

# Geoffrey Keating, William Thoms, Raymond Williams, and the Terminology of Folklore: “*Béaloideas*” as a “Keyword”

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Although the Irish word “*béaloideas*”<sup>1</sup> may be translated simply as “folklore,” a closer examination of the word’s history reveals underlying differences in the conceptions of folklore in Irish and English contexts. A parallel glance at the history of the English word “folklore” and the corresponding Welsh term “*llên gwerin*” shows that the terminologies reflect the founding ideologies of academic disciplines as they developed in their respective geographic regions. *Béaloideas* (literally “oral education”) suggests a more specific subject matter than that which is currently encompassed by the term “folklore,” a term whose definition has been revised and expanded in numerous recent articles representing Anglo-American folklore scholarship. Some even suggest the complete replacement of the word folklore with a broader, more contemporary term in order to avoid the social class implications of “folk.” Nevertheless, the term remains widely used in English as well as in other languages. Examples include the French *le folklore* (Robert 1989) and the Hungarian *folklór* and *folklorisztika* (Országh 1990). In Irish, the term “*béaloideas*” not only names the data and its study but also defines the data’s traditional parameters: oral (as opposed to material) traditions. The uniquely Irish implications of *béaloideas* are best understood in conjunction with a deeper analysis of the meaning of the English terms “folklore” and “the folk.”

Although not included in the first edition, the word “folk” was added to the 1983 edition of Raymond Williams’s *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Its presence suggests the importance of understanding the various uses of “folk”—referring to the people themselves, their culture, the academic discipline, and related artistic, musical, literary, and museological movements—as fundamental cultural concepts. The book as a whole suggests that words themselves are not random linguistic products but culturally situated entities embodying centuries of semantic change.

Keywords may influence the actions or social and intellectual issues they describe, as much as the described actions and issues affect the meaning of the words. As Williams states, "Many of these issues, I found, could not really be thought through, and some of them, I believe, cannot even be focused, unless we are conscious of the words as elements of the problems" (1983 [1976]:16).

Williams (1983 [1976]:136–37) and others such as Simon J. Bronner (1986:11–13), Richard M. Dorson (1968a:75–80), Alan Dundes (1965:1–6), and Duncan Emrich (1946) have amply documented William Thoms's coining of the English word "folk-lore" in 1846 in a European weekly magazine, *The Athenaeum*. In keeping with a growing movement to revive Anglo-Saxon aspects of British heritage and to downplay classical influences, Thoms suggested using the compound word "folk-lore" to replace the classically-derived phrases "popular antiquities" and "popular literature." As Thoms noted, the subject matter involved was "more a Lore than a Literature," and the "good Anglo-Saxon compound" he suggested met his criteria by using words with Germanic etymologies (folk, not *populus*; lore, not *antiquitatus* or *literatura*). The new word caught on quickly, and for about a century was used to refer to oral genres such as tales, songs, riddles, and proverbs, as well as customs and beliefs.

Since its coining, the word "folklore" has been subject to definition, redefinition, dehyphenation, and assessments of the implication of its component parts, "folk" and "lore." In 1946 Vladimir Propp discussed various European definitions (1984 [1946]:3–15). Three years later Maria Leach included twenty-one definitions of folklore by leading scholars in the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (1984 [1949]:398–403).

Since then, many new definitions have been proposed, some clarifying the enumerative approach (Dorson 1968b, 1972:1–47; Utley 1968) and others emphasizing new theories of performance and context (Bauman 1969; Ben-Amos 1971). For most modern scholars, the term "folklore" has transcended the original limitations of its component parts and has taken on a broader meaning of its own, including groups not previously considered "folk" (such as urban residents, industrial workers, and internet users) and subject matter not previously considered "lore" (such as kinesics and material culture).

Little has been written to date, however, about the history of the terms for folklore in the Celtic languages (Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, Cornish, and Breton), spoken in countries and areas where the development of folklore studies is critically tied to issues of nationalism, regionalism, language survival, and cultural identity. While these issues also informed Thoms's position, they are less critical today when balancing the English language's Anglo-Saxon and classical components is less contentious an issue than it was in Thoms's day. Analyzing the evolution of béaloideas and

relating it to the institutionalization of folklore studies in Ireland demonstrates the influences of nationalism, the revival of Irish Gaelic, and the association of Irish identity with Gaelic language and culture, especially as found in the *Gaeltachtaí* (Irish-speaking regions, primarily along Ireland’s west coast) where storytelling and other oral genres have flourished.

To analyze the terms for folklore in all the Celtic languages would require a format far more extensive than a single journal article.<sup>2</sup> Welsh terminology for folklore has been selected for comparison to Irish terminology because Welsh is a living Celtic language, and it is sufficiently different from Irish to provide a solid contrast.

Paralleling Williams’s use of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), this essay relies heavily on the history of the term “béaloideas” as suggested by a historical dictionary composed in a similar format, the Royal Irish Academy’s *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (*DIL*). One important distinction between their formats should be noted. While the *OED* is a dictionary of *Modern* English, with historical references dating back to the eighth century, the *DIL* is primarily a dictionary of *Medieval* Irish and does not attempt to illustrate current changes in words’ meanings. Therefore, an outline of contemporary uses and nuances of “béaloideas” is not available in as concise a format as the *OED*’s treatment of “folklore.” However, the available information on the historic development of the term “béaloideas” is adequate. This paper will contextualize the dictionary references, but it should be remembered that the scarcity of supporting information makes the argument somewhat speculative. The dictionary documentations of the words’ histories are not questioned here but accepted as the starting point for analysis.

Points of comparison made throughout this article are diagrammed in figure 1. There are many striking differences between the Irish, English, and Welsh developments in the naming and study of folklore. The Welsh examples are added as a reminder that although English language studies occupy a prominent position in the field, other Celtic cultures besides Irish have had to develop their own approach to the study of the exotic “other” within their boundaries. Since Celtic regions proved to have abundant examples of folklore, there was a concentration of activity within these regions to develop the terminology as well as the methodology of folklore collecting. Why should the English language dominate the field, especially when so much data was Celtic and when scholars wanted to conduct their discourse in Celtic languages? As the chart below shows, each attempt to name the field had a different emphasis although, on the surface, all dealt with the same subject matter. The Irish term emphasizes orality (means of transmission) whereas both the English and the Welsh terms emphasize the folk or community (“peasantry”) who use the lore:

Irish:	béaloideas = <i>béal</i> [mouth, i.e. oral] + <i>oideas</i> [instruction]
English:	folklore = folk ["peasantry," rural or uneducated people] + lore [accumulated wisdom]
Welsh:	<i>llên gwerin</i> = <i>llên</i> [literature, lore] + <i>gwerin</i> [people in general, "peasantry"]

Each of these words can be further analyzed in terms of: 1) their twentieth-century meaning, 2) the chronological relationship of the Celtic terms to Thoms's "folk-lore," and 3) the etymology and first known usages of the words and their component parts. The differences between the terms also provide insight into the nature and activity of folklorists in the Celtic areas. Not only does the terminology reflect its surrounding culture, but the terminology also shapes the study of the culture both in its living form (folklore in the field) and its institutionalized form (folklore on display in museums and heritage or cultural centers).

### Béaloideas

Many non-Irish-speaking folklorists are familiar with the word "béaloideas" because it is the name of a major journal of Irish folklore, *Béaloideas: The Journal of the Folklore of Ireland Society*, first published in 1927. One would not necessarily hear the word "béaloideas" in the field or from one's informants, any more than English speakers would necessarily label their own beliefs as folk beliefs, their own tales as folktales, or their own lore as folklore. Terms such as "local," "old," "country," or "regional" are frequently used instead of "folk." However, the long-standing presence of the journal *Béaloideas* and the activities of the Folklore of Ireland Society (*An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann*) have brought the term "béaloideas" into reasonably common usage in Irish. Yet, how many of these users have pondered the word's own history and implications?

### Keating's "Beuloideas" and Thoms's "Folk-Lore"

The actual word "béaloideas" predates Thoms's "folk-lore" by several centuries. The earliest *DIL* citation of the word, spelled "beuloideas,"<sup>4</sup> is 1629, as used by the historian Seathrún Céitinn (c1570–c1644), who is more widely known outside Irish-language circles by his English name, Geoffrey Keating. The 1629 citation brings up important questions concerning the dating and translation of the word "béaloideas" into English. As will be described below, the word "béaloideas" may well be older than 1629, with earlier usages reflecting concepts predating what we think of as folklore.

Keating wrote his historical work, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (literally "Basis of Knowledge about Ireland" but generally translated as *The History*

	IRISH	ENGLISH	WELSH
TERM:	béaloideas	folk-lore, folklore	llên gwerin
KEY CONCEPT:	oral transmission	"peasant" <sup>3</sup> lore	people's lore
FIRST USED:	1629 or earlier	1846	1858
CONTEXT OF FIRST USE:	existing term adapted to mean "folklore"	coined	coined
FIRST USER:	Keating (may have anonymous antecedents)	Thoms	Silvan Evans
MUSEUMS AND ORGANIZATIONS:	Irish Folklore Commission (now Department of Irish Folklore), Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Glencolumcille Folk Village, Ulster-American Folk Park, Bunratty Castle & Folk Park	Museum of English Rural Life, Centre of English Cultural Tradition & Language (Sheffield), Institute of Dialect & Folklife Studies (Leeds, closed 1984), The Folklore Society	Welsh Folk Museum
PUBLICATIONS:	<i>Béaloideas</i> , <i>Ulster Folklife</i>	<i>Folk-Lore (now Folklore), Lore and Language</i>	<i>Gwerin (now Folk Life)</i>

Figure 1

of Ireland), while hiding from the English government. A hunted priest, he sought to improve Ireland's image by writing "the truth of the state of the country" and by exposing those English historians who had "continuously sought to cast reproach and blame both on the old foreign settlers and on the native Irish" (Keating 1902:3).<sup>5</sup> His history differs considerably from prior Irish histories. From a twentieth century perspective, it appears more plausible than the existing mythological accounts of Ireland's settlement, such as *The Book of Invasions* (in Cross and Slover 1969 [1936]:3–27). Although Keating incorporated such material into his texts, he contrasted it, at least some of the time, to "*stáir fhírinneach*" (genuine history), as in his comments regarding the life span of Fionntain.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, Keating, who was also a poet, created an account which was more literary than the annals, another type of history then prevalent that succinctly recorded critical events in a year-by-year format.<sup>7</sup> Robert Fitzroy Foster describes Keating's *History* as "the first narrative history of Ireland" (1988:38). The work also contains "mythology, archaeology, geography, statistics, genealogy, bardic chronicles, ancient poetry, romance and tradition," which reinforces the aptness of Keating's own title—*Foras Feasa, A Basis of Knowledge*—in comparison to the translated title, "History" (Comyn in Keating 1902:iv). D'Arcy McGee's comment that Keating's *History* is "semi-bardic and semi-historic" (cited by Comyn in Keating 1902:xi) sums up the dual nature of the work.

Keating wanted to correct the derogatory and incorrect notions of Ireland put forth in English histories of the time. Common themes of wildness, barbarity, and the need for outside authority had been repeated by commentators such as John Good (1566), William Camden (1587), Edmund Spenser (1970 [1633]), and Fynes Moryson (1904 [1617]).<sup>8</sup> Similar views had been established centuries earlier in works such as Giraldus Cambrensis's *The Topography of Ireland* (1951) and *The History of the Conquest of Ireland* (1881). Cambrensis, for example, described the Irish as "a barbarous people devoted only to laziness...living on beasts only, and living like beasts" (1951:85–86) and as "a filthy people, wallowing in vice" (1951:90). Keating specifically addressed Cambrensis's portrait of the Irish, calling him "the bull of the herd for writing the false history of Ireland" (1902:153).<sup>9</sup> Cambrensis's accounts were published by Camden in 1602, as if further substantiating Camden's own views.

These ethnic portraits of the Irish were exaggerated and created a negative image that Keating wanted to rectify. An alternate, positive image of Ireland is revealed by the country's nickname, "the island of saints and scholars," so called because of its degree of monastic and missionary activity in the early Middle Ages. Though he was occasionally critical of the Irish,

Keating wanted to write a distinguished history of Ireland, outlining its contributions and proclaiming its glory (Foster 1988:38; MacLysaght 1969:15).

As a writer, Keating was creative and conscious of style. He demonstrated a fondness for creating compound words modeled after those often used in Irish poetry for both their dramatic impact and making words rhyme or meters fit.<sup>10</sup> Because the first *DIL* citation to the word *béaloideas* is from Keating, one might conclude that he invented the word in keeping with his poetic predilections, perhaps even foreshadowing Thoms's compound "folk-lore." However, the *DIL* entry for *bélaites* indicates an even earlier spelling of the word, suggesting either that it existed prior to Keating (although there is no citation) or that Keating's actual spelling is more archaic than David Comyn's text. The older spelling "bélaites"<sup>11</sup> suggests that the word may have been used before Keating, probably to describe a method of oral bardic learning which survived in parts of Ireland up to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when early colonialism began to make effective inroads into Irish culture.<sup>12</sup> Keating, writing in the seventeenth century, could simply be adopting a new meaning for the word.

### Translating Beuloideas

Although people began to translate Keating's *History* in the eighteenth century, it was David Comyn's 1902 bilingual edition of *History* which brought the work to twentieth-century scholarly attention. Comyn translated *beuloideas* as "tradition," not "folklore." Although one could not expect to find the word "folklore" used in a translation made before 1846, the word "folklore" had been available in English by Comyn's time for about sixty years. In fact, the translation of the word as "folklore" or even "oral tradition" might have more effectively conveyed Keating's original intention. Comyn's 1902 translation of Keating predated the organization in 1927 of *An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann* (The Folklore of Ireland Society). Although the word "béaloideas" had been in use for centuries, perhaps it was only later in the twentieth century that "folklore" became its primary meaning.

Keating's *beuloideas* occurs in a reference to oral narration: "...*agus fós atá seanchus agus beuloideas Éireann ag a admháil gur bh'é Pádraic apstol fuair purgadóir ar dtús i n-Éirinn*," translated by Comyn as "...and moreover, we have the record and the tradition of Ireland stating that it was Patrick the apostle who discovered purgatory at first in Ireland" (1902:48–49). Keating may have had a very specific reason for using the word "beuloideas" here. In this passage he is defending his view that it was the fifth-century Apostle Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, who discovered the cave known as Patrick's Purgatory, which is at Lough Derg in Co. Donegal. He was responding to the claim by Meredith Hanmer<sup>13</sup> that it was a later and lesser eighth-century Patrick who found the cave.

Keating upholds the importance of Patrick's Purgatory by validating its association with the greater Patrick while Hanmer devalues the Purgatory by claiming that its eponym was a less important Patrick. Comyn's translation is adequate for a general reading, but from a folkloristic perspective, it fails to convey the strength of Keating's argument that both *seanchus* (traditional history) and *béaloideas* (best translated here perhaps as "oral tradition") declare the Apostle Patrick to be the discoverer of the Purgatory cave. The word "seanchus" has a complicated history of its own.<sup>14</sup> In Modern Irish it suggests "oral, folk history" (as opposed to *stair*, formal, written history), but here Keating may be contrasting *seanchus* as *written* history with *béaloideas* as *oral* history, using both to support his contention.

This example suggests that in Keating's usage, the orality of *béaloideas* was more important than its agents (the "folk"). In seventeenth-century Ireland, most Irish speakers (both "folk" and "elite") would have been in constant contact with orally transmitted history and literature. Literacy in Irish was not common. The aristocratic patronage system was declining and the social status of those who had been literate in Irish, namely clergy and bards, was threatened, as ample sources show.<sup>15</sup> Within the community of Irish speakers, there would not have been a distinct "folk" subset of the population who transmitted lore orally, in contrast to an "elite" who transmitted lore in writing. Bards continued to serve their patrons by performing oral traditions through the seventeenth century, yet their works were also increasingly committed to writing. This is in sharp contrast to the early industrial Britain in which Thoms sought to find the folk link to a nearly lost, orally-transmitted Anglo-Saxon heritage at a time when literacy among even the working classes was eroding people's connection to a perceived ancient past.

I do not mean to suggest that by not overtly encompassing material culture, kinesics, dance, gestures, or other non-oral genres, the word "*béaloideas*" cannot be applied *today* to folklore (and folklife) in the broadest approach to the field. No single word in any language, short of a cumbersome long compound, could suggest the many aspects of folklore studies today. The word "*béaloideas*" can be used today in the same way that folklore is used in English: as a word whose current scholarly usage is far broader than its original components indicate. A comparison of the literal elements of *béaloideas* with the contemporary scholarly meaning of folklore would be fruitless. It is only within the past few decades that "lore" as a semantic component of "folklore" prescribing "*oral literature*" has been minimized and that the "folk" element has been broadened to include any group with face-to-face interaction (Ben-Amos 1971). *Béaloideas* can, however, be compared with folklore in its original compound sense (people



+ lore). Béaloideas does not contain a component meaning “folk” or “people,” perhaps implying that the Irish people *as a whole* are a folk group and that the folk do not exist as a subset within Irish society.<sup>16</sup>

### Changes in the Meaning of Béaloideas

Even though the term “béaloideas” has been available for centuries, it is surprising to note that relatively few early publications in Irish use this word in their title. Instead, titles frequently use more specific genre terms, such as *Scéalta as X...* (Stories from X); refer to the process of collecting, such as *Cnuasach X* (a Collection of X); or acknowledge the fullness of an informant’s repertoire, such as *Leabhar X* (X’s Book). Even in the journal *Béaloideas*, the first volume (1927) only lists one article using the word “béaloideas” in its title. The following list shows the distribution of other titles and subjects; since the publication is bilingual, some keywords are given in Irish, along with their English translations in brackets:

KEYWORD IN TITLE	NUMBER OF ARTICLES USING KEYWORD
<i>scéal</i> [story]	16 (about 30 more are folktale texts but not labeled as such)
“fairytale”	1
religious legend	1
<i>tómhaiseanna</i> [riddles]	1
<i>nósa</i> [customs]	1
“seasonal customs & beliefs”	1
“funeral customs”	1
<i>cnuasach</i> [collection]	1
“gleanings”	1
“traditions”	1
<i>cleas</i> [game]	1
“cure”	1
lights [material culture]	1
“folklore”	1

The emphasis in the first volume of *Béaloideas* is clearly on folktales, which is not surprising for a journal whose name implies “oral tradition.” Only one article deals primarily with material culture, “*Seana-shoillse na Gaeltachta*” [Old Lights of the Gaeltacht]; four deal clearly with the spiritual side of folklife (customs, beliefs, and folk medicine). However, by the Society’s fiftieth anniversary in 1977, there was considerably more variety in subjects treated. In addition to two historical articles on the Commission and the Folklore of Ireland Society, there were two articles on tales

(*béaloideas* in the classic sense), three on material culture (traditional drums, furze, and tower houses), three on folklore about specific subjects (fishing, horses, and robins), one on "lore" (of a schoolgirl), one on a game, and one on an individual person. In examining the history of an academic discipline, the first volume and various anniversary volumes of its publications are especially helpful in revealing the discipline's subject matter and goals.<sup>17</sup> Although *Béaloideas* clearly shows a predominance of oral genres in its earliest volume, the balance shifted in later years to a wider distribution of oral and non-oral folklore topics. The later trend widened the parameters of *béaloideas* as a word and as a field of study.<sup>18</sup>

A comparison with the contents of the first volumes of two other leading folklore journals, the *Folk-Lore Record* (later *Folklore*) and the *Journal of American Folklore*, further illustrates *Béaloideas*'s exceptional emphasis on folk narrative. Volume one, part one of *Folk-Lore Record* contains thirteen articles; three are about folk literature (two about tales, one about "local rhymes and sayings"), six about belief ("superstitions"), three about "folk-lore," and one about both tales and belief. While folk belief predominates slightly, the distribution of topics approximates the Society's range of interests as defined in its rules specified in this first volume: "...the preservation and publication of Popular Traditions, Legendary Ballads, Local Proverbial Sayings, Superstitions and Old Customs (British and Foreign), and all subjects relating to them" (Anon. 1878:viii). Narrative is an important component but not as important as it is in *Béaloideas*.

The first volume of the *Journal of American Folklore* (1888) shows an even broader concept of the field. It contains eighty-seven articles, including twelve short administrative notices and fifteen book reviews. Of the sixty monographic articles, the titles of eight use the word "folk-lore." Others use specific genres (such as tale, myth, and song) as titles, and still others use catchy phrases rather than scholarly genres as titles (e.g., "Brides Dancing Barefoot" and "What Befell the Slave Seekers"). While the largest category represented is folk *literature* (such as tales, myths, legends, songs, or speech), the number of articles on non-narrative genres is almost equal. For example, using the modern analytical terms employed by the journal's *Centennial Index* (1988), there are ten articles on "belief systems," seven on "behavior," two which combine "belief" and "behavior," two on "ethnography," one on "material culture," and ten which are either general or about definition, theory, or methodology. Even given the narrower conception of folklore at this time, the *Journal of American Folklore* allowed for much more genre diversity than did *Béaloideas*. The American Folklore Society's publication was, of course, heavily informed by the dual nature of the Society's earliest membership: Franz Boas and the anthropological school

associated with him and William Wells Newell and the literary approach associated with him.

While the above analysis could admit further fine-tuning of the analytic categories, the general trend is clear and sufficient for present purposes. The journal’s contents break down as follows:

*Béaloideas* 1927: forty-nine folk literature (forty-six tale, one “fairytale,” one legend, one riddle); ten other. Total: fifty-nine.

*Béaloideas* 1977: two folk literature (tale); twelve other. Total: fourteen.

*Folk-Lore Record* 1878, part one: three folk literature (two tale, one speech); ten other. Total: thirteen.

*Journal of American Folklore* 1888: twenty-eight folk literature (nineteen narrative/tale/legend; nine poetry/speech); thirty-two other. Total: sixty.

This comparison suggests that while both the English-language and Irish-language publications focus on folklore as expressed in their respective languages, there are clear but changing differences in what is meant by folklore in each language.

### **Béaloideas as an Attributive Noun**

The noun element “folk” in the English compound word “folklore” easily lends itself to combination with other nouns and can readily function as an adjective or even a prefix (e.g., folk song or folksong). In Irish, on the other hand, *béaloideas* does not refer to the “folk” as such, but to a method of transmission. Therefore, neither component of *béaloideas* can be readily separated out as the “folk” element and used as an adjective for further recombination in words such as “folksinger.” Although the grammar rules for attributive use are much more complicated than in English,<sup>19</sup> grammar alone would not prevent the possibility. The problem is semantic.

Since “*béal*” (mouth) is the key element suggesting the “folk” quality of oral transmission, it could then be applied attributively to nouns such as “song” or “tale.” But in isolation, outside of the word “*béaloideas*,” the word “*béal*” loses the suggestion “folk,” and recombinations becomes illogical, confusing, or redundant.<sup>20</sup> This can be illustrated using hypothetical examples such as \**“amhrán béil,”* (mouth song) for folksong, \**“ceol béil”* (mouth music) for folk music,<sup>21</sup> and \**“ceard béil”* (mouth craft) for folk craft. In these examples the primary means of learning would be aural or visual, respectively, although some “oral instruction” might be involved. This is not the case in English or Welsh. The *OED* cites about fifty compound words which combine “folk” with another element (such as -artist, -life, -museum).

In Welsh, “gwerin” (people, folk) can be used to describe virtually any genre (e.g., *cân werin*, folksong) or entity (e.g., *amgueddfa werin*, folk museum).

Further insight into the question of the Irish terminology of “folk” can be gained by looking into the words for “land” and “people” which might be translated as “folk” in the absence of a directly parallel term. Even *gwerin*’s linguistic cognate in Irish, “*foireann*” (group of people, team), does not work well in this combination.<sup>22</sup> Other possible choices include the words “*tír*,” “*tuath*,” “*daoine*,” and “*pobal*.” All of these may imply “folk,” but none are used in compounds with a word meaning “lore” to create a term analogous to “folklore.” None of the words strongly conveys the social class sense of “folk” or “*gwerin*,” as it is understood in English and Welsh. In one case, the word “*tuath*” has negative connotations such as “sinister,” “wrong,” and “perverse” (Dinneen 1970:1267–68). Although it could mean “folk,” the word would not express the positive patriotic sentiments that the Folklore of Ireland Society endorsed.<sup>23</sup> More recently, a satisfactory solution has been found in the term “*dúchas*” (heritage), which has been applied to folklore studies in phrases such as “*léann dúchais*” (heritage learning).<sup>24</sup>

To summarize, the term “*béaloideas*” was used originally to describe a system of oral instruction in medieval Ireland and eventually came to mean “tradition.” At some point after 1846, it was translated as “folklore,” and as such, it remains the primary Irish equivalent to the English term as seen in the names of Ireland’s principal folklore institution (*Roinn Bhéaloideas Éireann*, Department of Irish Folklore) and publication (the journal *Béaloideas*). In historical terms, “*béaloideas*” is considerably different from “folklore,” both in its original and current meanings. Languages other than Irish have natural cognate terms which may even predate the English term,<sup>25</sup> and others have adopted “folklore.”<sup>26</sup> Despite its many borrowings from English,<sup>27</sup> Irish does not have a Gaelicized spelling of the actual English word folklore. This absence is probably attributable to both the ready existence of the early term “*beuloideas*” and to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century determination to politically, culturally, and linguistically “de-Anglicize” Ireland.<sup>28</sup> “*Béaloideas*” differs from Thoms’s “folklore” in that it contains no element highlighting the “folk.” It also differs from contemporary American usage of “folklore” to mean “artistic communication in small groups” (Ben-Amos 1971), in which the key concepts are small group interaction, expressive behavior, and performance, rather than orality per se. However, in this regard, it should be remembered that Thoms’s compound of “folk” and “lore” was also quite different from today’s “folklore.”

### Folk-Lore: The "Good Anglo-Saxon Compound"

As mentioned previously, the history of Thoms's coining of the word "folklore" is well-documented. Numerous publications marked its centennial (Emrich 1946; Herskovits 1946; Taylor 1946), and recently in 1996, its sesquicentennial year, the term "folklore" and its changing meaning was debated in a plenary session at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society. It is defined and redefined as new folklore journals state their mission (e.g., Anon. 1878; Anon. 1888) and as scholarly interests change.

Dorson's history, *The British Folklorists* (1968a), provides a broader context for Thoms's endeavors, which are all the more striking in that, although Thoms renamed the discipline, he did not continue to work as a folklorist or to publish widely in the discipline. His contribution did, however, guide folklorists' paths away from "antiquarianism." This paved the way for at least the Victorian version of the study: an avocation that could be practiced by those with convenient access to the rural, unlettered population, especially country ministers, their wives, teachers, travelers, and the local upper class or aristocracy.

Thoms's quest for a Germanic-derived term reflects the romantic nationalist movement affecting other parts of Europe. The Grimm brothers, for example, attempted to restore Germanic identity in reaction to the general acceptance of French and Latin culture and language as more polished and sophisticated than German. Through the 1812 publication of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Household Tales), the Grimms hoped not only to entertain children, but also to recharge German identity. Inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder's project of defining the true soul of a nation through its "peasant" culture, the Grimms published tales that they presented as authentic folk texts. If recent histories have found that some of the Grimms' informants were less Germanic than the Grimms would have had readers believe, this simply reminds today's readers of one of their underlying agendas: ennobling the "folk" informant and native authenticity.

The name given a concept, field of study, or publication reveals underlying meanings, expectations, and agendas. Thus, terminology should not be taken for granted. As Andrew G. Sherratt indicates, even such lynch pins as "history," "civilization," and "the new subject [that] was called (somewhat unhappily) 'pre-history,'" have come under recent scrutiny regarding their subtexts (1993:27). Thoms's term "folklore" is a loaded one, as are its corresponding terms in other languages.

### Llên Gwerin and “The Problem of this Word ‘Folk’”

Because the term “béaloideas” avoids any suggestion of social class, the development of the Welsh term “llên gwerin” more closely parallels that of the English term “folklore.” In contrast to the Irish situation in which “béaloideas” gradually came to mean “folklore,” the Welsh term “llên (y) (g)werin” was deliberately coined in 1858 to provide the Welsh language with an equivalent to the new English “folk-lore.” “Llên” (learning, lore) was combined with “gwerin” whose basic meanings, according to the *Dictionary of the Welsh Language (DWL)*, include “people, populace, peasantry, and folk.”<sup>29</sup> The *DWL* cites the earliest use of gwerin in a ninth-century gloss of Juvenal’s *Factio*. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, gwerin has meant “the common people of Wales” and conjured the ideal of Welsh democracy flourishing politically, culturally, morally, and spiritually, which prevailed from the second half of the last century until the First World War (*DWL* 1,643).

The comments of Iorwerth C. Peate, the Welsh Folk Museum’s first curator, on “the problem of this word ‘folk’” (1959:99–100) shed further light on the deeper meaning of gwerin. Commenting that he came “from a people who lay no emphasis on class distinction,” he found the connotations of Thoms’s *common* people “somewhat ludicrous” (1959:99). While Peate says that gwerin means “the people in general, not a lower class in particular,” he goes on to distinguish the gwerin/folk from people in primitive and industrialized societies. The continuing discussions on the meaning, implications, and future of the English word “folk” today confirm that Peate did not meet his goal to permanently “settle the problem of this word ‘folk,’” which he described as “a much abused word, so abused that some scholars avoid it” (1959:99). In the Welsh context, however, the word “gwerin” successfully conveyed the holistic sense which Peate implied: of or pertaining to the Welsh population as a whole. This was a group in which many could claim rural or small town residence, strong faith, and retention of the Welsh language at least in religious worship and in the home.

According to the *DWL*, the first use of “Llên y Werin” was in 1858 by Daniel Silvan Evans in the first issue of a weekly magazine, *Y Brython* [The Briton]: “*Y mae gan y Seison fath o lenoriaeth a alwant Folk-lore, yr hyn a ellir ei gyfieithu yn Llên y Werin* [The English have a kind of learning they call Folk-lore, which can be translated as Llên y Werin]” (2,152). A closer look at Evans’s life (1818–1903) helps to contextualize his adaptation of the term into Welsh. Following the English model, Evans started a regular column in *Y Brython* that described customs and beliefs considered folk-lore. According to Thomas Parry’s biographical sketch of Evans, the concept of publishing folklore was new to Welsh scholars (1981). Evans contributed to

the study of Welsh folklore and language in addition to coining a term to describe the discipline. He was the first major publisher of *pennillion*, folk stanzas often improvised in counter melody to a harp. As a lexicographer, Evans was active in creating new equivalents to English words. He also started a historical dictionary of Welsh comparable to the pioneering *OED*.

Evans was a poet, an ordained minister, a professor of Welsh at the University of Wales, and the editor of many medieval Welsh texts. He was a member of the Independent (Nonconformist) Church, which sought to substitute church activities for many worldly forms of secular folk entertainment such as dancing, singing, playing music, and telling stories (Blyn 1995:172–73; Picton 1905 [1889]; Thomas 1974:80–121). As a Nonconformist, Evans's background probably would not have been rich in traditional, secular oral genres such as storytelling. It is not surprising then that his column in *Y Brython*, the pioneering folklore publication of Wales, emphasized customs and beliefs rather than narrative genres. Nor is it surprising that folklore studies in Wales eventually came to emphasize folklife and material culture rather than folk narrative.

Evans's religious background was not uncommon in Wales in his time. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, nonconformist religions spread through Wales. In the mid-nineteenth century, as folklore collecting gained momentum, the quantity of traditional stories, especially hero tales and Märchen, available in Wales was considerably less than in Ireland (even considering the population ratios). By this time, all living folk connections to the Welsh medieval epic tradition, the *Mabinogion*, had disappeared (Gwyndaf 1970:14). In contrast, even in the late twentieth century, Ireland has retained a living tradition of hero tales of Cú Chulainn and Fionn Mac Cumhail (comparable to the *Mabinogion* characters) whose antecedents date to Celtic prehistory. Sean Ó Súilleabháin (1968, 1970 [1942]) and Robin Flower (1947), among others, have praised this tradition as unique in Western Europe for its antiquity and for its performers' artistry and phenomenal memories.

The *gwerin* element of Evans's phrase "Llên y Werin" caught on rapidly and is now used almost uniformly in Welsh when describing something "folk." "Gwerin" is easily adapted to use in compound phrases such as *amgueddfa werin*, folk museum; *cân werin*, folk song; *chwedl werin*, folktale; *dawns werin*, folk dance; and *llên gwerin*, folklore.<sup>30</sup>

To carry the speculative nature of this paper one degree further, one could postulate alternate terms for folklore in both Irish and Welsh. If the Irish term were translated directly into Welsh, it would yield straightforwardly \*"*cegaddysg*" (mouth education/instruction). Translating the Welsh term directly into Irish offers more possibilities but would probably yield \*"*léann na ndaoine*" or "*na bpobal*" (learning of the people) or perhaps \*"*léann na foirne*" (learning of the team). One of the other ruralizing terms could be

used to generate a term such as “lore of the (people of) a country.” These possibilities could come together with the word “tuath” which means both “country” and “tribe.” As shown above, the selection of terms for folklore in both Irish and Welsh was not a random process, nor one which followed the same linguistic path. In the Irish case, it reflected a long history of and social reliance on oral instruction for historical, religious, legal, and genealogical teaching. In the Welsh case, it was modeled on the English term with due consideration to the ideological and social implications of *gwerin*. The purpose of this discussion has not been simply to present the words’ histories, but also to consider the impact of the terminology on the study of folklore in the respective countries and, returning to Williams’s point, to demonstrate that the words themselves are “elements of the problem” (1983 [1976]:16).

### **Folk Museums and Folklore Publications**

The use of the words “béaloideas” in Ireland and “llên gwerin” in Wales has shaped not only current conceptions of folklore but also the institutionalization of its study in both academic and government institutions. The following assessment is based partly on academic studies of museums and cultural displays, personal experiences of the institutions discussed, the institutions’ own publications, and travel guides.<sup>31</sup> As Thomas J. Schlereth indicates in his *Cultural History and Material Culture* (1990), museums themselves can be seen “as artifacts.” They function not only to store, display, and entertain, but also to mold their visitors’ thoughts and reflect their creators’ ideologies. With that in mind, the following section interprets the public interpretation of béaloideas, folklore, and llên gwerin in Ireland, England, and Wales.

### **The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland**

Beginning in the late nineteenth-century in Sweden and Norway, a new approach to open-air museology and folklore and folklife research developed at sites such as Lund, Skansen, and Maihaugen.<sup>32</sup> Such institutions typically house on a large estate both a research center and a complex of authentic buildings often relocated from various endangered sites. The historic buildings, attractive grounds, live demonstrations, and high-quality souvenir shops attract tourists. At the same time, scholars find research facilities and publishing opportunities. Items which lack inherent visual appeal, such as the tapes and transcripts needed to document oral traditions, are housed in controlled storage areas. As late as 1987, Timothy O’Neill lamented the lack of such a comprehensive facility in the Republic of Ireland. Although the Commission collected folklife objects, they were not given the same attention in displays as the oral traditions were given through printed



media; in fact, the folklife collection was temporarily housed in an old reformatory in Daingan, Co. Offaly (O'Neill in Sharkey 1987:6).

Only two entries are listed under Ireland in one of the earliest surveys of folk museums, Gerald Gottlieb's 1949 article on museums in the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (Leach 1984 [1949]:768). Both are in Northern Ireland: the Municipal Museum and Art Gallery in Belfast (described as containing Irish ethnographic material) and the Open-Air Museum in Holywood, Co. Down (described as displaying domestic life, craftsmanship, and social activities of the people of Ulster). There is no entry for the Republic of Ireland. For Wales, Gottlieb notes the Welsh Folk Museum, which had been opened just one year earlier in 1948. While the intervening decades have seen the opening in Ireland of many excellent small folk museums, parks, and heritage centers (sometimes in authentic settings and sometimes, as at Bunratty, in partially reconstructed settings), there is still no single institution that fully encompasses both the touristic and the scholarly realms.

In Northern Ireland, the "Open-Air Museum" mentioned by Gottlieb, later known as the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, combines the display of material culture with the study of oral culture. The museum's outdoor display of authentic, relocated folk buildings appeals to both tourist and scholar. Travel writer Ian Robertson (1987:377) praised the museum as "unlike some other fabricated 'folk parks'" in its display of *original* buildings, demonstrating that authenticity is an important criterion to the serious cultural tourist, as well as to the researcher. The museum's scholarly activities include conferences and numerous publications including the journal *Ulster Folklife*, which first appeared in 1955. It houses a research institute, a reference library, specially designed galleries, and a modern storage building.<sup>33</sup>

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum's joint academic-touristic mission is complemented by a relatively recent addition to Ireland's major folk museums, the Ulster-American Folk Park near Omagh, Co. Tyrone, which was established in 1976. While catering largely to tourists, this park emphasizes authenticity as much as possible, and replicas are distinguished from originals (Robertson 1992:322).

In the Republic, however, the offices of the Irish Folklore Commission (now the Department of Irish Folklore) are not connected with an open-air museum; they are located at the Belfield campus of University College Dublin. Although about 1,200 interested visitors and scholars are cordially received every year, the department is not primarily a tourist attraction. There could have been plans for an open-air museum when the Belfield campus was designed and designated as the Commission's home. Most of the campus had formerly been farmland and initially the space might have been sufficient. But the Commission's early collecting and publishing activities emphasized

oral traditions, particularly those in the Irish language. This is understandable since a major goal of the Commission when it was founded was to preserve and document a language whose living status and future have been widely debated.<sup>34</sup> At the time of the Commission's establishment in 1927, and indeed until relatively recently, traditional *material* culture seemed less threatened, even in non-Irish speaking areas (O'Neill in Sharkey 1987:5).

There are abundant smaller folk museums and parks in the Republic. Among the most well-known is Bunratty Castle and Folk Park in Co. Clare, conveniently located for tourists near Shannon International Airport. Developed and administered by the Shannon Free Airport Development Company, Bunratty Castle and Park are primarily marketed as a tourist attraction. At least one cottage in Bunratty Park was moved there to save it from demolition (ironically, during the expansion of Shannon Airport) (Danaher 1985:7). Most are replicas (Hudson and Nicholls 1987:69), which are not normally included in more academically conceived open-air museums. Shannon Development describes the buildings as "meticulous reconstructions" (Bunratty Folk Park 1996). While replicas may be tastefully constructed by local craftsmen using local materials in rigid adherence to tradition, the inclusion of replicas lessens the institution's sense of authenticity and academic validity. These comments are not intended to criticize the role of reconstruction and replication in satisfying public interests, but to illustrate an academic argument regarding the goals of preservation versus display.

At another folk village at Glencolumcille in Co. Donegal, dwellings described by Robertson as "modern 'folk cottages'" (1992:303) were designed and built for tourists to rent them for accommodation. The village is also a center for craft production and is known for its efforts to preserve the Irish language. While such tourist attractions, cottage industries, and commercial enterprises can be highly interesting to a folklorist studying folklorismus or tourism, such sites do not have and do not aspire to the authenticity and scholarship found at Skansen in Sweden or Holywood in Northern Ireland (nor do they need to in order to fulfill their visitors' expectations). In comparison to many fake "living-history" sites in the United States that border on Disneyesque amusement parks or pseudo-historical, pseudo-ethnic Las Vegas fantasies,<sup>35</sup> any of the Irish sites adequately convey a sense of history to the American tourist who has been primed for sentimentality since stepping on "the ould sod," to repeat an oft-used epithet favored by generations of tourism copywriters.

### **England and Wales**

Although the establishment of the Folk-Lore Society in England provided a serious, pioneering organization and publication forum for folklorists, England has seen few impressive examples of the open-air folk

museum/research institute. Despite the excellence of the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, its Traditional Heritage Museum at the University of Sheffield, the Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading, and other smaller locally-focused sites, there is a conspicuous absence of a national, solidly-funded folk museum and research center that documents all genres, time periods, and geographic regions. The Traditional Heritage Museum at Sheffield is affiliated with a “national repository for material on all aspects of language and cultural tradition in England” (CECTAL 1996). Yet it does not comprehensively display material culture from England as a whole but rather “life and work in Sheffield and the surrounding area in the period 1850–1950” (CECTAL 1996). Other important English institutions conduct work only on certain genres (e.g., the English Folk Dance and Song Society). Still others define their material through rural/urban dichotomies (such as “rural life” museums described in Jewell 1961:xi) or geographic boundaries (such as the numerous county museums).

This absence reflects such basic factors as: 1) a lesser historical need in England for governments to endorse folklore studies out of nationalist or nativist agendas; 2) the unthreatened status of the English language (at least in its standard form); 3) the greater impact of urbanization, the national education movement, and the Industrial Revolution on rural traditions in England than in Ireland; 4) the relative lack of a prestigious English Märchen or hero-tale tradition to maintain (Goldstein 1991; Briggs and Tongue 1965); and 5) “the long prevailing academic distaste for folklore and dialectology in Britain, and the corresponding lack of institutional development in those disciplines” (Green and Widdowson 1981:v).

In 1981, Green and Widdowson lamented that there were only “two English universities with a substantial and continuing commitment to these [folklore and dialectology] studies, Leeds and Sheffield.” They noted the regrettable closing of a similar program at Scotland’s Stirling University. At that time, it could not be predicted that the University of Leeds program would share a similar fate. In the future, it is unlikely that the continuing “tradition of intellectual prejudice” (Green and Widdowson 1981:v) and Britain’s ongoing budgetary concerns will support the growth of folklore programs. If anything, the accomplishment will be to maintain what has already been started.

The establishment of the Welsh Folk Museum (*Amgueddfa Werin*), recently renamed the Museum of Welsh Life at St. Fagans near Cardiff, provides a sharp contrast to the folk museums of the Republic of Ireland and England. Its similarities to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in Northern Ireland are not coincidental, but due in part to the links folklife scholar E. Estyn Evans had to both institutions.<sup>36</sup> While the Welsh Folk Museum is certainly highly promoted for tourism, it has two other functions less obvious

to many tourists: it has a major research center and is the primary archives for Welsh oral literature.

While folklife displays began in 1908 as special exhibits at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, the movement to develop a Welsh museum focused on folklife began in the 1940s. The Welsh Folk Museum is located on a site of about 100 acres containing relocated traditional buildings as well as an original mansion that now houses period interiors and the "Galleries of Material Culture." The estate owners donated the property to the National Museum in 1946 so that they could convert it into the folk museum which opened in 1948.

The museum has continued to grow and includes not only the open-air exhibits and mansion but also a modern museum building and research center. The museum publishes its research in *Amgueddfa: Bulletin of the National Museum of Wales*, as well as both popular and scholarly pamphlets, books, and bibliographies. In 1956, its first curator, Iorwerth Peate, launched the journal *Gwerin* as "a personal venture" (Peate 1963:4). *Gwerin* provided a forum for furthering the work of the museum and its staff, as well as that of other folklife scholars in England, Scotland, and Ireland. It was superseded by *Folk Life: Journal of the Society for Folk Life Studies*. The Society is still housed at the museum (Society for Folk Life Studies [ca. 1994]). In addition to its many foreign guests, the museum has many Welsh visitors. Although it is a tourist attraction, it is also a mark of Welsh national pride which reminds of Peate's goal that "...the chief aim of all men called to service in museums is...to awaken the best in the national spirit" (cited in Peate 1948:11).

Peate visited Scandinavian folk museums such as Bygdøy and Maihaugen in preparation for the plans in Wales. The Scandinavian influence is quite clear in the layout and concept of the Welsh Folk Museum. The precarious situation of the Welsh language and culture also played a significant role, as did Peate's own upbringing and personality. The son of a craftsman-carpenter, Peate was a poet and scholar who wrote extensively on Welsh crafts and material culture. As an advocate of a monolingual (Welsh-speaking) future for Wales (Stephens 1986a:461, 1986b:466), Peate strongly advocated the use of Welsh by his staff (Peate 1948:59).

Like Daniel Silvan Evans, Peate was raised in the Welsh Nonconformist tradition of temperance, uprightness of character, missionary zeal, political radicalism, Welsh literacy, and religious education in Welsh. As previously mentioned, this tradition was partly responsible for the decline of many oral genres of Welsh folklore. As curator of the Welsh Folk Museum, Peate was in a position to present a Celtic folk culture, which was more accurately displayed and understood in terms of material culture, vernacular architecture, and folk crafts than in terms of oral traditions. While attention was certainly paid to the surviving oral genres (primarily shorter format genres such as

legends), it is not surprising that organizing principles of the Welsh Folk Museum contrasted greatly with the Irish Folklore Commission's original emphasis on the rich, oral Gaelic heritage.

These overviews of museum developments reveal many aspects of Irish, English, and Welsh political, social, and economic history. The contents and organization of these museums not only indicate the availability of folk materials (oral and material) in different geographic regions, but they also reflect differences inherent in the accepted terms for their subject matter—the Irish "béaloideas" with its emphasis on orally transmitted material and the English "folklore" and Welsh "llên gwerin" with their emphases on the "folk" themselves.

### Conclusion

This paper has examined the implications of the Irish term for folklore, which has a very different lexicographical, etymological, and social history from the English and Welsh terms. In the Irish case, there was an existing word, "beuloideas," used since at least 1629 that referred to an early custom of oral education. The word "béaloideas" has been translated as "tradition" but eventually came to mean "folklore," primarily in the sense of oral tradition. This reflects the priorities of Irish folklorists and the Irish government as well as the outstanding richness of the oral materials available.

As the Welsh Folk Museum demonstrates, Welsh folklorists have been more involved with material culture, folklife, custom, and belief. This reflects centuries of suppression of oral folklore due to puritanical religious movements that influenced Evans's 1858 naming of the field. Moreover, it reflects the outlook of the museum's first curator, Iorwerth Peate, and his colleagues. In England, oral traditional culture was severely threatened in Thoms's time, thus attracting his interest. The folk-lore materials that could be gathered were seen as survivals or cultural relics of England's Anglo-Saxon past and not strongly associated through political ideology with England's future. By the mid-twentieth century, neither academic institutions nor the government energetically endorsed regional folklore and dialect studies in England. This contrasts sharply with today's thriving folklore institutions in Wales, the Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland.

These differences suggest the complexities of linguistics, personalities, and institutions which emerge as one traces the history of folklore studies in Ireland, England, and Wales. Geoffrey Keating may not have consciously created the compound "beuloideas," but his use of it helps establish a solid emphasis on orality. William John Thoms and Daniel Silvan Evans displayed creativity and innovation in coining terms to fit the ideological trends they perceived.

Applying Raymond Williams's analysis of the histories, nuances, and subtexts of keywords in social and cultural discourse reminds us that terms such as "béaloideas," "folklore," and "llên gwerin" are not chance evolutions of etymology but layered mini-histories of the societies which use them. Thomas Kuhn asserts that, "...the emergence of a [new] paradigm affects the structure of the group that practices the field" (1970:18). Recalling Williams's warning to be "conscious of the words as elements of the problems" (1983 [1976]:16), we see that terminology is one aspect of new paradigms and that terminology affects the structure of groups, practices, and fields of study.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this analysis reveals that key terms such as "béaloideas" and "llên gwerin" are neither objective, holistic, nor synonymous with "folklore," but laden with specific cultural and linguistic implications. "Béaloideas" and "llên gwerin" may appear to refer to the same subject, but their histories in Celtic contexts are as worthy of consideration as the history of Thoms's 150-year-old term "folk-lore" in the Anglo-American, English-language context.

### Notes

This paper was originally written with a stronger focus on linguistic issues for "The History of Folklore" course taught by Dr. Dan Ben-Amos at the University of Pennsylvania, Department of Folklore and Folklife in 1989. I am grateful to him for his comments suggesting more analysis of the language data in the living and historical context. The article also reflects the deep influence on my studies of my dissertation chair, the late Dr. Kenneth Goldstein. His broad comparative perspective on the development of folklore studies in Britain and Ireland were unlike the specialized viewpoints I absorbed in my studies in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. I was honored and saddened to have been among the last group of Penn students to have completed their dissertations under Dr. Goldstein before his death in November, 1995. Having acknowledged both of these leading folklorists, I take full responsibility for the specific development of the argument presented here; any shortcomings in no way undermine the excellence of their guidance.

1 A note on style: words cited as terms are in quotes. My own original translations are in square brackets. The word "folklore" is hyphenated when it is used as an historical term. Following standard linguistic procedure, words preceded by asterisks are hypothetical and unattested but are introduced for the sake of argument.

2 Béaloideas has direct parallels in Scottish Gaelic, "*beuloideas*" and "*beulaithris*," and their histories overlap that of the Irish term (Dwelly 1973:89; Thomson 1981:67). As for Manx and Cornish, their extinct status and small former speaker populations renders the discussion of their folklore terminology interesting

but less relevant in examining the link of living words and deeds. Regarding Breton, there is no entry for “folklore” in Le Dù and Le Barre 1985, but Le Gléau 1988 lists “*gwerinoniez*h” and “*folklor*,” showing the strong influences of Welsh and English (via French). Le Dù recently suggested “*etnologie*z” to this author as the equivalent term, based clearly on the French “*ethnologie*,” in order to avoid possible negative implications of the word “folklore” (personal communication 8/6/96).

3 “Peasant” and related terms will appear in quotes to indicate this author’s familiarity with the current arguments against their use. However, the terms are retained here as a reflection of their past use.

4 Keating’s spelling in Comyn’s edition is “beuloideas,” similar to the modern standard spelling “béaloideas”; the difference between “beul-” and “béal-” is insignificant here. The alternate spelling of “beul/béal” has continued into the twentieth century.

5 The foreign settlers were the Norman invaders of Ireland, from whom Keating himself was partially descended.

6 Fionntain supposedly arrived in Ireland before the Flood, having renounced the god of Noah who would not offer him refuge (Keating 1902:147). He survived, creating a discrepancy with the Biblical account which specifies eight Flood survivors.

7 Cf. *The Annals of the Four Masters*, described by Wallace (1983:33) as “austerely written.”

8 Foster describes Camden as “a religious controversialist, [whose] antipathy to Catholicism, rather than [his] inherent sense of racial superiority...colours his pictures of Ireland” (1988:5n); he describes Spenser’s view of Ireland as typical of the Elizabethan Englishman, “believing that Irish nationality had to be uprooted by the sword” (1988:8n). Moryson’s much-cited comments were interpreted to insinuate the practice of cannibalism among the Irish. Moryson states that visiting the Irish was like visiting a wild beast’s cave, where an animal “might perhaps find meat, but not without danger to be ill entertained, perhaps devoured of his insatiable host” (cited in Foster 1988:32).

9 For further commentary on Cambrensis as “credulous and prejudiced,” see Haskins 1963 [1927]: 315.

10 Keating’s poetry is represented in anthologies such as Ó Tuama and Kinsella 1981:83–89. Eleven compound words occur in just one short selection, the twenty-eight-line poem, “Óm Sceol ar Ardmhagh Fáil” (On Getting the News from Fál’s High Plain). They include *sáirshliocht* (high race), *mínghil* (smooth bright), *bri-neart* (strength-strength), and *foirneart* (strong strength).

11 “Bélaite” is a compound of “bél” (mouth) and “aite” (instruction). “Bél” offers little further room for analysis; it means “mouth,” “lips,” “mouth as the source for speech,” and by extension, “words.” The *DIL* cites one other example of bél from Keating (1908a:64) suggesting his familiarity with “*theagasc beoil*,” which the *DIL* (61) editors translate as “by traditional instruction” but which literally means “by instruction of the mouth.” “Aite” is related to “aite” (Modern Irish *oide*) for which the *DIL* (250–51) provides two definitions: 1) foster-father and 2) tutor, teacher. It was an early Irish custom to send children to be brought up and educated by foster-parents (Boswell 1988, Chadwick 1972, Ross 1970), so a foster-father may also be considered a tutor. Both uses of the word “aite” are documented in the Irish Brehon Laws, which were written down by the seventh and eighth centuries (Chadwick 1972:110).

12 Survivals are documented by Daniel Corkery (1925:65–67), and the passing of the tradition and its patronage are more poetically and poignantly lamented by Mahon O’Heffernan in his “Who Will Buy a Poem?” (1971:241–242).

13 Meredith Hanmer, D.D. (1543–1604), an English historian, moved to Ireland in 1591; his *Chronicle of Ireland* was published posthumously in 1633.

14 Comyn translates seanchas as “record,” and no doubt Keating here wants the word to sound as creditable a source as possible. Dinneen’s definitions range both from the straightforward, “history, lore, ancient law, a record or register, a minute description, a pedigree, an ancient tale,” to the more fanciful “act of storytelling, gossiping; inquiring (about one’s condition, health, etc.)” Dinneen also gives the expression, “*seanchas béil*” and defines it as “tradition, also gabble;” it literally means, “history, of the mouth, i.e. oral seanchas.” This phrase suggests that, unlike today, seanchas once implied written history unless otherwise stated. Seanchas is derived from “sean” (old) and possibly “cas,” which Dinneen defines as “a fold, a plait, a curl, a twist; anything twisted or convoluted.”

15 Moody and Martin 1984 [1967] and MacLysaght 1969 are among the sources that discuss the decline of the Gaelic aristocracy through death in battle, execution, emigration, and exile. They also discuss how the aristocracy’s fate stripped poets of their patrons and how the dissolution of monasteries stripped Irish-speaking Catholic clergy of their power.

“Dispossession” is the recurrent theme of much Irish language poetry of the time, as demonstrated by Ó Tuama and Kinsella (1981) who comment, “The year 1601 is a watershed in Irish history and literature. With the defeat of the Irish forces at Kinsale in that year the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland was assured. In the next hundred years, some 85% of Irish land was transferred into the hands of the new English colonists, and the old Irish aristocratic order disappeared. The traditional system of poetic patronage disappeared also, with traumatic consequences for literature in Irish” (1981:xix).



16 At least this was the case in the 1920s and 1930s when, in keeping with the nationalistic spirit following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, the study of folklore became more formalized in Ireland and received government support. Examples of this trend are the founding of *An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann* (The Folklore of Ireland Society) and the first publication of its journal *Béaloideas* in 1927. In 1930 the government funded the *Institiúid Béaloideas Éireann* (The Irish Folklore Institute) and, in 1935, the *Coimisiún Béaloideas Éireann* (The Irish Folklore Commission), which was superseded by the Department of Irish Folklore at University College Dublin in 1971–72 (Almqvist 1977–79; Ó Muimhneacháin 1977–79).

17 I am grateful to the late Professor Emeritus Kenneth Goldstein for emphasizing how revealing even the table of contents of such publications can be in clarifying their contributors’ definitions of folklore (1993).

18 Some of *Béaloideas*’s most recent issues, which publish conference proceedings on specific topics and genres such as migratory legends, do not lend themselves to this analysis.

19 In Irish, nouns can be used attributively (in an adjectival function) to modify other nouns. However, they must be in the genitive case, and they are subject to initial consonant mutation (lenition) if the noun being described is feminine or ends in a consonant which is palatalized or “slender” in Irish grammatical terms. For further examples of English nouns functioning attributively, see *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary*, s.v. “attributive.” For Irish usage, see Ó Siadhail 1983:20 and 1989:113.

20 Numerous dictionary searches and over twenty years’ experience with the Irish language reveal virtually no compound phrases using just “béal.” A more common strategy of suggesting the folk status of a song (or other genre) is highlighting qualifications such as 1) age (*seanamhráin*, old songs), 2) regionality (*amhráin Chúige Connacht*, as in Douglas Hyde’s 1893 series, *Songs of Connacht*), or 3) singing style (*amhrán ar an sean-nós*, song in the old style).

21 This could be confused with the widely used term, “port-a’-béil” (literally, tune of the mouth), also known as “mouth music,” “chin music,” or “gob music,” which refers to a specific style of unaccompanied singing or lilted of fast-tempo instrumental melodies.

22 While “foireann” and “gwerin” are linguistic cognates (Buck 1988:1314), they are not conceptual cognates from a folkloric viewpoint. Whatever their historical connections, “foireann” today does not imply the sense of community or shared ideology implied by “gwerin.” “Foireann” has more a sense of people or things joined together for a specific task or function.

23 For example, Séamus Ó Duilearga recommended preserving Irish folklore “for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland” in his editor’s note in the first *Béaloideas* (1927:5).

24 I appreciate Ray Cashman’s suggestion that this new term be included in this analysis.

25 For example, Swedish *folk*, as in *Folkliv*, and German *Volk*, as in *Volkskunde*.

26 Mexico’s world renowned “Ballet Folklórico” offers a Spanish example.

27 For example, *reasúnta* (reasonable) and *feithicil* (vehicle).

28 This determination was expressed in 1892 by Douglas Hyde in his famous lecture, “The Necessity for de-Anglicizing Ireland.” It was embodied by countless other Gaelic revivalists, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The lecture has been reprinted in Deane 1992:527–33. For more background, see Dunleavy 1974.

29 In contrast, “people” in the physical sense, as demographic units, is best expressed by the Welsh “pobl.”

30 Linguistic note: The “g” in *gwerin* is sometimes dropped for grammatical reasons if it is used as an attributive noun following a feminine noun. The process is known as “soft mutation.”

31 While travel guides are certainly not in-depth analyses (or even necessarily in accordance with the museums’ preferred self-image), they are widely used by visitors, are catalysts in tourists’ itinerary decisions, and hence are taken into consideration here. Without tourists, many folk museums would lose an essential part of their financial support.

32 For treatments of this history see Hall and Seemann 1987, Peate 1948, and Yoder 1990.

33 The scope of this museum is somewhat limited, however, in its presentation of Ireland’s rich oral tradition. Some genres of this tradition, specifically hero-tales and *sean-nós* singing, exist almost exclusively in the Irish language which mostly disappeared from Northern Ireland by the late nineteenth century. Exceptions include small pocket areas and the current urban revival (Ó Murchú 1985:26; Adams 1964). Because there are few survivals of local Irish language traditions, the studies of oral tradition at the museum usually focus on English language traditions.

34 See Hindley 1990 and Ó Ciosáin 1991.

35 Due to growing concerns about terrorism as well as expense, an increasing number of Americans prefer to explore other cultures and experience past times without leaving their native country. American commercial enterprises are ready to meet their needs, as documented in Adams 1995 and Venturi, Brown, and Izenour 1988.

36 Evans studied human geography under H. J. Fleure at University College Wales, Aberystwyth and, though a Welshman, went on to become one of the leading scholars of Irish folklife. His bibliography is too extensive to require repetition here but may be represented by his classic, *Irish Folk Ways* (1972 [1957]).

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