuscript for her upcoming monograph.

Finally, we are proud to announce that Maia Daniel, who

completed her MLitt in September, is the new co-convenor of the American Folklore Society's Folk Narrative Section. AFS/ISFNR was a wonderful opportunity to present new research, to see old friends and meet new ones, and to do so in the palm-tree-dotted environment of warm, sunny Miami.

Nicolas Le Bigre



l to r: Thomas McKean, Maia Daniel, Sheila Young, Athanasios Barmpalexis, and Nicolas Le Bigre



From the Director

This year sees the launch of our revamped MLitt programme. We've foregrounded the practical training so that students hit the ground running, taking part in and leading fieldwork from the third week of the course. Alongside this are workshops on ethics and responsibilities, fieldwork processing, indexing, and transcription, and writing ethnographic fieldnotes. This provides them with the diverse tools needed to engage with being folklorists from the start. On this year's Field School, students were thus able to take the lead in a number of fieldwork situations. The training is reinforced through a practical exam, a ten-minute, student-led interview which they then process according to the protocols they've learned. We've also enhanced the conceptual side of the course, supplementing the content-based lectures with seminars on more abstract perspectives on cultural themes such as Heritage and Authenticity, Decoration and Memorialization, and Objects, Making, and Process. Added to the growing Public Engagement stream in the second semester, we hope the new MLitt will give students a more rounded experience to better prepare them for the diversity of opportunities available for ethnologists and folklorists.

We're pleased to welcome a new and varied MLitt class this year. Ania Trepczyk, Elizabeth Kent, Ryo Yamasaki, Vera Nikitina, Cromar Collie, and Anna Joy Thigpen Hunt have already made a great contribution to the life of the Institute and to the archives; we look forward to working with them through the year and seeing what interesting dissertation topics they pursue.

In mid-October, four of us, Athanasios Barmplexis, Nicolas Le Bigre, Sheila Young, and I, attended the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Miami. Once again, Institute representatives formed one of the largest delegation from a single European institution, a testament to the good work that our students do.

After AFS, I went on to give a talk on Hallowe'en and its origins to a group of Aberdeen alumni in San Francisco, graciously hosted by Aberdeen alumna, Dr Anna Ewins. We talked about the old Celtic festival of Samhainn and how,

while many think of our contemporary Scottish Hallowe'en as an American import, it is, in fact, a re-importation of older customs that began life in Scotland and Ireland in the first place. After that, I gave some talks at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, hosted by Dr Sarah Strauss of the anthropology department. Subjects included negotiating tradition at the Burning of the Clavie, as well as my work with boatbuilding and knowing by doing, the occupational lore of women in the oil industry, Scottish Traveller memories, and, of course, North-East ballad, song, and narrative traditions. In between the talks, I was interviewed, and sang, for Wyoming public radio and performed with old and new friends at the closing concert of the university's 'Earth, Wind, and Water' conference.

Looking forward to next year, we'll be hosting a symposium on the academic legacies of Bill Nicolaisen in July 2017. The three day event will cover the main folklore genres Bill studied – names, narrative and the ballad – bringing together senior scholars who were directly influenced by him and younger scholars whose work builds on his diverse contributions to the field. As part of our tribute, progress is being made on the cataloguing and installation of the Nicolaisen Library, which will be integrated with the David Buchan Library to create an outstanding resource for ethnologists and folklorists, as well as names scholars.

Congratulations to our recent MLitt completions, Ali Anwar III, Casey Rennie, Maia Daniel, and Tallen Sloane, a great crop of students with an interesting diversity of work on digital museums, Aberdeen Football Club supporters' culture, the contemporary application of storytelling, and Jewish women's experiences in the North-East. Congratulations, too, to Dr Pat Ballantyne for achieving her PhD, a fascinating study of the relationship between Scottish traditional dance and the regulated versions promoted by organizations such as the Board of Highland Dance, and to Catriona Moore for completing her MLitt, with a dissertation on Nigerian foodways.

Finally, we look forward to the upcoming David Buchan Lecture and a fascinating array of public lectures, films, and visiting scholars in the Spring.

Thomas A. McKean



Isle of Eigg, Field School 2016



*Catriona Moore, Thomas A. McKean, Pat Ballantyne
Graduation, June 2016*

AHRC Memory Workshops

Motivated by a desire to create opportunities for North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo) scholars to develop their research and writing projects between events, we are running a series of workshops to encourage deep thinking and interaction on topics related to fiddling, piping, dancing, and other musical traditions around the North Atlantic. We wanted to encourage people to think outside the box. Could we spark new ideas by introducing NAFCo participants to scholarship that they might never have considered before?

The three workshops are conceived around the concept of memory, a topic broadly relevant to every NAFCo scholar, but they draw on the work of scholars from different disciplines to talk about how their work deals with memory. The first workshop, 9–10 June 2016, focused on how the brain remembers, with a keynote talk from cognitive psychologist, Professor David Rubin (Duke University). In April 2017, we'll tackle digital humanities with innovative programmer and folklorist, Professor Timothy Tangherlini (UCLA), and finally how the body remembers – somatic learning – led by performance studies scholar, Anna Birch of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (to be held at Cape Breton University in October 2017).

Rubin's keynote speech was live-streamed and scheduled so that it could be watched simultaneously in both North America and the UK (and is archived on the NAFCo website, as well). The talk was followed by three papers by NAFCo scholars on memory in their own research. These raised questions, issues, and narratives around the topic for the next day's discussion. We ended the first day with a ceilidh at the Blue Lamp featuring fiddling from the North-East of Scotland, led by Paul Anderson, and showcasing diverse traditions from other North Atlantic traditions, as well.

Day two began with small group discussions about the ceilidh, addressing questions regarding memory generated by workshop facilitators in consultation with Professor Rubin. We concluded discussions with a session during which everyone had a chance to speak briefly about personal or scholarly experiences with memory and get group feedback. Since one of NAFCo's principles is that it include both scholars and performers, we wanted to ensure there was time to make music and to dance, as well as to talk about them, so in the third session, participants were invited to perform something and to discuss their choices. The workshop closed with a discussion about future directions.

It takes time, of course, for new ideas and approaches to be absorbed, so we don't yet know what impact the workshop has had or will have. If nothing else, there is great value in bringing together like-minded scholars and performers from both sides of the Atlantic on a regular basis and these workshops facilitate that, since the main NAFCo events are generally two to four years apart. We look forward to reconnecting with friends and colleagues at the second workshop in Aberdeen, 27–28 April 2017.

Heather Sparling



Paul Anderson leading the ceilidh at the Blue Lamp

Field School

In early September, we at the Elphinstone Institute – new MLitt students, PhD candidates, and staff members – packed into a mini-bus and wended our way from Aberdeen to the Isle of Eigg and back again. We scheduled carefully chosen stops where students would encounter people, places, and traditions that might help them better understand what the study of Ethnology and Folklore is really about. In the evenings, we organised seminars based on readings and the day's activities, as well as assignments, such as when the students split into groups and made Cullen Skink following two different oral recipes. Each day a different student was responsible for photos, and all students were asked to take comprehensive field notes.

Throughout the field school (see pic opposite), key people spoke about their lives and their work, and we must thank Anne Greig for singing at Easter Aquhorthies Stone Circle, George Fullerton of Scott the Butcher for talking about making haggis, Alan Barron for guiding us round Nairn's fishertown, Rachel

Chisholm for leading us round *Am Fasgadh* at the Highland Folk Museum, Adrian Shine for discussing the creation of the Loch Ness Centre, Camille Dressler for showing us the Cleadale Crofting Museum on Eigg, Gabe McVarish for talking to us about playing fiddle and co-owning the Laig Bay Brewing Company, and Maggie Fyfe, for agreeing to be interviewed by the students about the community buy-out of Eigg.

MLitt student Ryo Yamasaki writes that the work done on the field school allowed the students 'to actually touch and feel the complex, intricate, and unpredictable activities of the people on the ground in order to better understand their worldviews'. Ryo's classmate Anna Joy Thigpen Hunt adds, if 'the field school had a pulse, and if those heartbeats were words, then ours pumped a steady rhythm of, "gratitude, inspiration, curiosity, anticipation"'. We're glad that the field school has become such an integral part of the MLitt programme, and we look forward to further excursions with the students in 2017.

Nicolas Le Bigre

What's On: Lectures, Film Series, and Other Events

Events start at 7:30, unless otherwise noted.

- 27 September 2016 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)
Bairns, Scweel, and Local Learning: Scots
Language and Scottish Studies at Banff Academy
Jamie Fairbairn
- 4 October 2016 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)
St Kilda: The Edge of the World, and **Return to
the Edge of the World**
- 25 October 2016 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)
Witch Belief in Scottish Coastal Communities
Lizanne Henderson
- 1 November 2016 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)
Brink of Survival
- 10 November 2016 • **TALK**
The David Buchan Lecture
King's College Conference Centre, 6:30pm
Copyrighting Tradition in the Internet Age:
Creativity, Authorship and Folklore
Valdimar Tr. Hafstein
University of Iceland, President of the Soci t 
Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore
- 22 November 2016 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)
Collective Compositions
with Simon Gall
- 29 November 2016 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)
#10aberdeenstories: The Role of Narratives in
Third-Sector Knowledge Sharing
Simon Burnett
- 31 January 2017 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)
Doric and Aa That
Robert Lovie
- 7 February 2017 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)
Indian Ocean Memories: African Migrants
with film-maker Dr Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya
- 28 February 2017 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)
Storytelling without Sound: Traditional Deaf
Motifs and Performance in British Sign Language
Storytelling
Ella Leith
- 7 March 2017 • **FILM** (MacRobert 051)
A Kabul Music Diary
with film-maker John Baily
- 28 March 2017 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)
From Production to Marketing: Community and
Culture in the Post-War Whisky Industry
Richard Bennett
- 25 April 2017 • **TALK** (MacRobert 051)
Tradition and Innovation at Cambus O'May
Cheesemaker
Ian Wilson (TBC)

FEECA 2016

Following last year's 'Newer Researchers in Folklore' meeting at the Warburg Institute in London, I awaited this year's FEECA conference at the University of Aberdeen with much anticipation. Co-sponsored by The Folklore Society, the conference was held over three days, and brought together graduate, postgraduate, and early-career researchers in the fields of Folklore, Ethnology, and Ethnomusicology, with the aims of strengthening relations between scholars and institutions in the UK and internationally.

The theme of the conference was 'A Fieldworker's Vision: Researching the Present', drawing on the article, 'A Gleaner's Vision', by W. F. H Nicolaisen, in which he critiques the early folklorists' preoccupation with salvage, and their insistence that folklore should be understood as something inherently of the past. Instead, he argues for a broader approach aimed at the present, encouraging folklorists to seek out and explore the customs and practices which surround them. As a scholar concerned predominantly with understanding contemporary traditions – I am currently looking at girls' Carnival Morris as an aspect of 21st-century folk dance – the words of Nicolaisen were highly resonant. Indeed, the breadth and scope of the engaging presentations given across the weekend were testament to the real interest shown by newer researchers in dealing with the folklore of today.

The organising team at the Elphinstone Institute: Carley Williams, Athanasios Barmpalexis, and Roderick Nicol, ensured that everybody was kept well fed and watered and fostered a friendly and supportive environment for the airing and discussion of emergent ideas and themes. Evening excursions to visit Aberdeenshire Castles (Crathes, see pic below, and Dunnottar) and a boat tour of Aberdeen Harbour provided a counterpoint to all the scholarly labour, offering a well-deserved chance to relax and to take in some of the region's stunning scenery.

This was a very successful conference and a very invigorating and enjoyable

way to meet and exchange ideas with potential colleagues of the future. Many thanks to all involved.

Lucy Wright



Postscript

The Institute relies on outside financial support to make many of its activities possible. If you would like to help us in this way, or join the Friends of the Elphinstone Institute, volunteer, or have suggestions, please contact the Administrator.

Who's Who at the Institute

Staff

- Dr Thomas A. McKean**, Director, *Ethnology and Folklore, ballads, custom and belief, Gaelic tradition, J. M. Carpenter Project*
- Dr Frances Wilkins**, Lecturer, *Ethnomusicology and Ethnology, sacred singing in coastal communities, Scottish fiddle traditions in northern Canada*
- Professor Emeritus Ian Russell**, *Ethnology, Folklore, and Ethnomusicology, oral traditions, including singing, music-making, drama and speech*
- Dr Colin Milton**, Associate Director, Hon., *Scottish literature and Folklore, especially of the North-East*
- Nicolas Le Bigre**, Teaching Fellow
- Alison Sharman**, Administrator

Patron

Very Rev. Iain Torrance, Pro-Chancellor

Honorary Research Fellows

- Dr David Atkinson**, *J. M. Carpenter Project*
- Dr Pat Ballantyne**, *Scottish step-dance traditions*

Dr Julia C. Bishop, *J. M. Carpenter Project*

Dr Irene Watt, *lullabies and project work*

Research Students

- Athanasios (Sakis) Barmpalexis**, PhD student, *shamanism in Scotland*
- Kristin Borgehed**, PhD student, North Studentship, *an ethnographic study of northern cultural performance*
- Les Donaldson**, PhD student, *The Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen*
- Ronnie Gibson**, PhD student, *the relationships between contemporary and eighteenth-century fiddle traditions*
- Bee Kerr**, PhD student, *women's domestic work in the twentieth century*
- Nicolas Le Bigre**, PhD student, Margaret Jones Studentship, *narratives of immigrant experience, archives*
- Hazel Macfarlane**, PhD student, *retirement and volunteering in museum contexts*
- M aire N  Bhaoill**, PhD student, *traditional singing among children in Ireland*

Roderick Nicol, PhD student, *legends and mythology of Piper Alpha*

Lorna Summers, PhD student, *boatbuilding on the Moray coast*

Carley Williams, PhD student, *safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Scotland*

Sheila Young, PhD student, *women's pre-nuptial rituals in northern Scotland*

Research Associates

Paul Anderson, *North-East fiddle styles and repertoires*

Sheena Blackhall, *creative writing in Scots*

Dr Elaine Bradtke, *J. M. Carpenter Project*

Dr Katherine Campbell, *Scots fiddle, instrumental and song traditions*

Evelyn Hood, *Scottish traditions of dance*

Dr David Northcroft, *education in the North-East*

Dr Robert Young Walser, *maritime musical traditions, J. M. Carpenter Project*

Les Wheeler, *Scots language, education*