

Preface

It is not uncommon to find brief glossaries towards the end of classical folklore monographs and folktale collections. While the editors and compilers of these folklore works included these glossaries for their own purposes and for the benefit of their readers, resourceful lexicographers have also found them worthy of their attention as sources of otherwise hard-to-come-by linguistic data. It is high time for folklorists to return the complement and use the works of lexicographers as sources in ways these authors did not originally imagine. And so it is that this book attempts to focus on the phenomenon of dictionaries as a source of folklore data, and to present findings and raise questions as to the nature of folkloric data present in those dictionaries. The work is structured as follows. An introduction discusses the topic of folklore and dictionaries in a variety of cultures. These topics include the various locations of folklore data in dictionary entries (and appendices), the different forms of dictionaries, how the nature of monolingual and bilingual (or multilingual) dictionaries may affect the data. The central question raised in the introduction is: *What is the nature of the folklore data we find in dictionaries?* There then follow three sections, each three chapters in length dealing with cases studies, but with a focus also on wider issues.

All of the writers in the first section take a diachronic view, looking not just at specific dictionaries, but also at their precursors, their planning, and their preparation of dictionaries, as well as their afterlife, just as much as the dictionaries themselves. In such a perspective, cases where folklore has been a key feature in the compilation of a dictionary are viewed as part of a broader metacultural and lexicographical tradition. The section's opening chapter by Diarmuid Ó Giolláin discusses a substantial dictionary published in 1904. Authored by the Rev. Patrick Dinneen, the work's object language was Irish Gaelic, its metalanguage English. The volume was published simultaneously by the Irish Texts Society in Dublin and by the firm of David Nutt in London. The choice of Nutt's as a house might be taken as a sign of the folklore-rich nature of this dictionary, as Alfred Trübner Nutt, the only surviving son of the firm's founder, was both a Celtic scholar and a former President of the Folklore Society. Ó Giolláin begins his chapter with a discussion of the position of Irish Gaelic and the history of bilingual lexicography focused upon it, before leading up to

Dinneen's dictionary. And in addition to discussing the kind of material found within the dictionary, this chapter also touches on the folklore of dictionaries (in this case, the relations of Gerard Manley Hopkins and his student informants), and on the second life of dictionaries, i.e. not only their use in their primary function by those seeking folklore data, but also their being drawn upon by creative writers as inspiration, albeit sometimes as inspiration for parodies. To be sure, dictionaries, along with other institutions and monuments, generate their own folklore, and they may be used in ways their creators did not foresee.

In the section's second chapter, Timothy Tangherlini speaks about Henning Frederik Feilberg's dictionary of Danish as spoken in Jutland, a variety that was explicitly described as being *almuesmal* ['folk speech']. Like Ó Giolláin, Tangherlini takes a diachronic view of his chosen dictionary, which encompasses its predecessors, in this case covering the long line of Danish dictionaries that precede Feilberg from Peder Syv in the seventeenth century onwards (Syv was also a collector of ballads), as well as covering Feilberg's successors, and the future of Jutlandic dialect study. Feilberg relied on a network of contributors to compile his dictionary, mostly teachers and priests in the Jutland countryside, but also one of the greatest of nineteenth-century European folklorists, Evald Tang Kristensen. Tangherlini shows us how for one entry Feilberg draws on fifteen records from Kristensen's collection. Such a methodology means his dictionary inevitably has a composite character, and a degree of patchiness corresponding to holes in his network.

While the first two chapters of this section deal with clergyman-lexicographers, the closing chapter by Jeremy Harte features a lexicographer of quite a different cloth, and one who was not afraid of getting his hands dirty with fieldwork, John Sampson. While acknowledging the previous lexicographical work of Charles Leland, Bath Smart, and Henry Crofton, much of Harte's focus is on the interactions between Sampson and his gypsy companions during which the linguistic data emerged that the dictionary would draw upon. The fieldwork-background to dictionaries and such moments of knowledge-creation are often covered up by lexicographers, though often there is more of this visible in those dictionaries which are chiefly reliant upon oral data than there is in, for example, Academy Dictionaries with their reliance on literary monuments as source material. Harte also illustrates one of the potential pitfalls present at the intersection of folklore and lexicography. Sampson often recorded folktales, from which he would abstract words to use as linguistic evidence. If we attempted to construct a Romany worldview on the basis of such material,

we would come up with something unrepresentative and “disconcertingly magical”.

The second section of this book presents case studies of some dictionaries that are particularly rich in folklore data. The first chapter takes up Vuk Karadžić, another of the key nineteenth-century folklorists of Europe. As well as compiling anthologies of folk verse and folk prose, Vuk was a lexicographer. His trilingual dictionary, in which German and Latin gloss the Serbian words, is full of both folkloric and folklife information according to Zoja Karanović and Jasmina Dražić. For example, there are more narratives in the pages of the dictionary than in Karadžić’s first collection of folktales. Karanović and Dražić’s chapter also leads us to consider the losses and gains when a dictionary is published in more than one edition. In Karadžić’s case, the second edition was forced to omit all the obscene words that had been documented in the first, but on the other hand, as a result of subsequent fieldwork, new entries had been added and existing entries had been expanded.

The *Lexicon Frisicum* of Joost Hildes Halbertsma is one of the most remarkable of nineteenth-century dictionaries. It is unfinished, concluding in the middle of the letter “F”, although it does include definitions of some words from later on in the alphabet thanks to its unusual principles of organisation. It documents the minority Frisian language (in all of its varieties and periods!) and takes Latin as its metalanguage. One of the benefits of using Latin was that it allowed the compiler to gloss sexual meanings in a forthright way that might not have been possible in a more widely understood language. The Latin metalanguage is interlarded by fragments in Dutch, English, French, and other languages. Anne Dykstra shows how Halbertsma, who was also a folklorist of a kind, thought that mythology and linguistics were disciplines that should be practiced in combination. His interest in comparative religion led him to compare the Frisian water-lily with the Egyptian (and Indian) lotus. Dykstra also documents the intellectual background to Halbertsma’s period – the exciting early years following the acceptance of the Indo-European premise, and the days of Romantic Nationalism. In Halbertsma’s case these combined in his seeking to prove in the pages of the dictionary that Frisian was the origin of English.

Haralampos Passalis’s chapter also describes the intellectual climate in which dictionaries were created – in his case, the Hellenic thesis, i.e. the idea that there was a tight, ethnic connection between ancient and modern Greek speakers. By contrast to the preceding two chapters which take a single monumental dictionary as their focus, this, the final chapter of this

section, discusses a series of Greek glossaries dating from the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century in which the folklore element plays an important role. The glossaries, often dealing with non-standard Greek, but written in standard (indeed, purist) Greek, attempted to link these marginal communities (e.g. in what is now Turkey) to their ancient Hellenic heritage, with the encouragement of philological societies, who promoted the linguistic work of enthusiastic amateurs with a series of competitions. Like so many of our subjects of interest, including Dinneen, Feilberg, Halbertsma, and Parish, one of the key participants in this trend, P. Papazafiroopoulos was also a man of the cloth. This played an important role in his research in that he keenly documented customs and beliefs that were “incongruent with the official recognized religious system”, including verbal charms, in the pages of his dictionary.

The writers in the third and closing section also deal with case studies, but do so with more of a focus on the methodological questions that arise both in the compilation and in the consultation of dictionaries. Lise Winer, the author of the first chapter in this section, draws upon her own years of fieldwork for and editing of the *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* to give voice to her firsthand experience in dictionary-making and the choices it inevitably involves. One of the interesting issues she touches on is that of how to present difficult information. For example, if a plant was often used in popular medicine (and indeed continues to be used) but is now thought by scientists to be harmful, should the lexicographer simply record the belief and practice as cultural data, or should information about the harmfulness of the practice be added to the definition and feature in the citations? Winer also raises another highly relevant question, concerning how the cultural data in the dictionary might be made more accessible. She discusses both sides of the question – the tagging that the dictionary-makers might add, and the retrieval strategies that dictionary-users might follow.

In the middle chapter of this third section, Jonathan Roper writes about a series of dictionaries published at the close of the nineteenth century by the English Dialect Society. Nowadays these glossaries have been eclipsed by the *English Dialect Dictionary*, the monumental work they were intended to both pave the way for and serve as source material for. They are rich in folklore material, but a good portion of this never made it to the *EDD* itself, remaining in their expansive definitions, their generous use of illustrative quotations, and their appendices (on occasion these include oral texts of some length). Roper also looks at the biographical background of a selected number of the Society’s volunteer lexicographers

and examines how this impacted upon the material they documented. He suggests that it was a prior interest in local vernacular speech that was to lead many of these people into the study of local vernacular culture.

The final chapter in this section, and in the book as a whole, is an autobiographical one written by Philip Hiscock. His account encompasses the celebrated *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, as well as humbler “vernacular lexicons” of Newfoundland English. It also takes up the topic of how to handle words with local “celebrity”, as found in words used as shibboleths or as local emblems. The fact these words may be more for display than everyday use can lead some linguists to ignoring them. Hiscock goes on to reflect on questions of readership when recalling the ways his Newfoundland students reacted to encountering the dictionary as part of his university classes on local culture. And he also pointedly and pungently brings up the “secondhand” character of attempting to do ethnography via dictionaries, a notion he expresses by a striking comparison to smoking leftover tobacco.

Altogether the book covers two centuries of dictionaries from a variety of locations, and there is much more that might have been addressed, even within that space and time. There were, for instance, many other dictionaries created during this period that one might look at, whether they be those created by great folklorists including the Brothers Grimm or Vladimir Dahl or Antoni Maria Alcover, or whether they be dictionaries whose folklore content has arisen more inadvertently. It goes without saying that dictionaries are also produced on languages outside Europe and North America. In the autumn of 2018 it happened that two-thirds of the students in my usual Tartu class on dictionaries and folklore were from north-east India; their choices of lexicons and word-lists to study introduced me to new lexicographical situations. Dictionaries such as those resulting from cross-cultural contact between Europeans and non-Europeans should also prove a fascinating topic of research for those interested in folklore and its documentation. In terms of other developments, folklorists worldwide might also turn their attention forms closely allied to dictionaries, such as grammars and phrase-books, and indeed to the vast data produced by linguistic surveys (especially dialect surveys and dialect atlases). Volumes of *Mundartentexten* [‘dialect texts’], might also be a focus of future research. Linguistic researchers often found it advisable to elicit dialect by having their informants talk about local culture, a subject they were clearly more masters of than the researchers were: it put them at their ease, and gave them a topic for conversation. And this strategy may turn out to have also been a collateral method of folklore-documentation.

The contributions in this book establish that dictionaries can be stores of folkloric and ethnographic data, data which may be poorly witnessed or even absent in conventional sources; at the same time the contributions also raise questions as to the representativity, the reliability, and the completeness of such data. These concerns are not sufficient reason to abandon this source of data, but rather arguments for us to be shrewd in our use of it. If the present book as a whole can be said to have an argument, it is a twofold one: first that dictionaries as sources of folkloric and ethnographic data should no longer be overlooked, and second that when they are used, they should be used critically. The whole question of how to fit lexicographic data together with other data, especially as supplementary, confirmatory, or disconfirmatory material, is one that will continue to require pondering over. Despite its own imperfections and incompleteness, this book represents the first attempt to address the topic of dictionaries as folklore sources comparatively, and will have succeeded if it manages to broaden local discussions and to guide further investigation on this important and little-addressed topic.

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*Jonathan Roper
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