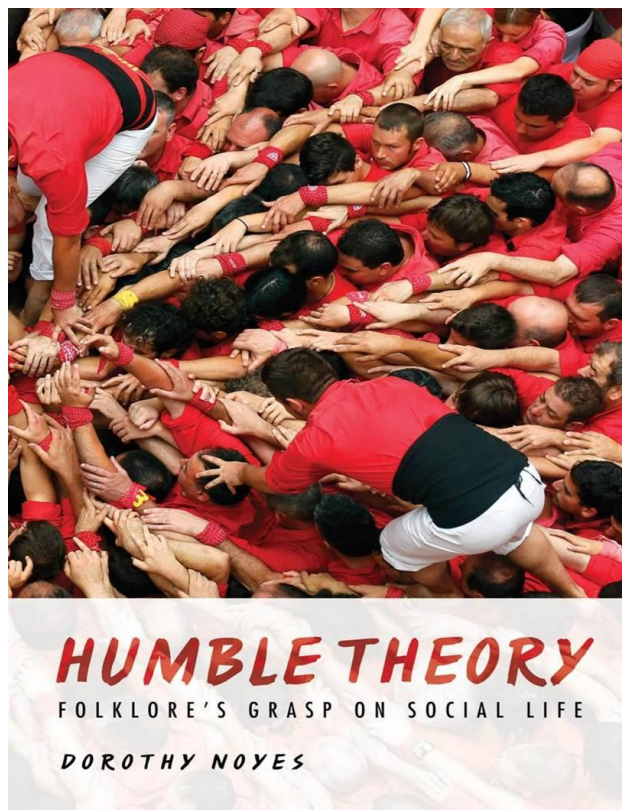


# Humble Theory

Folklore's Grasp on Social Life

Dorothy Noyes



October 2016

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# Front Matter

## Title Page

Humble Theory  
Folklore's Grasp on Social Life  
Dorothy Noyes  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Bloomington and Indianapolis

## Publisher Details

This book is a publication of  
Indiana University Press  
Office of Scholarly Publishing  
Herman B Wells Library 350  
1320 East 10th Street  
Bloomington, Indiana 47405 USA  
iupress.indiana.edu  
2016 by Dorothy Noyes

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

Manufactured in the United States of America

DOI: 0.2979/humbletheory.0.0.00

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Noyes, Dorothy, author.

Title: Humble theory : folklore's grasp on social life / Dorothy Noyes.

Description: Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2016. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016019837 (print) | LCCN 2016032583 (ebook) | ISBN 9780253022912 (cloth : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780253023148 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780253023384 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Folklore—Philosophy. | Folklore—Study and teaching. | Ethnology—Philosophy. | Ethnology—Study and teaching.

Classification: LCC GR40 .N69 2016 (print) | LCC GR40 (ebook) | DDC 398.2—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016019837>  
1 2 3 4 5 22 21 20 19 18 17

## Dedication

For Mike Krippendorf,  
who got me through it all

# Introduction

Had it not been for the stern advice of more than one friend, I would have relieved my own anxieties by entitling this introduction, “What’s Wrong With This Book?” Better scholars than I have introduced their work with “disclaimers of performance,” even or especially since Richard Bauman first called our attention to the practice (Bauman 1977; Jackson 2013a). In a book called *Humble Theory*, I cannot help feeling that I have much to be humble about. The essays here are likely to satisfy neither ethnographers nor theorists, and assuredly they will not satisfy historians.

But life is short and art is long and fools rush in where angels fear to tread. (At this point in my career I no longer fear clichés: they save time.) By temperament, circumstance, and my sense of a need at this period in the history of folklore studies, I have found myself again and again in the discussant’s chair: hazarding generalizations, drawing up provisional schemata, trying to connect the dots across a field of fragmented engagements and localized knowledges. These essays record some of my attempts to capture the big picture.

Some scholarly trajectories are the product of will and focus. My more winding path owes everything to serendipity and context. A formative context was of course the Department of Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania, from which I obtained my PhD in 1992. As Karl Mannheim long ago observed, intellectuals take direction from the crisis of their generation ([1923] 1952), and my graduate education coincided with the height of the postmodern and postcolonial critiques of the ethnographic disciplines. I remember it as a time of tears and tension at folklore meetings, followed for many years by fragmentation and a sense of paralysis. Everything seemed impossible, both ethically and intellectually. Ethnography was appropriation, comparison was reduction, and theory was playing God—a God of a particularly patriarchal, monotheistic, and Western tendency. All representation was at best distortion.

The critique was necessary, well-grounded, and far more nuanced than my presentation of it here, but in the heat of debate it was often oversimplified and converted from critique to crisis. What then was to be done? Two alternatives were prominent in my academic neighborhood: the literary and the activist escapes from the burden of representation. At first more among anthropologists than folklorists, there was a turn toward fiction and autobiography: the field adventure became an acknowledged voyage of self-discovery, tethered more or less tenuously to the voices of others. I did not feel this option was open to me: my self was of no interest to a larger audience, and if I had had creative talent I would have become a novelist. It must be said that



some of the work of the period was self-indulgent; to me, at any rate, it seemed a dead end.

The other, activist line took shape as the profession of public folklore was reconfiguring itself, its business tilting from documentation and celebration toward advocacy, collaboration, and technical assistance. Here my experience was more fruitful, if difficult: in three years of work for the Philadelphia Folklore Project I learned the extent of my naïveté and sheltered past. With all my admiration for the models then being developed by Bill Westerman and Debora Kodish, among others, I came to understand that I would have to work for years to build the moral courage and social acumen required for this path, while my temperament and existing abilities might serve me better elsewhere. Instead of trying to kill off my inner dead European academic, therefore, I decided to provincialize it, as Chakrabarty proposes (2000): to think hard about what use I might be as a scholar and how I could do more good than harm from my compromised position. At the same time, I set out to consider what might hold together the centrifugal field of folklore studies.

Of course I had any number of examples of useful work before me in the Penn faculty and across the field. I was best able to follow the lead of my dissertation advisor Roger D. Abrahams and my outside reader, James W. Fernandez. One taught me appropriate ambition, the other an enabling humility before the task. With a restless intellect like my own, Roger was always trying out the boundaries of the field, looking at what folklore and other disciplines had to say to one another. He taught me the value of the academic game and the need to play at a higher level; the need, indeed, to play, for he was incomparably fertile in invention, always trying out new formulations for identifying the effects and devices of vernacular performance. Still today, whenever I have an idea that strikes me as particularly clever, I know that within a day or so I will remember it as an aside that Roger let drop one day.

Jim Fernandez put me back at ease with representation. His recognition that we are all “inchoate pronouns,” struggling to represent ourselves and the world so that action can become possible, taught me to live with the imperfection of our work as well as the imperfection of the human efforts we study. It is all essay, in the etymological sense: a trying-out and trying-on of language always subject to revision or redirection by others. Particularly fruitful for folklorists, and for me as an ethnographer of Spain, was his later work on irony, the most resonant trope in all of the post-fascist, post-socialist, postindustrial, and post-modern worlds we inhabit. I have accepted, and become deeply interested in, the fact that the repertoires most ready to hand are not of our making, carry baggage, and are not going away any time soon.

Like other folklorists, I adapted to my opportunities. I began my career as a painfully timid but committed fieldworker, first working with Italian American craftspeople in Philadelphia, then beginning with my dissertation fieldwork a deeper involvement of many years in Catalonia. Despite my affinity for the ethnographic and philological minutiae, my training did not equip me to be a regional specialist in a language department; jobs in Catalan studies were in any case still thinner on the ground than

those in folklore. After four years of depending on the kindness of colleagues for lecturer positions, in 1996 I had the exceptional good fortune of landing a tenure-track folklore job in the Department of English at the Ohio State University. This sent me into a different direction.

Thanks to the charismatic teaching and interdisciplinary reach of the core faculty at that time—Patrick Mullen, Amy Shuman, and Sabra Webber—Ohio State was already the most diversely networked of any folklore program, anchored in both the English Department and the Department of Comparative Studies and radiating into the language departments, education, the arts, and the social sciences. The next wave of hires—myself, Mark Bender, John W. Roberts, and Margaret Mills, followed a few years after by Gale Modan—did still more to extend our reach across departments. Thus from the beginning of my time at Ohio State I found a host of colleagues in other disciplines who already knew something about folklore studies and were well-disposed toward it. Ohio State was then on an upswing, embracing its new mission as not just land-grant but flagship among the state's public universities, and this facilitated many interdisciplinary collaborations. The presence of the American Folklore Society on our campus from 2001 to 2014 ensured that everyone in the field sooner or later passed through Columbus. Through the years I chaired the Acting Committee on International Issues for the American Folklore Society, created and administered the listserv H-Folk, and travelled frequently to conferences and short-term teaching gigs across Europe; later I served on the Executive Board of the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore, then rising toward its present vitality as SIEF. Students and colleagues from Turkey, Romania, Croatia, India, China and Kenya taught me the life- and-death stakes of the field, as, closer to home, did those working in Appalachia and southwestern Louisiana. There was no shortage of new and renewed perspectives.

Within a few years of my arrival at Ohio State, I was teaching graduate seminars with students from as many as eleven departments at once, ranging from dance to political science. In the first years that mix was sometimes explosive. Learning to respond to work on Chinese storytelling as a model for language pedagogy, ethnic politics in Estonia, gentrification at Moroccan heritage sites, and music festivals in Ohio, I was obliged to think very carefully about how, within a limited number of courses, the field could be encapsulated to be made usable by such a range of students. When in due course I became director of Ohio State's Center for Folklore Studies, a position I occupied from 2005 to 2014, I asked my colleagues to concentrate our efforts for the time being on the cohesiveness of the graduate curriculum, which still today is simply an interdisciplinary specialization rather than an autonomous program. In hiring Katey Borland, Ray Cashman, and Merrill Kaplan, we had our eyes on scholars who could distill the theory and methods of the field compellingly within this limited situation, and who would further thicken our networks across the university. We agreed that other folklore programs were better situated to reproduce the field in its plenitude, but that Ohio State had an exceptional opportunity to make the field available and valuable within the larger academy. At the same time, we felt that,

with our array of international and multidisciplinary students, we were well-positioned to help reformulate the field's comparative agenda within social as well as textual frameworks.

I think we have not done badly—the students have certainly done us proud—although all of this remains a work in progress. At any rate, because I am easily distracted, it turned me into something other than an ethnographer with a sustained engagement in one place and body of traditions. While our graduate curriculum has a clear logic and is built on general principles, my undergraduate teaching is pure bricolage, born of momentary impulses and specific collegial interactions: *Cultures of Waste and Recycling*, *The Fairy Tale and Reality*, *American Regional Cultures*, *Cultural Diplomacy*, and *Poetry and Politics in the Twentieth-Century Mediterranean*. In all of these courses I show the circulation of vernacular genres and strategies in larger societal space: sometimes in complementarity with other cultural formations, sometimes excluded, sometimes appropriated and reinvented, sometimes regulated or conscripted. Like my courses, the research I have managed to complete in recent years oscillates between top-down summations of the big picture and opportunistic slices of life that seek to exemplify how folklore operates in the social world.

Most immediately, the work I've gotten done owes everything to the colleagues nudging me to do it. The essays in Part I of this book were all written to order as part of various disciplinary stock-takings. Having written my first grand synthesis, "Group," just after graduate school, I found myself in the habit of writing such monsters; "Group" is, for good or ill, still the most widely read piece I have published. "The work of folklore studies," as the title of Part I has it, is here laid out in various tours d'horizon intended mostly to create a usable past for the field and to help us situate our immediate endeavors. For this reason they blend the historical with the hortatory; they are in every respect arguable, but that is what they are for, to get us arguing on central questions.

The essays in Part II, "Histories and Economies of Tradition," started instead with bees in my own bonnet: recondite texts that caught my fancy. They are part of a broader turn in the field at present that emphasizes vernacular participation in general cultural history rather than treating folklore as simply a resource taken up by intellectuals for this or that project. I am likewise not satisfied with the too-ready split in our field's historiography between folklore as a project of domination and folklore as a trajectory of resistance. Compromise and accommodation seems to me the zone we normally inhabit, whether folk or folklorist. Of special interest to me are the provincial intellectuals who seek to mediate between "folk" and metropolitan elites, often failing to impress either party but sometimes building enduring cultural structures for social encounter. A subordinate theme in these chapters, one highlighted in my earlier ethnography *Fire in the Praça* (2003) and more recently developed by Jason Baird Jackson, who reinterprets the comparative tradition and especially the work of Hasan El-Shamy in this light (2013b) is the idea of folklore itself as vernacular theory:

typification rather than abstraction of social life that permits collective social reflection and redirection.

In Part III, “Slogan-Concepts and Cultural Regimes,” I return to wrestle with the concepts of our field, but focus this time on their intersection with the slogans of policy and politics. The rise of UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage program, culminating in the Convention of 2003, accelerated and consolidated certain transformations in the Patum of Berga, the festival on which my most sustained ethnographic work has been done. Across the field internationally, it marked the rise of new opportunities and new risks for both folk and folklorists. In these essays I consider the larger political economy within which diverse valorizations of the vernacular are situated, hoping that we will not too readily accept the terms on offer.

But to say no is easy; I do not quite know what my next affirmative move should look like. The publication of this collection, as welcome to me as it was unexpected, can serve as a ritual marker of my passage from mid- to late career, when I hope actually to accomplish some of the work I have laid out for us. Accordingly, I have not sought to update the articles, sometimes written at very particular conjunctures in the news cycle, but have added endnotes to mark changed circumstances and aftermaths. I have retained many formulations I now find embarrassing. I have, however, cleaned up the worst excesses of the prose—I hope.

My research over the years has been sustained by the funding and still more by the intellectual recreations of the Camargo Foundation, Cassis; the Shelby Cullom Davis Center at Princeton University; the Lichtenberg-Kolleg of Georg-August University, Göttingen; the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend Program; the Teagle Foundation’s Big Questions and the Disciplines Program; and the Mershon Center for International Security Studies of the Ohio State University. More importantly, I have had a long run of good fortune in the succession of chairs, directors, and deans in the various academic units in which I have participated over the last nineteen years at Ohio State: the Department of English, the Department of Comparative Studies, the Center for Folklore Studies, the Mershon Center, and the Division of Arts and Humanities. I am thankful for the usual varieties of time off and research funding, but even more for the tolerance of, even enthusiasm for, my peculiar academic profile.

Immediate intellectual obligations are noted as they arise in the articles, but a body of work across a career depends as much on what has been assimilated and forgotten as what is remembered. My debts and my gratitude are widely diffused through the American Folklore Society, the Ohio State University, and colleagues and students in many countries and disciplines. Two colleagues, however, merit special mention. Without the steady, generous attention of Regina F. Bendix and Jason Baird Jackson to my work and well-being across the years, several of these essays would never have been written and this book would not have happened. I am likewise grateful to Gary Dunham and Janice Frisch of Indiana University Press for the splendid opportunity to collect this work and their patient labor in seeing it through.

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# **Part I: The Work of Folklore Studies**

# 1. Humble Theory<sup>(1)</sup>

SOME OF YOU will remember the dictionary definition of the word humble, as propounded by Charlotte the Spider: “not proud and near the ground” (White 1952). Just as Charlotte found the epithet appropriate to Wilbur the Pig, perhaps we can agree that it is appropriate to folklorists and the kind of theory-making to which we should aspire. We who wear the scarlet F upon our bosoms are perhaps in no position to be proud, and for the present I think we should stop worrying about it: we would be better off cultivating shamelessness. If we are proud of anything, to be sure, it is of being near the ground. I enter, therefore, a plea not for grand but for humble theory.

Folklorists occupy a certain historical and institutional ground; we have built on it for a long time and our theoretical aspirations necessarily take it as their launch pad. Two issues lie behind the question posed for the AFS forum, “Why is there no grand theory in folkloristics?”

One, as I’ve suggested, is straightforward status anxiety. We labor under the stigma of the F-word and are constantly having either to explain it or to invent in its place new euphemisms. Since the latter arise from the desire to flee the stigma rather than an emergent reordering of the discipline, they are doomed to failure.

I have limited faith in collective campaigns for disciplinary respectability. As everyone from Castiglione to Molière to Bourdieu tells us, the quest for social distinction is doomed to undermine itself. I would also remind us that we are not the only discipline suffering from status anxiety. Even political scientists, who occupy a space far higher than we do on the imagined ladder toward transcendent knowledge, characteristically experience what international relations scholar Ned Lebow likes to call “physics envy.” In the course of interaction with specialists in international relations over the years, I have discovered that not a few suffer also from folklore envy. Their grand theories having failed to predict such non-negligible matters as the end of the Cold War, they find themselves attracted to disciplines closer to the ground and attuned to contingencies, softer voices, and the constraints of language and history.

Folklorists, likewise, envy actors both below and above us on this stairway to heaven. Closer to the ground than we are the artists and activists who make social life and

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<sup>(1)</sup> This piece is a lightly revised transcript of my comments at the forum “Why Is There No ‘Grand Theory’ in Folkloristics?” organized by Lee Haring and held at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society in 2005. The 2008 articles by Richard Bauman and John W. Roberts, cited here, were both published in the same special issue of the *Journal of Folklore Research* as my own contribution. Originally published as “Humble Theory,” *The Question of Grand Theory*. Special issue of the *Journal of Folklore Research* 45 (2008): 37–43.

whose collective labor shapes its forms. We long to be creative writers or makers of the revolution, not parasites upon such endeavors.

On the other side we have theory envy. The theory in question is typically not the grand theory of social science but the high theory of literary studies and philosophy. The latter has more glamour but can also be more resonant to folklorists, for in its poetic or world-making ambitions it mimics the primary symbolic systems we study.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes we throw up our climbing ropes and haul ourselves painfully from the ground of social experience to the heights of, for example, poststructuralism—often hanging by a thread from a cliff rather than finding a secure footing, step by step. I would remind us of our historical position on the slope or, better said, in the middle. The folklorist has characteristically been a provincial intellectual, and while this position has no glamour whatsoever, it's more significant than we think. The nation-state was made stable by the labor of provincial intellectuals trying to integrate their local realities and the overarching order into a viable whole. Today provincial intellectuals are wrestling with globalization. It's a position that poses strong temptations, to which some folklorists in a variety of historical situations have succumbed—hence the stain of the scarlet F—but it's also a position that offers constructive and critical opportunities possessed neither by the top nor the bottom. We need to learn to live with the ambivalence of the middle position.

The second issue we face is the need to map out useful work in the world for the people who call themselves folklorists. Here I feel there is something to be done. So let me stress that while I don't find the notion of grand theory useful to us at this stage in our disciplinary life—or perhaps ever—I am absolutely not refusing theory as such either in general or for folklorists: I am rather trying to define our right relationship to it.

First, we need to recognize the necessary complexity of folkloristic practice. If you will indulge a lapsed Episcopalian, folklore is a trinity, of which the three persons are indivisible. The field cannot theorize without strongly grounded, in-depth ethnography of particulars. The field has no purpose without engagement in the world, trying to understand and amend the social processes that created the F-word and other, far worse stigmas. Practice in the world has no lasting efficacy without theory to clarify its means and ends and make its efforts cumulative. The ethnographer, the practitioner, and the theorist are mutually dependent and mutually constitutive: they cohabit, to

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<sup>1</sup> These symbolic systems are, of course, the mode of vernacular theory, which calls on metaphor rather than abstraction to encapsulate and clarify reality. As Charles Briggs pointed out in the AFS discussion, vernacular theory was the empty chair at our table in this forum. Vernacular theory is more intimately linked to capital-T Theory than we think. Of course postcolonial studies, science studies, and other fields have amply revealed the Eurocentric categories informing supposedly culture-free theoretical formulations, but there is also a positive side to the relationship. Many in the hard sciences, where grand theory is so unproblematized that it need not be named and defended as such, freely recognize the poetic foundations of their thinking and the frequent impetus to scientific discovery from humble metaphor (e.g., Ziman 1991). Closer to home, the new identity-based disciplines have made an explicit point of building academic theory out of vernacular theory (Roberts 1999, 135).



different degrees, in singular folklorist bodies. We tend to forget this and too often moralize the differences between these three tasks because historically they have informed three different types of institution: the archive, the public practice, and the academic program. We who are lodged in these institutions acquire their local dispositions and can hardly help knowing where our bread is buttered. But when any of these three labors is neglected, the discipline suffers. We are currently at the end of a long phase of reaction to an earlier overemphasis on theory, when the lures of science and of objectivity tore us painfully from both grounded understandings and the pursuit of social justice. A restored focus on ethnography and practice has resulted in enormously improved ethnography and more successful practice. But the field has paid a price in fragmentation, no longer knowing how to draw intellectual connections between one situation and another. This fragmentation doesn't only impoverish theory per se: it also saps our ability to understand ethnographic particulars and to create coalitions towards practical ends of liberation.

Instead, we need to render unto theory what is due to theory. In part that means getting over our anxiety about reductionism. Thought is reduction. But humble theory recognizes that all our work is essay, in the etymological sense: a trying-out of interpretation, a provisional framing to see how it looks. In the absence of a better alternative, there is much to be said for the Enlightenment project. Science reduces reality in an effort to understand it but it also lays itself open to an ongoing process of collective correction and revision. While science as converted into institutional practice has often not lived up to its own ideals, so that its authority has legitimated various kinds of oppression, we can nonetheless recognize that science's own ideology gives us the tools to make this critique. And there is still a qualitative difference in openness to revision between, let's say, evolutionary theory and intelligent design.

While I would like us, in a humble spirit, to reclaim theory, I would not go so far as to look for grand theory. Grand theory constructs for itself grand objects: human nature, the nature of society, and so forth. Folklore does not have the resources to set up in competition with sociology, psychology, or anthropology. Our history has given us a smaller garden to cultivate, but not an infertile one.

We have our scarlet F to think about. Those forms and practices that have historically been labeled as folklore do not reside in dramatically different and distant cultural worlds from that of the labelers. Folklore is the intimate Other of modernity, the remnant that can be swept out of sight but not easily disposed of. Dell Hymes and others have long argued that the stone the builders had rejected should become the cornerstone of the human sciences.<sup>2</sup> There is no reason we should not work toward this goal—but we must recognize our immediate practical limitations. Folklore is also the intimate Other of the academy. We are there and not going away, but we will continue to make our colleagues uneasy and we are not going to have armies of scholars out

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<sup>2</sup> This metaphor was invoked by The Remnant, an appropriately named hip-hop group, in their performance at the opening ceremony of the 2005 AFS annual meeting.

saving the world for folklore any time soon—which may be a good thing. Dealing with the residual, the emergent, and the interstitial gives us quite enough ground for the few of us there are to occupy it.

Along with the external constraints on our disciplinary space, our internal intellectual history provides us with a limited but important ground to build on. We should remember that the American Folklore Society was founded as an act of opposition to the grand theory of the period: evolutionary biology as it was mistakenly generalized to account for cultural and social difference. Franz Boas' message was that anthropologists were theorizing in advance of the facts, as Sherlock Holmes would say: they did not yet know how to read the particulars of cultural situations. William Wells Newell deliberately brought together Francis James Child and Franz Boas—one looking at the English stock then celebrated as the apex of cultural evolution, one looking at Native Americans, seen by many anthropologists as savages at the bottom of the ladder. By putting the expressions of both of these groups under the common lens of German philological method (cf. Bauman 2008) and by explicitly setting up these two groups along with new immigrants and once-enslaved Africans as the range of subjects whose lore the AFS should examine, Newell was insisting on the common humanity and common historicity of the people whom grand theory had set asunder (1888). Our field was thus at the inauguration of what Jason Baird Jackson has called “the Americanist tendency toward theoretical modesty, grounded in an appreciation of the complexities of history and ethnography located in actual places and times” (2004, 202). As the presidential address of Dell Hymes in 1974 strongly reminded us, this is a usable past (1975).<sup>3</sup>

For the moment, we are better equipped to criticize grand theory than to build it. At the same time, however, we can continue to address that middle territory between grand theory and local interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Performance theory, it's often said, is only method, but method takes us to theory. We begin to think in the act of describing and see particulars in the act of comparing. We need an analytical vocabulary allowing us to move across situations. We cannot leapfrog from the local into transcendent meaning, and my political scientist friends are encountering the reverse problem as they try to plummet in the other direction. The questions proper to our field are in the middle of the ladder. They are not Why-questions but How-questions, about the life of forms in society. They are our old topics: transmission, performance, and differentiation. How do forms move across time and space and remain recognizable? How do the people who recurrently interact in a given situation generate forms in common, and how do those forms work back again upon their makers? How is form marked by voice, such that we

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<sup>3</sup> Naturally this, like all origin myths, must be treated as such: rhetorically useful and unencumbered by inconvenient nuance. John W. Roberts' closer reading of Newell (2008) reveals that American folklore was not as free of the Europeans' nationalism or the anthropologists' evolutionary racism as we would like to think. But like all good constitutions, Newell's initial program for the AFS provides a blueprint for the eventual transcendence of its own historical limitations.

<sup>4</sup> In discussion, Gary Alan Fine pointed to Robert K. Merton's “theories of the middle range.”

can recognize it as folk, or as Cajun, or as mine or as Other? We have two centuries of scholarship built upon this ground, which in recent years we have neglected. Humble it may be, but we have a there there. We have a there here and need not go looking to the stars—cosmic or academic—for salvation.

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## 2. Group<sup>(2)</sup>

IDEAS ABOUT GROUP are the most powerful and the most dangerous in folklore studies. Our influence as a discipline has often come from arguing for small groups against big groups. Against imperialism, we argue for the nation-state; denying the homogeneity of the nation-state, we argue for the ethnic group or the social class; at last, wary of the dangers of essentialism at any level, we turn to the face-to-face community.

It is less comfortable to recall that we have also argued for big groups against small groups: for the historical and racial unity of a nation against the diversity within it, for example. Today, on the left, we often participate in efforts to redefine and organize stigmatized social categories as “communities”. Looking to the right, we cringe as we see our abandoned structural-functionalist models reborn in claims for “community values”. Applying for grants, we know we’ll do better if we can frame our project around a “community”—that is, a viable political constituency—instead of a practice.

We prove the reality of a group by demonstrating that it has a culture, unified within and differentiable without (Handler 1988). In documenting, “preserving”, and synthesizing this culture into canonical forms—the Kalevala, the Kinder- und Hausmärchen, the Catalan sardana, the open-air museum, the American ethnic festival—we diffuse and generalize it among that group’s potential members, thus improving the isomorphy of group and culture (Klusen [1967] 1986).

And yet, working ethnographically, we are aware of the fragility of the group concept put to the test. We learn in interaction of the status differences within a group that may make men public, and women private, performers; we discover the creative individual whose influence galvanizes and directs performance in a particular milieu; we find that a festival declared by all to be a celebration of unity is in fact animated by vigorous factionalism; we discover the complex networks of contacts and influences feeding into and emerging from an apparently bounded community.

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<sup>(2)</sup> This article was first drafted for “Common Ground: Keywords for the Study of Expressive Culture,” a special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* appearing in 1995, then corrected and slightly updated for the published volume of 2003. Here I again clarify phrasing that does not satisfy me, but I have added ethnographic updates only in a few footnotes and have not updated references or my own formulations. 1995 represents the ethnographic present of the situations described, and this is by now a very long time ago in the history of vernacular culture. The internet was just opening up its possibilities, neoliberalism loomed less large over those of us in middle-class jobs in rich countries, and UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage Convention had yet to take shape. That said, I think the article largely grasps the directions in which we were headed. Originally published as “Group,” in *Eight Words for the Study of*

The impossibility of a neat definition of the group became clear to me one day in 1988 when, as part of fieldwork for the Philadelphia Folklore Project, I was visiting Italian Market Days, the autumn festival that promotes the market to the rest of the city. With a photographer, I had come to rest in front of the greased pole, a New World reflex of the *albero di cuccagna*. The Tree of Cockayne, a common feature of European carnivals, promises infinite satisfaction if only you can get to the top of it. In this realization it was a twenty-five foot metal pole planted by the city on the base of a street lamp; from a little platform on the top there hung lengths of salame, a leg of prosciutto, balls of cheese, and an envelope of money. The length of the pole had been generously rubbed with bacon fat.

A group of teenage boys clustered around the pole, trying to get up. By their looks they were working-class Italian-Americans, the kids who work in the market. They had come up with a collaborative strategy, forming a tight circle of bodies at the base and a second layer of lighter boys on their shoulders. They had to decide on the best way of linking arms and scrambling up backs, and they tumbled down several times before getting it right. Then a few boys tried for the top, inching up with their knees, sometimes wiping the fat off with a towel, always sliding back down at the end. At one point a girl came in and climbed up to the second layer, but the hands and the jokes of the boys became too much, and she soon retreated. Later we were agreeably surprised to see an African American boy stepping in: he was dressed like the others and seemed to be a friend, remaining part of the group until the end. Exhibition label text began composing itself in my head: here was the freedom of the marketplace fostering multiethnic collaboration for the common prize. I checked myself—was my subconscious turning Republican on me?—and the boys also decided to take a rest. We and a large crowd had been watching them, rapt, for a good hour and a half.

The advent of a Southeast Asian man prevented that text from ever being written. Perhaps from the new Vietnamese neighborhood adjacent to the market, the man looked thirty; he was wearing nothing but a brief pair of white shorts, and he strode straight to the pole through the gap made by the relaxing boys. Then, with no help whatsoever, he started up, using his feet instead of his knees. On his second try he had reached the top and grasped the leg of prosciutto, grinning hugely.

The boys on the ground, who had been frozen with surprise, now began to stir. They shouted at him, struck at the low part of the pole. One, then another, threw a sneaker at him, narrowly missing. Then they began to shake the pole from side to side. The man decided to come down before the shoes became stones and, trying to treat it as a joke, smiled and walked away rather quickly.

As we caught our breath—imagining the consequences if there had been a larger Vietnamese presence in the crowd—the boys started up at the pole again. This time, galvanized by the competition and having observed the Asian man's technique, they made it up within a quarter of an hour. The boy on top scrambled onto the platform,

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Expressive Culture, ed. Burt Feintuch. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2003), 7–41.

enjoying his triumph, and gestured to the crowd, tossing small toys down to them and waving his clasped hands in victory. Eventually he took the envelope of money and slid down to the cheers of his companions.

The photographer approached him and asked what we were both wondering. “What happened?” she said. “That black kid was with you, and that was okay. Why couldn’t the Asian guy get it?”

He was not at all embarrassed. “We know that kid,” he said. “We go to school together, he works in the market with us, he’s a friend. But this Chinese guy—” (“Chinese! I hate Chinese!” interjected one of his friends) “—just came out of nowhere. This is an Italian festival, an Italian should get it. He’s got his own festival to win at.” Then he excused himself: he was ready for a beer.

The first time I told this story in class I learned that the incident was not unique: a student interrupted my recital to say that he had seen an Asian shaken off the pole that year. The story highlights many of the familiar contradictions of contemporary American identity politics.

- “Italian Market” is in fact an outsider’s term, a tourist label. Locals call it the Ninth Street Market and are aware that it used to be Jewish and that its clientele is increasingly African American. Nonetheless, the market sells itself to the city at large as Italian. And the Asian man, though a neighbor, was clearly not a member.
- Ethnic and racial prejudice diminish with frequency of interaction and—crucially—with common economic interests. The Italian owners of Ninth Street businesses depend on African American labor and customers.<sup>1</sup> The Vietnamese, however, shop in their own stores and compete in the restaurant business.
- As we know from the theorists of creolization, childhood is the key moment of mixing: those you grow up with are Americans, the ones who come after are strangers. This incident took place only a decade after the Vietnamese had “come out of nowhere” and begun to settle in this depopulating neighborhood.
- Festival politics in Philadelphia today territorializes, essentializes, and compartmentalizes ethnicity. Each group that has arrived at political representation has its “own” festival, in which others are invited as spectators and consumers, but in which the insiders alone have the right to participate. Ideally, festivals are located in centers of historical settlement that still retain a high residential concentration of the group celebrated. The miniaturization of the ideology of the bounded nation-state in the urban village can be seen in the T-shirts, sold during Italian Market Days, that layer the map of Italy over the map of South Philadelphia.

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<sup>1</sup> Relative racial integration at the market belied still rigid residential segregation in South Philadelphia, and in that context I heard some fiercely racist comments from Italian Americans who felt that

In contrast, the pan-African diaspora celebration of Odunde has suffered continual harassment from claiming a site on South Street, a historical center of African American culture, but now the border of a gentrified area. Odunde has repeatedly been treated by the city as requiring containment, and the city has sponsored alternative festivals in more clearly African American and less “central” locations, such as North Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively—and better yet from the city’s point of view—festivals are put in the neutral spaces of Penn’s Landing and the Parkway, each group getting its turn at these barren sites devoid of everyday resonances. Here one finds the ethnic festival at its most formulaic: only the colors of the flag and the spice in the sausage change from Sunday to Sunday.

- White people cannot tell Asians apart: hence, to obtain civic recognition and civil rights, such historical enemies as the Vietnamese and the Cambodians, both possibly seen as “Chinese,” are obliged to form Asian-American Associations and work together as a bloc. The same often goes for Latinos; the diverse Africans brought to these shores by slave traders went through the process long ago, and new African and Caribbean immigrants are confronting “blackness” as a social category that erases their own distinctiveness.
- The most spectacular performance genres of such festivals are marked explicitly as ethnic, but might just as well be labelled by gender. The exclusion of the Asian man was breathtakingly visible; the exclusion of the Italian-American girl was effected by a quieter and more intimate transgression of her person to inform her that she was transgressing male space. This level of “intimate difference” (Mills 1993) easily goes unnoticed in larger political-economic debates.

Several definitions of collectivity are at play (at war?) in this incident. The group created in everyday interaction, the group united by common interest, the group made by exoteric ascription, the bounded descent group, the group defined by territory, the gendered peer group, the group as a category of political and touristic representation, and the group emerging from performance all make their cases here.

But perhaps we may simplify the problem. At bottom, folklorists have been interested in the group as the locus of culture and as the focus of identity. Our difficulties with such concepts as “folk”, “nation”, “race”, and so on may be seen as resulting from the confusion of the two. Starting from the formulations of the “Towards New Perspectives” paradigm, we can distinguish between the empirical network of interactions in which culture is created and moves, and the community of the social imaginary that occasionally emerges in performance. Our everyday word “group” might best serve as shorthand for the dialogue between the two.

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African Americans were encroaching on their neighborhoods.

<sup>2</sup> See Philadelphia Folklore Project 1993 for an account of Odunde.

## Towards new perspectives on the folk: small groups and differential identities

The essentialism and othering inherent in the word folk are now such commonplaces of our discipline that I need not discuss them here: it is for this reason, I am sure, that I was assigned the less loaded term group for this keywords issue. Certainly the prestige of Dan Ben-Amos' definition of folklore was another reason. When, as part of the would-be scientific revolution that culminated in the publication of *Towards New Perspectives in Folklore*, Ben-Amos defined folklore as "artistic communication in small groups" (1972), he intended the sociological conception of small group to overcome some of the difficulties inherent in the notion of folk.<sup>3</sup> The classist, racist, and antimodern connotations of folk were all problematic in an American context; moreover, the word was tied to an old paradigm that understood the people as bearers, not makers, of tradition. Following Alan Dundes' assertion that a folk group could be "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor" (1965, 2), Ben-Amos identified two conditions that must hold "for the folkloric act to happen": "both the performers and the audience have to be in the same situation and be part of the same reference group" (1972, 12). The face-to-face criterion, drawn from sociology, focused attention on the interactions of the performance situation and the shaping role of audience; the notion of reference group carried this concern with audience into the interpretive realm, implying the specificity of meaning to a particular group with shared codes and values, a common identity.

For different historical reasons, German *Volkskunde* also found itself uncomfortable with the Volk in this period. Klusen, in his article "The Group Song as Group Object" ([1967] 1986, 186–187) proposed the same terminological shift as Ben-Amos: he would use the social-science notion of the primary or face-to-face group. Group, he declared, is more objective a conception than community—the latter being, like folk, an idealization of a more complex reality. Instead, group "defines an exact unity of people who interact". It can be ad hoc or short-lived and need not be grounded in a historical identity. "It must be guaranteed that they all know each other, that all can communicate directly with each other and that they can interact directly, i.e., from two to a few dozen people. It is necessary that every group have at least one dominant element in its make-up and function, what folklorists have called the 'creative thought'"—that is, Dundes' common factor or the unity of Ben-Amos' reference group.

Like Ben-Amos, Klusen begins to suggest a redefinition of the group in his critique of the notion of community. He insists that the community sought by folklorists is not a vanishing survival, but a project for the future, and likewise, that the national song did not exist until Herder created it. The diffusion through print of the songs collected by early folklorists turned them into national culture (*ibid.*, 198–199).

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<sup>3</sup> A scientific revolution was intended in both senses: the creation of a new paradigm, and one rather social-scientific than humanistic. The new paradigm did subsequently emerge, happily resolving



Intimations that the group is a product of interaction rather than its precondition were followed up by the Texas school. The Texas approach emerged from the quiet insistence of Américo Paredes on the role of cross-border gazing in both performance and scholarship. It built upon the awareness of folklorists (themselves often African American or Latino) doing fieldwork on the borders that the face-to-face group is by no means the only and certainly not the most dangerous locus of performance (see Kodish 1993). The Texas concern with “neighborly names” and interethnic performance both hostile and hospitable, culminating in Abrahams’ concept of the display event (1981), called on an implicit network model of interaction between different social positions. Bauman pointed out that scholars had previously tended to conceptualize the folklore-bearing group as a social category, that is, as people sharing a given status or label. Instead, the sociological idea of group proposed by Ben-Amos depended not on shared identity but on the fact of regular interaction (1972). As Bauman demonstrated, much folklore in fact takes place in regular interaction between people belonging to different social categories, and plays upon this very fact of difference. Boasting, competition, denigration, hospitality, teasing all depend on and highlight the difference in social location between performer and addressee. The large-scale display events that have become characteristic of plural societies draw boundaries as loci of political, economic, and cultural conflict.

The Texas approach lets us see how, in the greased pole contest, the category of “Italian” is situationally invoked as a boundary device: it quietly encompassed the African American male, silently excluded the Italian-American female, and noisily expelled the Asian. The genre of display event, or, more specifically, ethnic festival allows us to understand the rules unwittingly—or deliberately?—breached by the stranger. There at the “traditional” core of the festival, the part most highly marked as esoteric, instead of watching and admiring as his role called for, he showed the Italians up on their own turf. In punishing this serious breach of display event etiquette, one of the boys proffered the culturally sanctioned alternative: “He’s got his own festival to win at.”

The display event model presumes a larger society of complex linkages within which boundaries are regularly drawn and redrawn. Performance, sanctioned and unsanctioned, becomes a key means of boundary construction and maintenance, each festival or demonstration declaring difference between copresent individuals.

## Network, Transmission, Boundary-Drawing

That groups are not homogeneous is the first realization of any scholar doing fieldwork. The first stages of fieldwork are a trajectory through a social network, from the margins toward the center.<sup>4</sup> Initially we are often sent to the high-status marginals of a network: its “brokers,” those accustomed to dealing with outsiders and representing

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into a socially aware but essentially humanistic framework. See Shuman and Briggs 1993 for evaluations.

<sup>4</sup> I owe this point to Michael Krippendorf.

the inside to them. If we show ourselves to be at all open, the low-status marginals also gravitate to us—eccentrics, alcoholics, “street-corner philosophers.” All of these, high and low, transform their enforced social distance into critical distance: attempting to defend their distinction, their exclusion, or their chosen exile from a group and its habits, they think a great deal about the group and develop a discourse that sounds rather close to our own theory. Initially, at least, we may find them the most articulate consultants. From us, bearers of alternate and sometimes more prestigious values, they in turn seek validation for their own distance.

But our object is to get to the center: the best singers, the men who dress the devils, the healer. For this we have to rely on introductions, connections, friends-of-friends. If, after long and patient self-insinuation, we do reach the center, we learn that we can no longer simply depart. Our entry has changed the shape of the network, and we are part of it. Not that we have assimilated, become like them: on the contrary, our difference is often what makes us valuable. The important thing is that we have contracted ties through the hospitality shown us. Our physical departure from the group does nothing to change this; indeed, it may heighten our usefulness. When we return to our own land of business schools, Rockies to be climbed, and Timberland boots, we are called upon to reciprocate.

The riddle is a genre particularly dependent on network structure, and has led more than one folklorist to propose a network model. As new fieldworkers in small-scale communities, Roger D. Abrahams and Alessandro Falassi both found themselves targets of riddling, in part out of hostility toward outsiders, in part because they provided a new audience or butt for the good old jokes (Abrahams 1983; Falassi 1980, 92–93). Honorio Velasco found that riddles were differentially distributed in a Spanish village among networks of family, neighbors, or friends, and that they were habitually directed out from the center of these networks towards newcomers and children for the obvious reason that everyone else knew them already. He concluded that “...the real social locus of oral tradition (at least of riddles) is not the local community, but social networks.... The intervention of specific ties is differential, or can be, for the different genres of oral tradition. In the case of riddles, the diversity of ties is greater than in that of proverbs. The amplitude, density, and openness of a social network are factors determining the availability of texts and their renewal” (Velasco 1986, 172–73, translation mine).

Kenneth S. Goldstein had made the same discovery in the Northeast of Scotland more than twenty years before. Observing that riddling was a marginal activity among adults in the settled rural population, he asked why it continued vital among the Travellers, a formerly itinerant group. He concluded that the energetic visiting practices of the Travellers—a relic of the solidarity of their wandering days—gave them the opportunity to learn new riddles, while the settled population, whose social circle was limited to immediate neighbors, knew all its riddles already and found no amusement in telling them. This analysis was confirmed by the fact that children, who because of the geographic scope of rural schools, had a larger acquaintance than either adult

group, were the most enthusiastic riddlers of all. “It follows that in those societies in which the network of outside contacts is large there will be a more vital riddling tradition than in those societies with a more limited series of outside contacts” (1963, 333).

Goldstein’s interest in the Traveller population and his reliance on an implicit network model both grow out of the northern European folkloristic tradition of transmission studies. Ever since Benfey’s hypothesis of Indian origins for folktales, folklorists had been considering the role of migrant populations and professional itinerants such as gypsies, colporteurs, and journeyman artisans in the diffusion of oral tradition. Carl W. von Sydow put forward a sophisticated account of the process in his critique of the super-organicism and mechanicism of the Finnish model ([1932]1948). Rejecting the theory of the automigration of tales, von Sydow emphasized the movement of people, in both permanent migrations and the temporary movements of work, military service, and visits to kin, markets, and festivals. He speaks not only of mass migrations, but of the movement of individuals, and how their formation of new relations facilitates the exchange of tradition. He recognizes a differential diffusion based on the channels and barriers of economic and political relationships. Still more important, he noted the uneven distribution of tradition within apparently homogeneous communities, depending on differential experience resulting from such factors as occupation, gender, age, and social position, and from such different contexts as the ritual, the familial, and the casual.

Even the “oikotype”, a concept suggesting belief in a bounded homogeneous community, is more flexible than von Sydow has generally been given credit for. The development of a conspicuous eco-type<sup>5</sup> depends on the degree of isolation and integration in a given area; to use Benedict Anderson’s term, it depends on the “limited pilgrimages” of residents ([1983]1991). “The narrower the cultural area is, the more uniform will be the development and the more distinct the oicotypifications” (von Sydow [1932]1948, 16).

Von Sydow’s insights have led to a large body of subsequent work: studies of active and passive tradition bearers (e.g., Goldstein 1972), public and private traditions and gendered performance (e.g., Mathias and Raspa 1985; Thomas 1983), individual makers of songs (e.g., Abrahams 1970; Ives 1964), and new channels of transmission such as the telephone and the mass media (e.g., Dégh 1994). Dégh’s work on legend transmission (notably in Dégh and Vászonyi 1975) explicitly builds on von Sydow’s program, and in turn the sociologically networked folklorist Gary Alan Fine integrates social network theory into this “multi-conduit” model (Fine 1979, 1980).

Despite Bauman’s declaration of differential identity (1972, 34),<sup>6</sup> the performance approach and the broader ethnography of communication have deep roots in this tra-

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<sup>5</sup> The field has not anglicized von Sydow’s term as I have just done, but to do so would foster a fuller discussion of its affordances and pitfalls.

<sup>6</sup> Bauman described von Sydow as emphasizing the local level and the obstacles of political bound-

dition: consider their concerns with authority and rights to performance, disclaimers, reported speech, and so forth. The return to a newly formulated textuality (see Bauman and Briggs 1990) has brought these continuities to the forefront.

We should recall that our comparative tradition compares texts, not national or local “cultures”. Turning from evolutionism to diffusionism, this kind of comparativism retains no necessary link to a nationalist or racist agenda and indeed precludes an understanding of the group as bounded. Rather, it presupposes a network model in which any individual or geographic community can be seen as a nexus in a variety of relationships and social ties: some intimate and long-lasting, others temporary but influential.

Folklorists have a long tradition of using the network as both field method and theoretical model. The more formal development of the network idea in sociology and social anthropology can enrich this usage and facilitate a more fine-grained analysis of the social base of cultural practices.

## Social Network Theory

According to Jeremy Boissevain, the notion of social network was initially broached by Radcliffe-Brown in 1940 as a means of testing empirically the assumptions of structural functionalism. That is, the network model was a means of understanding the group and particularly the notion of social control at the experiential level (Boissevain 1989, 557).<sup>7</sup>

Methodologically, we construct a network by placing an individual at the center and charting all of her social relationships, then tracing the relationships between all of her connections and adding in all of their connections. The resulting structure of linked individuals will have certain obvious features:

- Greater or lesser size of the first-order zone (immediate acquaintances) and the second-order zone (acquaintances of acquaintances, including the eminently useful friend-of-a-friend). The role of culture “brokers” between social groups enters here, as a single tie in the first-order zone can open up a large number of ties in the outer zone.
- Greater or lesser density: “the ratio of actual to potential contacts” (Milroy 1987, 46). Socially mobile individuals tend to have sparse networks, knowing many individuals who are not known to each other. In more stable situations, dense networks in which everyone knows everyone else are likely to emerge. Typically, “mobile” and “stable” have been interpreted literally, with proximity and longevity

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aries. To me it looks the other way around. His generation of Young Turks needed to take a stand against influential elders; in a more precarious academy my own generation of folklorists needs to claim a legacy.

<sup>7</sup> I take my account of sociological network theory primarily from Boissevain 1989 and from the

of residence taken as predictive of a dense network. However, a dense network may well be global, as long as it comprises regular interactants: one may think of such specialized occupational groups as international bankers, opera singers, royalty, and folklorists.

- Centrality and peripherality. An individual may be central to a network—that is, known personally to everyone in it—or peripheral, dependent for access on a few intermediaries (the typical situation of the newcomer or the fieldworker).
- Clustering. Within a large network dense clusters emerge—nuclear families, small bands of close friends, cabals, etc.

Less easily read but equally important to network description are its interactive aspects—that is, the specific qualities of its individual ties. These include:

- Multiplexity or single-stranded relationships. A relationship may be based on only one factor: working together, for example. A multiplex relationship is one in which my sister-in-law works with me, lives in the house down the block, and spends her free time in my kitchen chatting.
- The content of a relationship: occupational, familial, neighborly, sociable, erotic, political, commercial, etc.
- The frequency of a tie: daily meetings versus yearly Christmas cards.
- The duration of a tie: a casual affair versus a lifelong partnership. The tie acquires a history, with periods of greater or lesser intensity, variety in the content of the relationship, and so forth.
- Affective intensity: the father-daughter tie may be more highly valued than the worker-worker tie in a given situation, but where workers regularly share dangerous experiences at a distance from their families, it may be less intimate. Conversely, a short-lived tie may rank high in intensity: if once I met Miles Davis or was presented to the Queen of England, this tie may figure more largely in my personal identity and my conversation than its duration alone would warrant.
- Exchange rights and obligations: the directional flow of goods and services in the relationship. Depending on status and power differentials, one party may be defined as patron and one client; one provider, the other customer; both as colleagues.

Structural and interactional characteristics of networks affect each other. In particular, a dense network tends also to be multiplex. This kind of network has been

the most studied, in part because it fits our classic notion of community, in part for obvious methodological reasons. In such situations, to make one acquaintance is to make several, and a friend of a friend is easily pulled into the everyday round of interactions. Thus the working-class neighborhood, the “urban village,” has been the key site of sociological fieldwork, just as folklorists have found their work most satisfying in African American churches, Newfoundland outposts, Turkish villages, or Maine lumber camps. The dense multiplex network is also likely to be the repository of conservative vernacular culture. Characterized by frequent interaction, a high degree of solidarity, and an equally high degree of social control effected by mutual observation and gossip, this sort of network has sufficient integrity to resist the pressure of hegemonic norms.

Sociolinguistic change has been understood to depend on second-order ties and peripheral network members (Milroy and Milroy 1992, following Granovetter 1982). It is these weak ties that connect networks to the larger society, and create what integrity a society has. New forms enter networks through the observation of colleagues, employers, or neighbors from other ethnic groups. The innovations made available through these boundary encounters are most often taken up by the peripheral network members least subject to social control. Once a critical mass of peripheral members have adopted an innovation, central members incur less risk in taking it up; their influence then quickly causes the innovation to become general (Milroy 1987).

Paradoxically, then, the weak ties are culturally powerful, a fact folklorists have also long recognized in studying not only the center of the community, but its marginals: the gypsies, the drunks, the migrants, the peddlers. Walter Benjamin recognized the two poles of cultural transmission when he defined his two archetypal storytellers. One is the longtime member of the village community: the oldest inhabitant, we might say, recalling the procedures for the legal ascertainment of local custom in medieval Europe (Thompson 1993). His (or her) tales are those of the founding struggles, the exemplars, the external threats vanquished. The other is the traveller who tells the news: the bizarre, the marvelous, the unimagined. The two figures and the two kinds of narration merge into the same life-cycle, Benjamin notes, in the journeyman artisan, whose *Wanderjahre* end in a triumphant return to the point of origin (1969, 85). Therefore it is not so much a question of different sorts of community members, but of the multiple interactive worlds of individuals.

Ulf Hannerz, also following Granovetter, follows up this interest in the weak ties that provide access to new models and alternative norms. He suggests the network metaphor as the most suitable way of understanding the “global ecumene,” a world interconnected by migrations, marketplaces, and media. In the latter connection he confirms our ethnographic finding that we need not think of all ties as face to face, for some are made through the mass media, and many more are made through limited-circulation media like the professional journal, small-scale media like the cassette tape and home video camera, and interpersonal media like the telephone, the internet, and

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excellent summary in Milroy 1987. Milroy and Milroy 1992; Hannerz 1992 offer helpful updates.

the old-fashioned letter. The postmodern world, then, is not a collection of bounded nation-states, but a “network of networks” (Hannerz 1992).

Density and multiplexity, or the lack thereof, must be understood as strategic rather than natural to a given situation. Network ties, being defined by interaction, disappear with disuse: they are not like the apparently eternal ties of shared identity. Here we need to remember that unhappy verb, “to network,” which figures so largely in the lives of new Ph.D.s and other mobile individuals seeking stability. For precariously situated individuals, it is advantageous not only to make numerous contacts but to intensify existing ones with affective content and material obligation: to make friends of the neighbors, to suggest a useful resource to a senior colleague, to fix up a brother with a best friend, to find a job for a cousin newly arrived from the old country. Mobile individuals, however, will tend to network upwards, with those who have more resources than they do, and to let downward ties lapse.

Characteristically, according to Milroy, middle-class people have the least incentive and opportunity to form dense multiplex networks. These, rather, are characteristic of traditional working classes and of elites—contexts of comparative equality and stability. The rich need to defend their position by a solidary distribution of rewards and the exclusion of intruders, and the poor need to pool scarce resources in order to use them effectively. A shared territory is crucial to working class community, however, for it allows the frequent interaction and mutual observation that the rich can maintain through airplane tickets and fax machines. The disruption of working class neighborhoods, as during urban renewal, thus breaks up networks. Denied their accustomed occasions of personal respect and recognition, relocated people are inclined to become more interested in impersonal respect and recognition through the signs of status—education and consumer goods (Milroy 1987).<sup>8</sup>

Hannerz broadens this picture of network strategies, proposing a model of three (1992, 44–45). “Segregativity” is the tendency to maintain the distance between one’s divergent contacts, compartmentalizing one’s activities. “Integrativity” is a strategy of drawing links between one’s disparate connections, attempting to bridge the gaps but maintain diversity. “Encapsulation” is the cultivation of maximum cohesiveness through a dense multiplex network in which all the meaningful contacts of life occur. The tripartite distinction provides a useful framework for discussing the cultural implications of network strategies.

#### Segregativity

Segregativity may offer the pleasures of a double life, but usually it emerges from societal pressures and is more appropriately tied to double consciousness. I suspect that segregativity most often takes the form of a boundary drawn between “public”

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<sup>8</sup> This last paragraph is showing its age as of 2015. In 1995 there were no cell phones, no Skype; labor markets were less fully globalized and precarious workers less flexibly mobile. Still, I think few people would argue that the loss of key industries in established working-class communities and the movements of workers to where the jobs are going have been conducive to the maintenance of old dense multiplex networks or the formation of new ones.

and “private” behavior, with the drawing of the line dependent on power differentials. Lesley Milroy found that working-class people in Belfast drew the boundary at the physical border of their neighborhood: within that “private” context, one was free to enter any kitchen one pleased and stay as long as one liked (1987). James Scott offers a more general theory of “public” and “hidden transcripts” (1990), suggesting that the space of the hidden transcript of subordinate populations varies with the intensity of elite surveillance. Not all dominators have studied Foucault: some leave untouched large spaces of everyday life, in which resistance can take shape. Others effectively isolate individuals and colonize their psyches to the extent that resistance remains, barely articulable, within the self.

Stigmatized social categories recently granted civil rights are generally admitted to the hegemonic realm on the condition that their cultural difference remain invisible. Their behavior must display the desire and the ability to assimilate to apparently unmarked, culture-free organizational norms. Michael Bell’s account of a middle-class African American bar in the early 1970s demonstrates the intensity of private play that can result from self-repression in the workplace, and the consequent fear of inauthenticity in the self (1983). Joëlle Bahloul examines the elaboration of a traditional means of expression into a complex segregative mechanism in her study of the foodways of Algerian Jews in Paris (1983). Strictly kosher and Algerian at home in food items and methods of preparation, this group reproduces its separateness in the private sphere. But because an important part of its identity, not to mention its income, comes from cosmopolitan ties, group members regularly go out to eat with Gentile colleagues; even when by themselves at restaurants, they make a point of eating shellfish. The non-Jewish food serves literally to incorporate an important aspect of their self-concept, but the occasions are kept strictly distinct, so that they can participate fully in both worlds. Cleanliness has been reinterpreted as separation rather than exclusion.

The “intimate difference” of gender falls here also. Early network studies of working class communities in Britain showed that strong norms of gender difference were maintained by the largely separate networks of husband and wife: these networks preceded marriage and were maintained alongside it, imposing separate norms of conduct and reinforcing traditional gender roles (Bott 1971). Turning this around, one can see that a societal division of labor by gender fosters the separation of networks. Where men work and women stay at home, men socialize with their workmates; women’s networks are made of kin and neighbors. Women have thus a context of performance which has generally been described as “private”, the term “public” being reserved for mixed-gender or all-male gatherings (see Thomas 1983 and various essays in Jordan and Kalcik 1985).<sup>9</sup>

In Western societies where women also work, network and cultural differences may become even stronger. As several sociolinguists have noted, working-class men tend to work in large-scale occupations where they associate with each other, such as mining

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<sup>9</sup> See Meltzer 1994, 47, on the apparent impossibility of women alone ever constituting a public.



or construction. Women working as domestics, in shops, or in offices are more isolated from their cohort and more exposed to prestige norms, and these contacts in fact offer them opportunities for an ascent in status. Consequently their speech and sometimes even their political attitudes approximate more to prestige norms (Downes 1984, 178–183). Exposed to a wider variety of material culture and custom than men, they are more disposed to experiment and innovation. Their cultural repertoires in the presence of their husbands can thus differ considerably from those invoked in the workplace, in their own socializing, and with their children.

#### Integrativity

Integrativity at the level of network parallels hybridity at the level of culture. Deborah Kapchan describes a Moroccan market woman who demands of her male customers, “Aren’t we all Muslims?” At the cultural level, the vendor is dialogizing a cliché generally used between Berbers and Arabs. Socially, she is claiming the right to be integrated into this larger category of mutual acceptance (1993). Examining these two levels together lets Kapchan make concrete the marketplace metaphor so popular since Bakhtin as a shorthand for the process of cultural mixing (see also Abrahams n.d.).

Hybridization and integrativity are often a consequence of migration, as is evident in the earlier concept of “creolization,” rooted in the large-scale movements effected by European imperialism. Today we are equally likely to find our mixing in the spatial juxtapositions of urban immigrants. Hannerz redefines the “cultural role of cities” as that of a kind of switchboard between messages and communicators of widely distant points of origin (1992, 51).

Migrants who use their culture of origin as an economic resource are key to the transnationalization of culture and the growth of a cosmopolitan urban sensibility. To return to Philadelphia’s Ninth Street Market, we may consider the fate of the “decorated palm,” an Italian-American art form used in Philadelphia to adorn family graves on Palm Sunday (Noyes 1989, 60–65; Philadelphia Folklore Project n.d.). Some such palms are made for domestic consumption; others are made by church groups for the congregation. But some are sold in the market, and these, to the knowledge of the vendor, have gone on Protestant altars, yuppie door knockers, and even Passover dinner tables. Through yet another context of exchange, public sector folklore with its exhibitions, workshops, and artist’s markets, they have become “folk art” and entered both a museum and private collections.

Based on the nature of the network ties, we can see differing constraints on the recontextualization of these objects. When transmission takes place within multiplex and dense bonds of kinship, religion, neighborhood, and ethnicity, there is by definition no recontextualization. The situation being constant, so are use and meaning: the baggage of obligations and resonances has not far to travel.

Of course the situation is never wholly constant or the network wholly isolated: consequently we see the gradual formal differentiation of the palms in, for example, church congregations concerned to encompass the full range of community preferences

and economic possibilities in a parish comprising several generations. Differentiation allows the maintenance of a network, though a looser one, and of a cultural norm, though a more flexible one.

The public marketplace offers still fewer constraints. While Ninth Street is in part a neighborhood market, whose customers consider longstanding relationships and local knowledge as assurances of quality, it also depends on patrons from outside who value the market's apparent authenticity or freedom from commodification. These are tourists, and what they do with their purchases will have as much to do with their own assumptions about tradition and ethnicity as with any communication from the source.

The public-sector folklife festival or exhibition foregrounds this communication, since the tie between maker and audience is now defined as educational rather than commercial. However, while contextual information is transmitted, contextual obligation is not. The object obtained in this kind of exchange is often reborn from its first life of use in the community to a second life as "triumphant object" (Klusen [1967] 1986), displayed in a collection with a narrative of its original use.

Of course such contacts can also create new relationships, with the practitioner acquiring a powerful identity as "artist." In this case the aesthetic and monetary value placed on the object in its new set of relationships will feed back to the network of origin, and here too the object will gain new prestige and receive new elaboration. Given the lability of any kind of display event and the increasing skill of public sector presenters at creating participation instead of spectacle, it is not unheard of that the audience becomes converted, consumed rather than consuming. Sometimes the audience accommodates to the practitioner instead of vice-versa.

In connection with Bauman and Briggs' model of the making and remaking of texts (1990), which does not stress the sources of constraints on recontextualization, the network metaphor can help us think about mediation. A text that moves from one location to another through several contacts has undergone several recontextualizations and is transformed to a much greater degree than one that moves from one network point to the next. We can see the implications of the network for many situations in which an exchange of expressive forms is not accompanied by the sharing of everyday relations or a lifeworld in common. Commodification may be defined as the degree to which the expressive form can circulate without interaction between the points on its trajectory.

Commodification can be mitigated and concealed by the entextualization of context. Increasingly, "folk art" is sold with a narrative attached. I have a beautiful skirt decorated with small bells and fragments of mirrors, bought by my mother on a vacation in Rajasthan. The skirt was so adorned, she was told, in order that girls herding goats in the mountains could be seen from the village when they got lost. The girl whose skirt I wear is well and truly lost now: a pity, for I would certainly like to hear her version of this absurd story. But it seems unfair that I should be able to buy her story as well as her skirt, while my mother's money gives her nothing of mine. And although she

has been so transparently presented to me, I feel safe in assuming that she is a fiction. However, when we receive the lies of cultural commodity in return for the opacity of money, it is still not an even exchange.

So I am not ready to abandon the idea that power is lost with mediation. If the fictional girl and I met face to face, not only my invisibility but her visibility would be compromised. To her face I do not think I could ask her such silly questions about her life: it would be rude. At this distance, far behind her back, I can say whatever I like about her. Indeed, I can assert that I have nothing to do with her and forget all about her.

When Union Carbide did this to Bhopal, the consequences were rather more serious. We are familiar with the smooth disclaimers of relationship when the North is called upon to account for the economic, ecologic, and political disarray of the South. The denials of responsibility are made possible by the attenuation of commodity networks across such complex and many-pointed paths of transmission (see Wallerstein 1983). I like to think, in contrast, of the early medieval preference for gift and theft over trade (Geary 1986). The former were valued because they established a relationship between origin and destination. The condescension of the giver and the thirst for revenge of the robbed were both preferred to indifference.

#### Encapsulation

We have tended to view the dense multiplex network and its conservative culture as historically prior to other kinds of networks and cultures. We might turn the problem around, however, and instead of defining this network type as the structure of the traditional community, define it as the product of a desire for tradition, a closing of ranks in conditions of threat. Threats to network may be cultural, and work in two directions of exchange. Authorities in the network may attempt to exclude innovations they consider threatening, or a group in a disadvantaged position may wish to control the commodification of forms that have emerged from within their ranks. In each case, network position has an influence: those who draw boundaries are those central figures with their centrality to defend.

Arjun Appadurai observes a conflict of interest between merchants and rulers, whom we might see as peripheral and central elites. “Whereas merchants tend to be the social representatives of unfettered equivalence, new commodities, and strange tastes, political elites tend to be the custodians of restricted exchange, fixed commodity systems, and established tastes and sumptuary customs” (1986, 33). Political elites will fear contact and incipient hybridity, for it presents the possibility and perhaps the attractiveness of alternative social arrangements.

This is true of the smallest networks as well as the larger society. There too central members, often senior men, both bear the responsibility for and benefit from the reproduction of existing assumptions and structures. So, for example, in the rural family of Catalonia, eldest sons consistently think and vote more conservatively than their brothers and sisters, whom they attempt to dominate through invocations of traditional authority. The eldest inherits the farm—a dubious advantage in the present

economy—and needs as much of the traditional support system of unmarried siblings as he can muster. This dense family network is sustained by values of self-sacrifice for the continuity of the whole, symbolized in the house and its name. Without such sacrifice, a small farm cannot be maintained. However, the younger children have powerful reasons to leave home. They will inherit only a share of the movable property and can expect to prosper to the degree that they embrace individualist, innovative, capitalist values (Barrera González 1990; see also Streicker 1995 on the cultural conservatism of senior men). As peripheral members of the farm-based network, they have little material interest in its maintenance.

Resistance to the exit of expressive forms from the network is easily understood as a protection of cultural capital, the appropriation of which robs the network of a resource.<sup>10</sup> When I did fieldwork on the Patum of Berga, a Catalan Corpus Christi festival unique in the region for its historical continuity and present intensity, I was surprised to find both the senior political elite and the senior working-class men who control access to festival participation united in their rejection of more mobility for the festival.<sup>11</sup> These two groups, who disagree in many quotidian matters, together refuse invitations for the Patum and its elements to travel, or to be performed out of season for touristic or honorific purposes—practices with, respectively, one hundred years and perhaps four hundred years of local precedent. They ridicule the “copies” of the Patum that have arisen throughout Catalonia since the death of Franco. “The Patum is for Berga, for Corpus; that’s it,” both groups say, to the endless frustration of a young middle-class intelligentsia that sees the economic salvation of the town in the cultivation of wider network ties.

But the contestation is not merely political: much as the young people would like to wrest some control from the older generation of politicians and patumaires, they too are ambivalent about the former and future commodification of the Patum. “If the tour buses start coming, the Patum will be ours no longer.” They compare its intimacy, the familiarity of its gestures, the security of its dense crowd of participants, with the alienation of the Running of the Bulls at Pamplona since Hemingway brought it to international notice.

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<sup>10</sup> For an exemplary case, see Evans-Pritchard 1987 on the complex dynamics of ownership in Southwest Indian jewelry.

<sup>11</sup> The following discussion is elaborated and updated in Noyes 2003. The ethnographic present here is the early 1990s, and the situation has evolved since then, in Berga as elsewhere. The advent of UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage agenda and other such initiatives has shifted the focus of the impulse to encapsulation in many communities that harbor attractive traditions. By the turn of the millenium, a significant segment of both elites and townspeople had grown more interested in the Patum’s economic potential as a tourist draw than in its immediate social utility or even its cultural prestige. The primary concern became the protection of property rights in the tradition, which now requires advertisement through selective circulation of its elements. See chapter 8, “The Judgment of Solomon.”

The most militant Berguedans, jokingly called the *integristes*,<sup>12</sup> not only insist on the immutability and incommensurability of the *Patum* (they kindly observe to me that although my scholarly efforts are welcome as bringing another member to the community, they will be worthless in explaining anything of the *Patum* to anybody), but have a utopian vision of total encapsulation. When they drink, they talk about closing the town off at the borders for Corpus Christi, of an “anarchism properly understood” with no institutions but the *Patum* and the sanctuary of the local Madonna, of a Berga sufficient unto itself: quite the opposite of this industrial town’s long history of economic dependence and violent engagement in larger political projects. Authenticity, as they use the word, is what emerges from the local: the alienation they know and fear is that of their situation being defined for them from above. The *Patum*, their most valued possession and all they have to make them unique, is uniquely vulnerable to such alienation.

Instead, they make the *Patum* a shibboleth to mark off Berga from the world. Outsiders are recognized by their failure to master certain gestures, exclamations, or nuances of dress, insignificant except as they testify to long familiarity with the festival. Such boundary mechanisms are familiar in many cultural forms, often linguistic, as the word shibboleth reminds us. Lesley Milroy notes the resistance of certain phonetic realizations to change: they have become signs of network loyalty (1987, 194–97). Tonguetwisters can be used to spot foreigners: Castilian immigrants in Catalonia were once asked to pronounce “*Setze jutges d’un jutjat mengen fetge d’un penjat*,”<sup>13</sup> which calls for the rapid alternation of voiced dental fricatives, alveolar fricatives, and alveolar affricates, none of which exist in Spanish. Other cultural shibboleths are less demanding, calling for a possible but still effortful act of mastering the culture. In Catalonia at large, the ability to dance the *sardana* is one; in the Bar La Barana of Berga where the central *patumaires* congregate, it is the willingness to eat low-status foods like lentils and to drink cognac with Pepito. This sort of shibboleth demands less competence than volition, and the new-comer’s agreement to make this declaration of allegiance earns him or her a place in the network. Indeed, a number of Catalans consider allegiance to the shibboleths more important than birth in the ascription of identity: I and many other outsiders have often been told approvingly, “You are more Catalan than many Catalans are.”

Shibboleths become emblems of identity, the most conservative elements of the culture, and may be frozen while other elements are changing rapidly. Parody of them is treated as desecration (Ayats 1993). The deepest insiders, however, may break this rule and joke with the sacrality they create and sustain. The dancing Eagle of the *Patum* of Berga, an official symbol of the city to which outsiders and ordinary citizens

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<sup>12</sup> We might translate this as “fundamentalist”: the analogy is to a militantly conservative Catholic tendency in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spain. But the emphasis on integrity is appropriate: their concern is with the wholeness and completeness of Berga.

<sup>13</sup> “Sixteen judges on a tribunal eat the liver of a hanged man.” The founders of the Catalan New Song movement of the late Franco period called themselves the Sixteen Judges.

are expected to pay the most rigorous respect, is referred to as “the old magpie” by central patumaires in the heat of action.

“As long as we have the Patum we’ll have Berga,” they say. The shibboleth attests to the power of the network and ensures its continuity. Regulating the access of outsiders, it also creates feelings of community within.<sup>14</sup> Community, in other words, is an effect of network strategies.

As both field procedure and organizing metaphor, the network is better adapted than more bounded notions of group for getting at the social grounding of expressive practices. The network lets us get rid of those boundaries, so theoretically troublesome, and gives us a structure for talking about long-distance and mediated relationships. It addresses our concerns with multivocality and complexity by understanding actors as both interrelated and uniquely positioned agents; it prevents us from making a priori assumptions about meaning or origins by demanding that we examine the content and character of any given set of relationships. It might even let us ground the split postmodern subject in some social reality, helping us trace, in Bakhtinian fashion, the dialogue of influences at play in an individual.

## Community, Imagined and Performed

In proposing the network as our analytic metaphor for talking about the social location of culture, I do not want to throw out the notion of group altogether. First of all, because the establishment of shibboleths is obviously a crucial aspect of network practice. And, more generally, because the body of theory that has destroyed the group as a natural object has simultaneously resurrected it to abundant life as a cultural creation. The group—which in this context I will give the more affectively charged name of community—is an “invention,” in the historical materialist world of Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983); an “imagining,” in the more postmodern discursive realm of Benedict Anderson and assorted French theorists (Anderson[1983]1991; Miami Theory Collective 1991); and, we may argue from our own pragmatic tradition of Kenneth Burke and Dell Hymes, “the naming of a situation” (Burke 1957). Finally, calling on the phenomenological/experiential tradition of Victor Turner, community is a felt reality (see Mills 93, 185).

I should like first to stress that a felt reality is quite real enough. By declaring the community to be a product of the social imaginary, I by no means intend to consign it to insignificance. We must still deal with that problem, raised but never quite addressed by Benedict Anderson, of how an “imagined community” can be worth dying for; unhappily, we must also understand how it can be worth killing for. Colonial inventions have given birth to imagined nations as well as empirical states. New namings of situations

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<sup>14</sup> For an elaboration of the concept of cultural shibboleth, see Michael 1998.

can contest all-too-real hegemonic definitions and sometimes lead to the abolition of material injustices.

Moreover, imaginings are not limited to their first imaginers. Like texts, ideas once propounded live in the world and travel long distances from their points of origin. Still more, if we adopt the French agenda of a history of images rather than one of ideas (Le Goff 1988), we can see ideas as living in concrete realizations: texts, performances, and objects, all transmissible and open to recontextualization. The traces left by these realizations in social memory—what Le Goff calls the “imaginary”—sediment around the first irritant of an act of naming like the nacreous coverings of a pearl. This object builds up in the social imaginary, ever larger, ever more real, until at last it is as big, as dense, and as difficult to deconstruct as “race” or “Germany”.

As is now well-known, folklorists have been particularly active in defining and objectifying the culture of imagined communities in such genres as the museum, the dictionary, the national epic, the collection of tales, the preserved site, and other lieux de mémoire (Nora 1984).<sup>15</sup> The prestige of objectivity—if not as a political entity, at least as a culture—gives a well-known boost to the position of a group in the imaginary. And, of course, it makes the culture negotiable as commodity in the material realm. As we know, there is nothing new about these acts of reification for economic purposes, from below or from above: Philip II of Spain, to whom we owe the first folk-cultural questionnaire I know of, seems basically to have been interested in finding things he could tax (see Abrahams 1993).

But communities are not just reified representations, and ideological claims are not convincing without experiential confirmation. The New Perspectives turn focused and advanced earlier insights that identification with a community is effected in performance.

That identity is a performance was entirely clear to early modern Europeans, with their manuals of conduct for courtiers and the tensions between appearances and reality in their theater, which regularly pointed out that “all the world’s a stage.” Other parts of the world, notably the Indonesian islands as described by Geertz (1980) and Keeler (1987), seem to find this insight equally obvious. The naturalization of identity into biology is, as we now realize, an ideological concomitant of European imperialism. Twentieth-century phenomenological sociology rediscovered the role of performance. Erving Goffman showed us how individuals and teams stage themselves for an audience (1959), and Harold Garfinkel delved deeper into microanalysis of the performance of “normal” gender roles (1967).

Judith Butler’s synthesis argues that such apparently natural categories as gender are reproduced through repeated individual performances. The heavy social sanctions on deviant gender performance imply a deep-seated recognition of gender’s constructed status: it must be constantly policed and reinforced to maintain itself. “Gender reality

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<sup>15</sup> I will not sport with the reader’s impatience by summarizing this familiar discussion, but refer him or her to some basic sources: Handler and Linnekin 1984; Handler 1988; Dorst 1989; Bendix 1997.

is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (1988, 527).

Folklorists have long been aware that certain kinds of identity are derived from performance, most obviously in the case of professional performers where such performance is stigmatized: female dancers, bluesmen, con men, gypsies, and the like. We have also realized the frequent basis of stereotypes in misunderstandings of exotic norms of interaction and thus performance. For much of the twentieth century, Americans exhorted to look one another straight in the eye understood the respectful averted gaze of Asians as "shifty-eyed," while WASPS accustomed to wider interactive distance and more monophonic turn-taking complained of "pushy Jews." But the richest work on the ascription of identity from performance has perhaps been done in the Caribbean, where available social identities are, for historical reasons, exceptionally fluid and multiple. In the West Indian dichotomy of "reputation" and "respectability," performance itself is the basis of social identity (see Abrahams 1983). More complexly, racial identity in many Caribbean and Latin American societies is ascribed less on the basis of physical features than on behavior, both everyday performances of self and more framed performances of music, dance, religion, or sport (e.g., Streicker 1995). Linguistic performance is also central to such ascriptions. In their work on Belize, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller propose that, given the multiple and overlapping codes available to speakers, any utterance is an "act of identity," as much constitutive of as constituted by social namings (1985).

If individual acts of identification create the reality of social categories, the reality of a community with which to identify comes from collective acts. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller note that different social or historical conditions facilitate the "focusing" or "diffusion" of a linguistic norm. We may say of collective identities generally that although they are often reactive, responding to external ascriptions and oppression, they become realities with the taking of collective action. This, James Scott notes, is why dominant populations so often regulate the assembly of subordinates: even the most innocent social gathering, even a collective act of respectful submission, is dangerous insofar as it is not dictated from above. Any such act creates a collective out of an atomized population, makes them realize the possibility of further autonomous action (1990). Acting in common makes community.

Folklorists looking at the persistence of ethnic identifications and at the creation of new coalitions and interest groups in the Civil Rights movement saw how performance made these groups real to their potential members. At first, the emphasis was on discourse: the collective construction of tradition as a means of naturalizing the group. More recently, we have talked about the cognitive and bodily consequences of collective action and, indeed, the existence of techniques for community-making.

One must first recognize that the performance of community reinforces its own social base by fostering dense and potentially multiplex interaction. Brazilian samba schools, Philadelphia mummers' clubs, or Swiss amateur theatrical societies need year-round planning, rehearsal, and material preparation to put on their elaborate annual



performances. All this labor and the fund-raising that must accompany it remobilize local networks, keeping up many ties that might otherwise slip into desuetude. In making work, the voluntary association also fosters recreation: the choir rehearses, then goes out for a drink. Often a formalization of an existing network, the voluntary association creates a further base for dense multiplex sociability—for what is affectively defined as “community” (see Bendix 1989).

The performance itself adds something important, however, and can extend this feeling of community to a larger social body. Community is made real in performance by means which seem to be cross-cultural. Simplifying, we can specify these means as repetition, formalization, and “consensus”.

Repetition works both synchronically in a given performance and diachronically, as a performance reenacts a precedent. Richard Schechner’s definition of performance as “restored behavior” (1985) conveys the sense of recovery effected especially by calendar customs and historical reenactments such as passion plays or the climb up to Masada, in which “a historical narrative is transformed into a personal narrative” (Bruner and Gorfain 1984). The conservatism of such performances, the insistence on exact reproduction, has the effect of reducing dialogicality between performances and collapsing the distance between past and present (Briggs and Bauman 1992, 150). Insofar as the past invoked stands for the community and its origins, the effect of repetition is also to efface present contentions in the collective restoration of a unity understood as primordial. As long as there is the *Patum*, there will be *Berga*; conversely, “the demise of the ballads will coincide with the disappearance of this imagined community,” notes McDowell of a Mexican case (1992, 415). The community exists in its collective performances: they are the locus of its imagining in their content and of its realization in their performance.

Repetition is made possible by formalization, placing controls on such features as prosody, register, and lexicon in order to limit reference and assist memory.<sup>16</sup> The monologism imposed by formalization on texts is reinforced by the univocality it makes possible in performance. A rhythmic slogan, a song in stanzas, or a soldiers’ chant imposes a rhythm on collective motion and enlarges the individual voice by coordinating it with all the others (Ayats 1992). The crowd that becomes one body and one voice becomes more than the sum of its parts. The strength of the individual is identified with the strength of the whole, and ventures impossible or abominable for individuals—public protest or murder—become not only thinkable but achievable.

With the coordination of collective action—be it in chanting slogans, walking in pilgrimage up a hot mountainside, or dancing with the devils of the *Patum*—participants achieve what James Fernandez calls *con-sensus*, from its etymological root of “feeling together.” This confluence of feeling happens both within the individual, as different senses carry in coordinated messages, and in the collectivity, as individuals undergo

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<sup>16</sup> The classic but controversial reference is Bloch (1974) 1989. For versions that do not see formalization as exclusively a tool of domination, see Ayats 1992; Briggs 1986, 289–339; and McDowell 1992.

the same experience in concert (1988).<sup>17</sup> At the most attenuated level, we may see the process in the global televisual community created by “media events”, as families in their living rooms consume the same breakfast as Charles and Diana on their wedding day, the menu having been distributed in advance by Buckingham Palace to enable this act of communion (Dayan and Katz 1992, 98).

More usually, consensus arises from co-presence. The great emphasis in many religions on communions or sacrificial meals—a collective sharing of substance—points to the bodily basis of community. The mutual incorporations of sexuality and nurturance keep the human community alive, and their invocation in performance recalls this common humanity, the foundation of any more specific solidarity.

Participants do not only take the community in, but receive its outward marks. In many Spanish and Southern Italian festivals, the everyday marks of identification in costume and conduct give way to more spectacular immersions in community. In what is generally said to be a reenactment of a founding battle, citizens pelt each other with rotten oranges, tomatoes, or bags of flour. In Berga, the annual blessing of pack animals with holy water from the balcony of the church on the feast of St. Eloi has become a general inundation. The families who live along the parade route spend all night filling pitchers and pails and barrels; some just attach garden hoses to the kitchen faucets. In recent years, the people in the street have taken to throwing water back up through the windows, and there is increasing interchange between balconies. Some people are thrown into the public washhouse along the route for more complete “baptisms.” At the end, you can easily tell who’s loved, who’s central: they’re drenched.

Sometimes the cost is higher. Here we may think of the circumcisions, scarifications, and other mutilations of the body described by Pierre Clastres as the inscription of the community’s law upon the individual (1989). These too are shibboleths, boundary mechanisms: in Berga you must have scars from burns received in the Patum on your hands and arms to show that you have participated fully in the community’s central self-realization.

But a community-making festival is generally a more complexly orchestrated mechanism of consensus (and all Berguedan factions agree that the goal of the Patum is to “make union”). The Patum’s techniques of the body, imposed by powerful social controls, effect a gradual transformation from mimesis to vertigo, a development that Caillois suggests is cross-culturally frequent (1979, 87–97). The festival’s dancing effigies clearly represent and, in their comportment, mimic the various social divisions that have defined the community historically: male and female, upper-class and lower-class, native and foreigner, human and animal. As the five days of the festival progress, as the dances are repeated over and over, as the great drum keeps beating “Pa-tum” into your head and the band and your neighbors force your feet to dance, as you drink more and more and sleep less and less, as the smoke of the firecrackers blackens faces and the crush of bodies takes from you the control of your own movements, the giants

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<sup>17</sup> And see Sklar 1994 on “kinesthetic empathy.”

and the dwarves spin into one, the royal eagle becomes as fierce as the flaming mule. You lose your everyday name and position: no longer distinguished by them, you are a part of the sweating dark mass. Under such conditions no signification is possible; there is nothing apart from this sensation. The Patum is pure immanence. In the last grand explosion of the plens or “full ones”, devils covered in vines and firecrackers among whom the entire community dances, community is at once generated and reproduced for another year in what Berguedans describe as simultaneous orgasm and rebirth. Then the lights come up—there is a gasp of collective self-recognition—and the moment is over.

Such an experience leaves traces in the body. When the Patum is at last over and you can sit or, better, lie down, your body continues to vibrate as it does after a long plane or boat trip. Uninterrupted sleep will not come for several days: you keep waking up in great jerks, thinking you’re dancing. The tunes won’t get out of your head: people sing them to themselves for weeks afterward. The burns, of course, itch and scab and scar, often staying with you till the next year. No common experience touches you in this literal and pervasive way, and nothing can really release the tension left in you but a return to performance. For at least a month before Corpus Christi the Berguedans are like horses pawing the ground before a race—their bodies erupt into the dance, their voices into the music, and then they check themselves. The Patum breaks out of Berguedan bodies—as if it were always down there, simmering—on occasions of collective rejoicing or reassembly: an important victory of the Barcelona football team or a gathering of Berguedans abroad.

And the Patum is introduced to Berguedan children as the very foundation of culture. Children learn its tunes and its movements at the same time they are learning to walk and speak. “Show me how the dwarves go, au!” “What does the mule do?” In the same way that even urban Americans teach their children the sounds made by cows and roosters as part of their civilizing process, Berguedans teach their children that culture is about the differences and the relationships between the mule and the giants.<sup>18</sup>

This performance of community has thus very nearly naturalized itself in the body: it can get no deeper. When Berguedans say, “We carry the Patum in our blood,” they are not talking about race or birth, but about a rhythm that seems to have mastered their heartbeats.

The ineffability of the sensation makes such verbalizations dangerous, however: the Berguedans understand this well and have cautioned me accordingly. With the language of the body as shifter between experience and essence, it would not be hard for race and birth to enter this discussion. The Patum carried “in the blood”, “suckled in with our mother’s milk,” is genuinely different for someone grown up with it. Some Berguedans draw the conclusion that only a native can ever be a member.

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<sup>18</sup> It is worthwhile remembering that such festivals often have children’s versions: this is true of the Giglio in Brooklyn and of the Palio in Siena as well as of the Patum, and I would expect to find it more

Happily, this argument is not hegemonic in Berga, where some of the most fervent local patriots are of immigrant birth. But we need not look far to see the dangers of such powerful bodily performances. The desire for return to that sensation of perfect plenitude, perfect wholeness, total presence can lead to intolerance of less coherent and cohesive everyday conditions. The moment of performance itself, enhanced as it often is by alcohol or other drugs, sometimes finishes in acts of purificatory violence intended to bring the empirical into accordance with the imaginary (e.g., Davis 1974). The reality without is annihilated to make room for the reality within.

## Reconciling Network and Community: The Appeal of the Local

Plainly, the community is in no way independent of the network. The performance that constructs the community ideologically and emotionally also strengthens or changes the shape of networks by promoting interaction; it may even have the effect of breaking up a network by erecting boundaries within it. The community of the social imaginary coexists in a dialectical tension with the empirical world of day-to-day network contacts. The imagined community offers a focus for comparison and desire, and, at the same time, is itself subject to re-visionings in the light of everyday experience. This productive tension is the complex object we denote with the word group.

The community exists as the project of a network or some of its members. Networks exist insofar as their ties are continually recreated and revitalized in interaction. To my suggestion that central members have the greatest interest in such revitalizations, I would add Benedict Anderson's observation on "limited pilgrimages": he noted that when colonial elites restrict the careers of native officials to their own colonies, the unintended consequence is the creation of solidarities, common resentments, and, crucially, a common horizon among the native administrative class (1983). This intelligentsia, because it cannot participate in empire, makes the national revolution. Similarly, the Italian immigrant professionals who could not get to the mayoralty of Philadelphia invented Italian-Americans as a constituency from a very much more heterogeneous body of people (Noyes 1993); and the history of working-class consciousness speaks for itself. When rights in a larger whole are denied, a smaller one will declare itself against that unity, now understandable as "false" or "imposed".

We might also consider Victor Turner's notion of "star-groupers." "Every objective group has some members who see it as their star group, while others may regard it with indifference, even dislike." Star-groupers are not necessarily in accord with each other, he adds, but compete both for position and for the definition of the situation. They are, indeed, the makers of social drama, the contests of representation that seek to address social ruptures (1981, 145–6). Social drama is, indeed, a concomitant of

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generally.

more acknowledged forms of community-making: the giving of names, the defining of boundaries, and the sponsorship of collective effervescences. The process is, furthermore, circular insofar as the experience of an efficacious performance of community is probably what makes a star-grouper in the first place and incites him or her to take an active voice.<sup>19</sup> Certainly the Berguedan integristes have become such from their experience of the *Patum*, so intensely felt a reality that nothing else will ever feel as real. Their cultivation of the local is an attempt to enlarge and make permanent this reality.

Which brings us to the habit of thinking of local community as primary and natural, a habit common also to folklorists, as our recent self-criticisms have remarked (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1992a; Shuman 1993). In fact, I thought of beginning this article, not with the greased pole, but with another picture that has stayed in my mind. Henry Glassie opened his Introduction to Folklore course at the University of Pennsylvania with an image that must now sum up the discipline for hundreds of Penn graduates: a breathtaking aerial slide of the open-field village of Braunton, Devon, surrounded by its countryside, centered by its church with the bell-tower. The lecture went on to demonstrate the centripetal social life and expressive culture of Braunton, supported by images of concentric spatial form and culminating at the heart of the matter, with twelve villagers in the belfry ringing the changes on the bells in a pattern of perfect reciprocity and equality.

The village community gives us the idea made visible, the performance made permanent in architecture. Here group is territory and performance, social ideal and lived reality. Here is the community as “bounded individual” (Handler 1988), like a body writ large. Here is the emblem. Here are the city walls as the limits of interaction, the reach of the sound of the bells as the limits of meaning.

As soberer Berguedans will tell you, this is a fantasy.<sup>20</sup> But it is significant that it is their favorite fantasy. It may well be that the internet is a more important realm of interaction than the neighborhood for many in at least the Western world.<sup>21</sup> However, even for those of us who will never live in one, the face-to-face village community is a salutary reminder that life is still material, that really important things like eating and reproduction still take place in common space, and that violence, however remote and rational its sources, is felt close up and in person.

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<sup>19</sup> At the time of this writing I had not discovered Albert O. Hirschman’s beautifully lucid discussion of “exit, voice, and loyalty” (1970). Today I would say that traditional performance is a major mechanism for creating the loyalty that induces individuals to give voice within problematic communities rather than take an exit to greener pastures.

<sup>20</sup> See Albera 1988 for an Italian anthropologist’s refutation of the assumptions of isolation and boundedness in European community studies. But see also Caro Baroja 1957 for the Mediterranean village ideology of concentricity or “sociocentrism.” The Italian notion of *campanilismo* is substantially the same.

<sup>21</sup> But we should beware of assuming that our latest thing is the only thing, particularly when we are trying to think globally; cf. Glassie 1991; Klein 1995.

I fear mediation: I fear the interactant I cannot see, whom I cannot oblige to see me. Recent history surely justifies my fears. All of us at the mercy of abstract “global forces” that assume the responsibility for what must, somewhere, be the acts of men, is it any wonder that both left and right are fighting for more local control? No, the local is not natural, the local community is not a given, but it deserves special status in the discipline all the same. For we too have our empirical reality and our disciplinary imaginary, and as an emblem of the latter I prefer the village to its recent rival, the marketplace.

I just can’t get enthusiastic about the marketplace. No doubt it looked appealing to Bakhtin from the Soviet Union, but those of us who live in its midst can better see its shortcomings. Certainly it offers liberty in relative abundance—if you can afford it—but equality and fraternity are goods in much shorter supply.

I admit that we have to live with commodification: our disciplinary practice has from the beginning been complicitous with the process (Cantwell 1993; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1992b; Stewart 1992). And as contemporary scholars, we have no choice but to participate in the system. Have we not reached the end of history?

One last gasp of the old Marxist history came in 1968 when French students tried to uncover reality beneath the society of the spectacle by picking up the paving stones of Paris. “Sous les pavés, la plage,” they said, and then cast the stones through shop windows. They were utopians, to be sure, and their failure was recently confirmed by the suicide of Guy Debord, their key ideologue.<sup>22</sup> There is no beach beneath the paving stones. There is no village community, Salvadoran collectivists learned when their government, supported by ours, came to bomb it into deniability.

But I see no honor in celebrating the conditions of our imprisonment. I grant that the marketplace is the vitiated air we breathe and consequently deserves all the scholarly attention we have begun to give it. But let us not allow the empirical to kill off the imaginary entirely. Folklorists have already provided the nation-state with a human face: I fear that, with our tendency to celebrate what we describe, we may unwittingly do the same for the multinational.<sup>23</sup>

I will conclude, however, on a more hopeful and more American note, turning descent into consent, circumstance into choice, and novelty into romance (Cantwell 1993; Sollors 1986). I returned to Italian Market Days in the fall of 1994 and found an Italian man in his twenties showing a group of small children—female, black, Southeast Asian, and all—how to climb the greased pole. Perhaps that Vietnamese man is adding his own discreet recommendations to a child in some house on Eighth Street. Network keeps trying to reach community. We know it to be a slippery ascent, but that knowledge has not yet deterred us, and it should not.

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<sup>22</sup> In 1994, that is.

<sup>23</sup> In 2015 I can say that the fear was justified. Folklorists and other cultural workers have, however, for the most part been critical or at least painfully ambivalent rather than unwittingly complicitous; they remain divided on the possibility of engaging productively with market forces and their policy reflexes. See the now massive body of scholarship on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage agenda.

## Acknowledgments

My thinking on these matters has benefited from conversations with Roger D. Abrahams, Michael Krippendorf, and William Westerman, and from time spent with the Bar La Barana, Berga, and the Philadelphia Folklore Project; my thanks to the latter for permission to cite material derived from fieldwork I undertook for them. None of these persons or entities should be held responsible for the results.

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### 3. The Social Base of Folklore<sup>(3)</sup>

WHEN THE ENGLISH antiquarian William Thoms coined the word “Folk-Lore” in 1846, he proposed it as a “good Saxon compound” to delineate the field then known as “popular antiquities, or popular literature” (Thoms [1846] 1999, 11). Most readers have noticed the nationalism implicit in this substitution of words derived from Latin. Less attention has been given to the fact of the compound. To be sure, it mimics Germanic word-formation. But it also suggests a tighter semantic cluster than the previous English phrases might have implied. The hyphen between folk and lore anticipates key questions for the discipline. What commonsense relationships exist between bodies of knowledge and groups of people? What relationship should scholars posit between cultural forms and social structures?

Do such linkages dissolve over time? Cultural expressions persist and move independently of their creators: stories and songs are heard and retold; craft knowledge is passed on in apprenticeships; proverbs are remembered and invoked in new settings. Literacy and other systems of recording facilitate the detachability of forms from contexts. Today the circulation of both people and cultural goods is so rapid and multi-directional that the very idea of a folk organically connected to a set of customs and expressions seems like a nostalgic fantasy. To be sure, the fantasy has enormous currency. Politicians, both national and local, project it upon the territories they propose to govern. Innumerable industries reproduce it through tourist attractions, restaurants and packaged foods, music, books, clothes and home décor. And an academic discipline exists that seeks to examine the compound term both empirically and theoretically.

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<sup>(3)</sup> This essay, commissioned for the magisterial *Companion to Folkloristics* edited by Regina Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), gave me an opportunity to update the “Group” essay, which remains more heavily cited and more attractive in its arguments. Here I am to some extent reacting to the enthusiasm for the imagined-community part of my argument in “Group” and, if truth be told, to a proliferation of student projects on online communities. I would like to clarify once and for all that I do not consider such communities inauthentic; I just have yet to find them interesting. It’s a question of age and prior passions. More consequentially, I want to push back against too casual an interpretation of folklore’s 1968. Like other activists of the period, the “Young Turks” who overthrew the old paradigm did not intend to flatten all cultural expressions into an anything-goes equivalence grounded in relativist identity and consumer choice. Rather, Hymes’ insistence on the performance of tradition as an assumption of responsibility recognizes the weight of history, the inertias of language, the pressure of society, and the limits of the body and its material supports. So does the concern with the social base formulated by Bauman and the Texas school. In chapters 4 and 9 I will return to these questions. Originally published as “The Social Base of Folklore,” in *A Companion to Folklore*, ed. Regina Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem. (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell. 2012), 13–39. ©2012 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Folklorists have always been conscious of their own role in creating the category of folklore. Although “folks” have been objectified in a variety of institutions and representations (including the nation-state as a political entity), such publications as the Grimms’ *Deutsche Sagen* confer the further dignity of academic objectivity upon the Germans as a people, legends as a kind of thing in the world, and German legends as a distinct corpus (1816–18). Nationalist, populist, revolutionary, and colonialist scholars around the world have continued to produce cultural objects in the hope of modelling social futures.

These futures occasionally come back to haunt them. In the 1960s, German scholars querying their responsibility for the Nazi myth of the Aryan Volk engaged in a thorough critique of the disciplinary past; they laid out a reflexive approach to the afterlife of those concepts in the present (Bendix 2012). Young folklorists in the US, seeing the prevailing comparative method as Eurocentric and irrelevant to current civil rights struggles, set out more bluntly to slay the old fathers and reformulate the field on new scientific foundations. To this end, they posited a different kind of relationship between folk and lore. Dan Ben-Amos provocatively redefined folklore as “artistic communication in small groups”: tradition and variation were no longer considered essential (1972, 13). In the same forum, published in book form as *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore Studies*, Richard Bauman proposed a new approach to what he termed the “social base” of folklore.

The old European textual scholarship, Bauman explained, took for granted the location of folklore “among peasants and primitives.” Postwar American work was instead explicitly concerned with social groups, defined not by their place in the hierarchy but by their communal identity. In this approach a less visible nation-state ideology had been operationalized in functionalist social theory, treating named groups as natural entities. Bauman argued for a third way. Folklore lives in a “social matrix” (1972, 35) of actors seeking to accomplish their ends not as components of a system but as individuals in competition and conflict. People were connected to folklore not through the abstract linkage of group to tradition but through empirically traceable instances of performance. To be sure, folklore often thematized communal identity, but rather than expressing a pre-existent identity among insiders, it more often constructed one, aggressively or humorously, at social boundaries. Communication of differential identity to outsiders nonetheless required a code held in common. Generated in ongoing social interaction, shared forms rather than shared identity were the *sine qua non* of folklore. Scholarship needed therefore to investigate the “social base” of particular forms empirically, case by case.

Bauman does not define this new phrase, used at that time to refer to the class, ethnic, and occupational makeup of political parties and social movements. The word base has, to be sure, an objectivist and perhaps Marxist tinge (cf. Williams 1973). It implies the dependence of cultural forms on societal structures, in contrast to later theorists such as Michel Foucault who treated discourse as constitutive of society itself. This debate would become fruitful for folklorists. For Bauman’s immediate purposes,

however, the primary value of the phrase social base lay in allowing researchers to seek a “direct and empirical” connection between folk and lore (1972, 33).

In this overview, I follow Bauman in tracing the interlocking development of three dominant approaches. Each of them situates the social base of folklore at the nether pole of one of the core binary oppositions of Western modernity: old and new, particular and universal, fluid and fixed. The first takes folklore to be the cultural forms proper to the deepest stratum of social life, flattened and superseded by the historical, hierarchical, or institutional overlay of modernity. The second views folklore holistically as the expressive bonds of community, which assert or maintain its differential being against external pressures. The third turns from stratum and bonds to performance, finding the social base of folklore in the contingencies of a situation it seeks to transform. That very contingency, however, has destabilized the institutional base of the field of folkloristics: is there truly an isolable object to justify an autonomous discipline? I conclude by looking at some folkloristic reactions to the present tension between the visibility of the cultural and the elusiveness of the social.

These formulations pose historical responses to one another. The emphasis on community reacted against the idea of stratum, and the formulation of performance set out to correct a restrictive idea of community. But they are also ongoing parallel strands in the web of the field, each salient in the design at given times and places. Viewed synchronically, they offer complementary points of entry into any given case study.

It is not easy to generalize about a body of scholarship that, more than that of most disciplines with theoretical aspirations, is dispersed internationally, ideologically, and institutionally. (For the sake of limiting the discussion to manageable complexity, I concentrate on the field as it has developed in the United States, and this is a provincial view, for the US has arguably never been the field’s center of gravity.) The social base of folkloristics emulates that of its subject matter insofar as most folklorists are closely engaged with particular situations, populations, and cultural forms. In the wake of civil rights movements, anticolonial movements, and the breakup of the Soviet Union, folklorists around the world challenged the dominance of the comparative “Finnish” method, and the field now has multiple centers and paradigms as well as a healthy suspicion of totalizing assertions. By the same token, the field has rejected canonicity in either its subject matter or its interpretive authorities, remaining open on principle to examining any kind of cultural production and considering knowledge from any source on its merits. This exceptional framework presents challenges for disciplinary self-presentation within the hierarchical knowledge structure of universities. It is not devoid of status anxiety: folklorists take on the tinge of their engagements, which can leave them politically compromised or stigmatized by association with the low, local, or ephemeral. And folklorists are frequently involved with their research at a personal level, particularly if they do ethnographic fieldwork. Studying live cultural forms, they are caught up in performance and aesthetic evaluation, and the performers often criticize or make use of scholarly interpretations. Participating in powerful collective experiences, necessarily accepting hospitality, folklorists develop emotional

attachments and ethical responsibilities in relation to an often subaltern and vulnerable “social base.” Like many of my colleagues, I feel occasional impulses to valorize myself, my discipline, or my subject matter, and like them I worry about the state of the world. I rarely find it possible to detach the reading of a particular situation from the larger question, “What is to be done?” (Chernyshevsky [1863] 1989). Such concerns can cloud scholarship, but they also have heuristic value. Folklorists do not find it easy to claim objective scholarly authority over an unproblematic domain of reality. The social base of folklore research itself encourages a useful humility before the task.

## The Vernacular Layer

The concept of folklore took shape as Western thinkers began to contrast tradition with modernity. As modernity itself grew older, the sociotemporal location of folklore shifted. In the nineteenth century, most scholars understood folklore as a historical stratum within general culture, a residue surviving chiefly in the lowest layers of society. Today the layers have reversed: folklore is seen as emergent, rising up from the interstices of institutions and the new platforms of digital culture. In between came a Marxist conception of folklore as the culture of the dominated classes and the American liberal idea of folklore as the shared vernacular of everyday life, underlying formal institutions. Borrowed from linguistics, the very word vernacular exemplifies the ambiguities of this view of folklore as partial and submerged. Used primarily to contrast a native tongue to a language of power or learning, vernacular derives from the Latin word for a native-born house slave (Howard 2005).

Focused attention to vernacular culture began in the wake of Renaissance enthusiasm for vernacular languages, with a burst of political and scholarly attention to “popular antiquities” across Europe. Latin Christianity condemned popular belief as superstitious awe born of ignorance or surviving from the pagan past of the countryside. But it also valued certain local objects, with their attendant settings and narratives, as “relics” of sacred history. Humanist scholarship secularized this interest in popular culture as historical evidence, documenting oral language and beliefs. Provincial elites seeking to maintain their power against centralizing states celebrated not just their legal privileges but their communal rites and performances as treasures from a prestigious antiquity. Rulers from Philip II to Napoleon sent questionnaires across their empires to identify customs and practices that interfered with governance or, conversely, might be taxed or harnessed for economic development (Abrahams 1993; Bauman and Briggs 2003).

Thus by the early nineteenth century there was already a long history of attention to peasant and provincial expressions in Europe, treating them for the most part as requiring to be recorded in text but eradicated from practice. Of course this history moved in tandem with the discovery of the “primitive” in the process of European overseas exploration and imperialism (De Certeau 1988). But while the imagined primitive



is radically alien, the imagined folk is the intimate Other. It lives within the border of the nation state; it lives within the emotional memory of modern western man. In 1697 Charles Perrault described his fairy tales as learned from peasant nursemaids. More than a century later, the lullaby learned at the breast would remain the metonymy of oral tradition for Herder and the German Romantics (Wellbery 1999, 190; cf. chapter 7). The folk is all that is close and yet estranged: the servant class, the feminine, the domestic, the rural. Close enough both to arouse and to defile the right-thinking bourgeois individual, it excites simultaneous nostalgia and repudiation. The associated late nineteenth century conception of unschooled beliefs and customs as cultural “survivals” raised similar anxiety, implying both historical anomaly and a certain vigor in persistence.

Marxist theory made the anxiety explicit. Writing in the early 1930s from Fascist Italy, where the southern peasantry lived in quasi-servitude and extreme regional diversity hindered the advance of modernity, Antonio Gramsci began to understand folklore as a foundation for revolution. In an influential few pages, he defined folklore as inchoate philosophy, pieced together from the cultural detritus that made its way to the subaltern strata of society (1985). In the view of Gramsci and the Italian school founded by Ernesto De Martino in the 1950s, the archaism of folklore was objectively, though not consciously, resistant to dominant ideologies (Lombardi-Satriani 1974). Latin American and U.S. Latino folklorists, writing from the tensions between indigenes and colonizers, produced a more contemporaneous model of cultural contestation. Américo Paredes demonstrated that the heroic history of Texas took very different shape in Anglo-American literary treatments and the oral memory of Mexicanos, with the material evidence largely supporting the latter representations (1958). Attached to union movements, the Federal Writers Project, and the Library of Congress, left-wing populist folklorists in the US documented work songs, the narratives of former slaves, and other evidence of progressive strains in oral tradition (Green 2001; Hirsch 2010). Young white male scholars in their wake, coming of age in the folksong revival and the Civil Rights era, celebrated the transgressive performances of African American male street culture (e.g., Abrahams [1964] 2006; Jackson [1974] 2004).

The mainstream of US folkloristics took a different line out of the theory of folklore as survival of earlier stages of civilization. William Wells Newell, founder of the American Folklore Society in 1888, grafted the survivalist anthropology of the Englishman E.B. Tylor onto the new psychology of the American William James. Newell identified supernatural belief not as the property of children and country people but as a general human propensity to epistemological error, amenable to correction through schooling in self-conscious rationality (1904). The psychoanalytic interpretations of Alan Dundes also owe something to this American concern with common foundations. Dundes understood much folklore as the symbolic precipitate of unconscious processes that takes collective shape in such shared forms as the cockfight or the football game (2007). More often, American scholars revised Newell to defend the rationality, self-consciousness, and thereby the full citizenship of the folk: David Hufford’s account of supernatural

belief shares Newell's emphasis on common perceptual experience as the source of tradition, but documents the self-critical monitoring of the experiencer (1982). Only in the 1990s did many US folklorists become comfortable again with the old European idea of custom as second nature (Kelley 1990), acknowledging the layer of inattention and habit in which much cultural practice is transmitted and reproduced (Cantwell 1993).

Newell's broader approach responded to the American situation. As a settler nation on top of long-settled indigenous polities, with a huge population of formerly enslaved forced migrants and a diverse influx of new voluntary immigrants, rapidly urbanizing and industrializing, the U.S. could not conceive of the folk either as a stable lower social layer or in terms of common ethnic origins. In opposition to the evolutionary anthropology dominating the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which administered Native American populations, Newell argued for the historicist conception of lore espoused by Franz Boas: situational rather than racial particularities accounted for expressive differences (1888). The regional and professional diversity of the American Folklore Society's own early membership imposed a working conception of folklore as something that everyone has, but taking a multiplicity of forms in a multiplicity of groups underneath a national intellectual culture.

This conception of the lower stratum as everyday and familiar had an important afterlife in US folklore studies. Some, influenced by the Chicago school of sociology, saw folklore in localist terms as the "little tradition" coexisting with a shared "great tradition" (Redfield 1956). The consequent research emphasis on domestic sociability as the context of folk performance and on women as tradition-bearers foreshadowed US liberal multiculturalism by identifying folklore with the private sphere (e.g., K. Goldstein 1964). This *de facto* understanding was not often theorized, however. Instead scholars invoked the supposed inverse correlation between technology and intimacy, making reference to oral transmission or, later, face-to-face communication (e.g., Thompson [1946] 1977; Ben-Amos 1972). But such formulations could not stand up against actual vernacular practice, and fieldworkers have made successive cases for writing, print, the telephone, the copy machine, and ultimately the internet as genuine conduits of tradition. Thus folklorists followed the folk themselves to explore expressive interaction in the favored medium of the moment, and technology proved a dead end for delineating the field.

A clarifying move came with the "new perspectives" turn of the 1970s, when US scholars seeking to revitalize the Boasian tradition began to replace folk with vernacular. Rediscovered in the 1960s by sociolinguists, architects, and cultural critics, this adjective was used to claim the autonomy, coherence, validity, and contemporaneity of practices hitherto defined in terms of lack (Brunskill 1963; Labov [1966] 2006; Ilich 1980). The vernacular now stood for the everyday order of culture, developed in person-to-person interaction without the mediation of institutional codes or controls. Vernacular remained a contrastive term to standard, but now it was seen as dynamically engaged with the upper layer, as folklorists synthesized the Western Marxist,

postcolonial, and liberal traditions. Ill at ease with the disdain for popular culture in some of the US literary establishment (e.g., MacDonald 1962) and with what they knew of the Frankfurt school's critique of mass culture as ideological mystification (Benjamin [1936] 1968; Horkheimer and Adorno [1947] 2002), most American folklorists emphasized creative adaptation and critique by consumers (e.g., Sutton-Smith et al. 1995; Santino 1995). On the more politicized end of the discipline, the students of Américo Paredes revised the Gramscian conception of subaltern cultures as unconsciously resistant, arguing that minority expressions explicitly challenged the dominant discourse (Limón 1983).

To be sure, the insistence on synchronic meaning found in Ben-Amos's redefinition of folklore threatened to erase history just as the concern with historical reconstruction had once caused scholars to ignore the communicative present. Several lines of research corrected this tendency. By the late 1960s a preponderance of folklorists rejected the Anglo-American scholarly orthodoxy that enslaved Africans had lost their native cultures on the boat: there was ample evidence of African forms persisting in diasporic expressions (Vlach 1978; Abrahams and Szwed 1983; Thompson 1983). In the 1980s, as creole forms became central to theories of language origins, folkloristic interest in the creole also intensified, encouraging a revisiting of earlier accounts of oral transmission (Abrahams 1983). At the same time, folklorists took up Mikhail Bakhtin's account of verbal utterance as intrinsically dialogic (drawing on previous utterances) and French theorists' reframing of dialogism as intertextuality (the making and reading of texts through other texts) (Bakhtin 1981; Kristeva 1980). Still determined to demonstrate the active role of the people once deemed mere "tradition-bearers" (von Sydow [1932] 1948), folklorists now argued that creativity entailed the reworking and shaping of available materials—an argument especially favored in feminist revisions of *ex nihilo* mythologies (Babcock 1986; Weigle 1989). Any given practice was thus likely to have not a single straightforward social base but historical layers, hybrid sources, and complex authorship. Folk art scholars traced social exchanges in women's ritual arts (Turner 1999) and unearthed the social roots of works deemed by the art world to be the spontaneous expression of uneducated "outsiders" (Ward and Posen 1985; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989). The social was no longer simply the "context" for the cultural expression: increasingly it was seen as its subject matter too.

In Primiano's influential formulation of "vernacular religion" (1995) and a large body of work on vernacular healing systems (e.g., Brady ed. 2001), the idea of the vernacular is inflected by this work on assemblage to become a more self-conscious version of Gramsci's "common sense." Rather than a stable layer, the vernacular is now described as the immediate sphere of engagement in which actors negotiate between the tradition, professional, and alternative discourses available to them, drawing on multiple resources to create a practical repertoire. We see here some influence of an American tendency to equate agency with consumer choice, but also a sense that actors' space of maneuver is shrinking as institutional procedures and commercial products colonize ever more everyday activities. Parody and poaching necessarily replace autonomous

creation in a world so dense with prior discourse (Dorst 1990; M. Hufford 1999). We might now imagine the strata as reversed, with the vernacular growing up from the cracks in the institutional layer.

But if actors are constrained by such a world, their practices proliferate. Modernity's acceleration, breaking up the social base into ever more fields and domains, fosters a fissiparous, multiform vernacular. As populations become more mobile and urbanized, recording technologies improve and multiply, and commercial incentives intensify, attractive traditions are apt to be professionalized. Professionals who can devote themselves fulltime to a musical, dramatic, or culinary genre are likely to develop formal elaborations, technical refinements, and variations; the audience may expand in consequence. Meanings will become less context-dependent and influences grow more complex. Performers and audiences will begin to diversify and cluster according to taste and economic possibilities, so that a practice will often develop mass-market and avant-garde variants, followed typically by a reaction seeking to resurrect the authentic version as cultural heritage or to create a classical canon, in either case curated by specialists or specialist amateurs (Kaplan 2013). American jazz, for example, has repeatedly undergone this cycle, while continuing to influence new vernacular forms on the ground such as hip-hop—which has itself now undergone a few such cycles. And the phenomenon of social relocation is not unique to arts with commercial potential. Customary practices such as gleaning and trash-picking, once accepted elements of a communal repertoire of subsistence, later even celebrated as folklore in nostalgic cultural representations, became relegated to the social margins of an increasingly affluent consumer society (Varda 2000). Today these now repressed “outsider” practices are returning to the mainstream out of environmental concerns and growing economic necessity, in institutional practices of recycling, civic practices of charitable redistribution, and such “alternative” variants as dumpster diving. Vernacular repertoires are maintained over time as resources for future use by flowing into new social spaces as they are squeezed out of others.

## The Social Bond

In tandem with the conception of folklore as a lower cultural stratum there evolved a compensatory holistic view. In modernizing mood, nineteenth-century thinkers saw the practices and dispositions of the past as impediments to progress. But in moments of distress with change, they looked back with regret at the apparent cultural coherence and social cohesion of their childhoods; they might also draw on older social knowledges to imagine alternatives to the social violence of industrial expansion. Early nationalist work channeling the streams of tradition into forward-moving cultural projects was followed by a concern with the dynamics of small groups, giving way in turn to a discovery of folklore in every conceivable kind of social assembly. In arguing over what might constitute a folk community and examining their own investments in that argument,

folklorists produced a variety of insights into the role of cultural form in social bonding: the role of performance in making bounded groups seem like objective realities; the transmission of cultural form in the creation of social networks; and the creation of a sense of communal belonging in individuals.

Folklore research begins to take shape as an autonomous discipline with Romantic nationalism and more specifically in the writings of Johann Gottfried von Herder, who wrote in the 1770s of oral traditions as vital organic processes grounded in place. Herder did not consign traditions to the past, though he judged them vulnerable to external influences. Under normal circumstances, individuals would continue to assimilate their traditions, contribute to them, and develop them as the lifestream of the nation. After the Napoleonic invasions, German thinkers systematized Herder's ideas into a prescription for nation-building. Channeling the flow of poetry into the procedures of philology, Jakob Grimm and others reconstructed a posited cultural community of the past with a view to its future realization. They created the shared cultural currency and pedagogic frameworks that, circulated within the imagined national boundary, would thicken interaction and quicken group consciousness for ensuing political struggles.

The Grimms' international network of correspondents shared strategies as well as texts, creating replicable forms that could be filled with national content. They hunted down words, stories, songs, and old texts for anthologies and assembled epics such as the Finnish *Kalevala*, soon followed by the Estonian *Kalevipoeg*. New nation-states found resources for large-scale collection projects, creating archives and atlases of folk tradition and open-air museums bringing the architecture and material cultures of the region into a central assembly. In general, a first stage of amassing the national "treasury" (a frequent metaphor for early vernacular dictionaries and folklore collections) was followed by a second stage of winnowing and disciplining the national cultural wealth. The second stage produced standardized abridgments suitable for bourgeois domestic consumption, as in the well-known case of Wilhelm Grimm's reworking of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Bauman and Briggs 2003).

Seeking to wrest free of powerful neighbors, small would-be nations at the European periphery embraced the new apparatus with special enthusiasm, and small countries such as Finland, Estonia, and Hungary continue to exercise major international influence in the field. But larger polities seeking to retain their hold on diverse populations also produced folkloric documentation for public consumption and created institutions of folklore scholarship. Folklore proved politically labile: the same forms might be made to serve nationalist or separatist, imperial or anticolonial, fascist or socialist agendas. To be sure, most successful political projects, whether revolutionary or reactionary, were led by small elites or soon coopted by them, and the showiest genres of folk performance were often mobilized, sometimes coercively, to signify popular consent to their doings. Thus colorful costumes and rhythmic dances have come to connote collective passivity to many people, and the word "folklore" is tainted by association in Spanish and some other languages.

The village community became the privileged image of the folk group, embodying the national essence while the cosmopolitan cities governed the state and managed its economy. Peripheral outsiders such as the Celtic bard, the African slave, or the Roma “gypsy” became the boundary figures that both colored and confirmed the “normal” citizen; rural communities of the dominant ethnic group mediated between this local difference and the metropolis (Abrahams 1993). Furthermore, as both rural Europe and its colonies were incorporated into an industrializing market economy torn by labor conflict, the owner class conscripted local traditions into the service of a paternalist social order consciously evoking the feudal estate (Noyes 2000). Both statesmen and capitalists turned the rural *Gemeinschaft* into a conservative icon of the ideal social order. Rural elites and entrepreneurs quickly understood the advantages of playing up to the image.

In the twentieth century, a culture concept rooted in Boas’ transplantation of the German Romantic tradition encouraged most American folklorists to maintain their focus on rural communities or their immigrant descendants, with the nation-state taken for granted as backdrop. The idea of culture as a holistic way of life was popularized in mid-century in widely read ethnographies by Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and others; it was also operationalized by social scientists working for the US government during the Second World War and after, both in efforts to understand enemy psychology and in campaigns to win the cooperation of local ethnic groups in war and counterinsurgency operations (Price 2008). Functionalist social theory turned nationalist ideology into science by positing that the world was naturally divided into organic self-maintaining collectivities.

The culture concept assumed the seamless mutual implication of a bounded group of people, a way of life, a mental framework, and discrete aesthetic expressions. Some US folklorists came to embrace cultural relativism even at the national level, with Alan Dundes writing about American folk ideas as “units of worldview” (1972). More often, because the new ethnographic methods lent themselves to studying small homogeneous populations and because the country’s size and diversity impeded generalization, US scholars sought visibly distinct, visibly “cultural” small groups to study: African-American sharecroppers, Anglo-American mountaineers, Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants. But in contrast to anthropology or sociology, where the community itself was the usual ethnographic object, folklorists retained their focus on form and genre. Some used the methods of structuralism or psychoanalysis to extrapolate a community worldview from a single domain such as architecture or legend or festival (Glassie 1975a; Dundes and Falassi 1975). A few produced an accumulation of articles on diverse genres in a single setting through the course of a lifelong field engagement, as in Don Yoder’s work on the Pennsylvania Germans (1990). More theoretically inclined scholars of verbal art pushed to read genres not just against culture but against other genres in a broader ethnography of communication. Such a project would identify local expressive economies encompassing both complementary and competing formulations of group experience (Hymes 1964, Ben-Amos ed. 1976; Falassi 1980). This move did not

directly challenge the concept of homogeneous community but began to treat cultural forms as flexible and rhetorical, restoring attention to social process.

Common descent or history ceased to be a criterion of folkness for many scholars. The methodological turn to context and participant observation, the political preoccupations of the civil rights era, and professional anxiety about the dwindling population of ballad-singers and fairytale-tellers all prompted a search for a contemporary folk, defined increasingly in sociological rather than anthropological terms as “small groups” without reference to a prior tradition (Ben-Amos 1972). Dundes claimed that any group developed traditions, or what Ben-Amos called artistic communication: “The term ‘folk’ can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor” (1977). Folklorists argued at meetings over whether lovers, owner-pet dyads, and individuals might constitute folk groups, while pushing earlier lines of research to expand in obvious social directions: from immigrant folklore to family folklore, from urban folklore to suburban folklore, from old sects to new religious movements and even mainline Protestants, from secret societies to college fraternities. Groups acquiring public identities as communities through civil rights struggles followed, with work on gay folklore and the folklore of the deaf (Goodwin 1989; Hall 1991). Pop-cultural publics became objects of folklore research when they thickened into fan communities such as Deadheads and Trekkies (Bacon-Smith 1982). Folklore theory began to reflect explicitly on identity (Dundes 1993; Oring 1994), and personal identity emerged as a new focus, in studies both of traditional performers (Sawin 2004) and of self-formation through consumption, with a special interrogation of women’s appropriation of exotic traditions (Lau 2000; Shukla 2008; Bock and Borland 2011).

At the same time as new groups were identified, folklorists increasingly recognized that much folklore is about boundary maintenance rather than group vertebration or even self-integration. The University of Texas folklore program, diverse in its composition and situated in an epicenter of the Chicano movement, pursued this agenda with special vigor, studying the “shouting match at the border” and the exchange of slurring “neighborly names” not as an exception to the rule of coherence but rather as the normal organization of expressive life (Bauman and Abrahams eds. 1981).

New studies of festival and “display events” puzzled out the dialectics of group-making and differentiation. In contrast to anthropological accounts of collective liminality, Abrahams and Bauman addressed conflict not as a temporary ritual break but as structural, arguing for multiple organizing principles and co-existing social positions in a single community (1978). Stoeltje and Bauman identified festivals as key ethnographic sites of modernity, the product of commerce, mediation, and ethnic co-existence (1989). Abrahams explored the expressive repertoire of large-scale events, particularly the nonverbal modalities that could compel a common attention among strangers: noise and explosions, rhythm, gigantized décor, smell, and especially food (1982). There followed studies of ethnic foodways as the medium of intergroup sociability (Brown and Mussell eds. 1984), the aesthetics of marketplace pitches and county

fairs (Prosterman 1995; Kapchan 1996), and the gendered construction of embodied experience (Young ed. 1995).

In the face of a growing disciplinary emphasis on communal identities, Noyes argued in 1995 for the need to make an analytical distinction between group, network, and community: the institutionalized entity, the empirical pattern of social interactions, and the imagined collectivity to which individuals claim belonging (chapter 2). Each of these threads has received ongoing scholarly attention.

Institutions generate their own folklore, much of which is not resistant to but supportive of organizational goals. Professional authority and identities are sustained by group-specific belief systems and expressive patterns (O'Connor 1995; Schrager 2000). Military units foster cohesion through hazing rituals that submit the individual to the group while often violently excluding others, generating a characteristic dynamic of secrecy, scandal, codification, and reform fostered by modern expectations of institutional transparency (Bronner 2006).

In the course of recognizing their own historical role in objectifying political communities, folklorists observed that the “folk” also objectify themselves in institutions and monuments. African American and Latino folklorists pointed out that the minorities usually studied by white scholars in their transgressive moments spent most of their time in the same struggle to create order as that of the dominant population, under more challenging circumstances (Davis 1992). The performance of respect and organizational hierarchy in Caribbean “tea meetings,” African American women’s clubs, and Native American ceremonies confirms the aspiration to stable social being (Abrahams 1983; McGregory 1997; Jackson 2003). Like new nations, new religious groups construct lineages, rituals, and bodies of scholarship, linking claims of antiquity to present mechanisms of bonding (Magliocco 2004). In the burgeoning of inter- and intra-national tourism, communities construct themselves for the eyes of outsiders, in text, museum, and performance (Dorst 1989); producing these activities for strangers, however, creates social interaction among members that may become an end in itself (Bendix 1989). More aggressive performances of communal identity, such as initiating a foreign researcher into a local ritual or stuffing a visiting politician with local specialties, force powerful outsiders to acknowledge the group’s existence and importance as well as to own an obligation to it (Fenske 2010).

In these last examples we can see that the making and witnessing of objective signs of identity also entails the forging of interpersonal social bonds, sometimes among member-performers, sometimes between performer and audience. This takes us to the network. Folklorists have long studied the diffusion of oral tradition across wide geographic and social distances. The implicit network approach of the historic-geographic method became explicit in work on the “legend conduit” (Dégh and Vaszonyi 1975): still more than the song or the fairy tale, rumor and contemporary legend circulate between strangers, between mouth and media, across racial boundaries (Fine and Turner 2004). Working at a more intimate level, studies of jokes and riddles showed how traditions could regulate social boundaries but also bridge them, the dyadic question-and-answer



form establishing complicity and provisional solidarities (Hasan-Rokem and Shulman eds. 1996; Oring 2008). Folklorists interested in patterns of social reciprocity have observed that they are thematized in oral tradition itself. In the Irish tale of “The Man Who has no Story,” a guest in a strange house who declines to make the effort of contributing to the evening’s entertainment is sent out on the road to be buffeted with supernatural punishments, after which he has indeed a story to tell (Glassie ed. 1997, 319–324). The same requirement of performance in return for hospitality can be found today at Chinese urban banquets: a potential new business partner earns the trust of others by singing a song or telling a joke that attests to grace under pressure, self-mastery while drinking, and a concern for the general well-being (Shepherd 2005).

The word “tradition” comes from a Latin legal term for a hand-to-hand transfer of property; it is worth considering this handover in terms of the gift exchange first described by Marcel Mauss (1923–4). Vernacular performances are typically offered and valued knowledge passed on in the context of ongoing social relationships. Where no such relationship exists, the gift creates one: even if giver and receiver never meet again, there is an obligation to remember the giver and context of giving. To be sure, folklore is no stranger to commercial exchange, not only in its recent commodification but in many of its earliest documented manifestations in fairs, marketplaces, and among itinerant peddlers. Nonetheless, with commodities marked as folk, there is always a social supplement to the monetary transaction, an expressive gift. The personhood and social identity of the seller or producer expose themselves to the gaze, perhaps in expressive patter and costume, perhaps in a narrative authenticating the product sold. Sustenance may be shared: ethnic restaurants, with their mimesis of domestic hospitality, are privileged mediators for new immigrant groups in establishing provisional social solidarities, inverting the larger host-guest relationship. In festival and tourist settings, embodied participation is offered through the invitation to join in dance. Although much of folkloristic performance works to objectify and naturalize group shibboleths, the shibboleth can thereby become the invited point of entry for outsiders (Michael 1998), creating social bonds vital to the circulation of information and resources, the restructuring of collective action, and the maintenance of existential solidarities that can be mobilized in time of need.

Just as folklore’s rethinking of its keywords found a useful external irritant in Hobsbawm and Ranger’s “invention of tradition” in the 1980s (1983; cf. Briggs 1996), so Benedict Anderson’s “imagined community,” discovered somewhat later by folklorists, provoked both appropriation and contrastive reflection ([1983] 1991). Many scholars argued that not just nations but all communities were imagined. Some, however, were more imagined than others, requiring a greater effort to construct persuasive symbols and narratives that could not be supplied by prior common experience. Imagination, in turn, did not imply unreality. Recurrent exposure to community-marked narratives and images instills compelling memories into individuals; recurrent participation in communal performance incorporates the community into the body such that individuals identify with it not of choice but from a sense of inevitability: they feel connected,

responsible, bound in history or bound in fate to those who have shared the powerful experience (Noyes 2003). This naturalized belonging gives rise to its own metafolklore: blason populaire and ethnic slurs against outsiders, inside jokes and restricted codes, self-mockery, and even the covert performances of shared experience denied in the public presentation of the group (Herzfeld 1997).

The imaginary that bonds communities may be freely chosen, as in the rituals carefully negotiated and designed by neo-Pagan congregations, with their voluntary membership (Magliocco 2004). It may be imposed from above, as in the state rituals of fascist and communist regimes. It may be imposed from outside, through discrimination and stereotyping, even though imprisonment, expulsion, or genocide. Mobile postmoderns tend to idealize communal attachments, but belonging is ambivalent in practice, a source of both comfort and tension. Where belonging is thick, with a rich imaginary reinforced by dense interaction among community members or strong external pressures, individuals are likely to feel an almost sacramental strength of meaning in everyday actions. One might also call it claustrophobia. Community can be a painful inheritance and it restricts individual freedoms: Glassie has suggested in lectures that the formal intricacy of arts like Turkish rugs and Irish fiddling is the product of personal frustration, the great folk artists being talented individuals who lack other channels for their energies. Folklorists often remain attached to communitarian imaginings nonetheless, in part because of this aesthetic payoff, in part to find redemption from a violent social history, and in part from concern for the future. Most importantly, however, the social base of folkloristic practice itself tends to naturalize and valorize community. In search of an expressive form marked with social identity, committed to the interpersonal scale of ethnographic methods, dependent on actors motivated to interact with outsiders, contemporary folklorists can hardly escape the communalist discourse their disciplinary ancestors helped to create. Communal strategies of self-folklorization took shape in response to centuries of incursion by the state and its experts into provincial communities; they have been appropriated at need by the apostles and representatives of the nation-state, the ethnic minority, the immigrant group, the voluntary association, and every other mode of imagined community (chapter 6). Furthermore, folklorists tend to work with sympathetic, disadvantaged populations rather than with groups they find odious: both ethical commitment and the personal toll exacted by participant observation reinforce this inclination. Folklorists often develop professional synergies with the relevant “folk” as well as becoming involved in advocacy for them or joining their political struggles; they sometimes come from and sometimes marry into their community. Regardless of the balance of power and solidarity in any given case, all of these circumstances create opportunities and incentives for folklorists to participate in, draw upon, enrich, and reinforce existing communalist discourses, to the point that in some intensive cases of revival or activism there is little discursive distance between folk and folklorist, with all parties speaking the same hybrid (e.g., McDermitt 1999). To be sure, folklorists have extensively documented racism, sexism, ethnic prejudice and other forms of intra- and inter-communal oppression, as well as

their own role in imagining communities and turning them into social facts. Still, the ethnographic bias makes it difficult for the field to focus on those communal mechanisms that enable both intimate violence and indifference toward more general social goods.

## Performance in Context

If the idea of community resisted that of social layer, the idea of performance disputed that of community in turn. As folkloristic examinations of community found it to be more an effect than a cause of folk performance, scholars began to look to material circumstances and contingent situations to understand how and why performance might arise. The American concern with self-making, favoring a Boasian folkloristics that emphasized the accidents of history, had already fostered an open-ended approach to the “social base.”

European scholarship anticipated a concern with location not as reified homeland but in network terms as a particular juncture of circumstances, actors, and resources. While the nineteenth-century creators of the comparative method often traced the global movement of traditions only in order to make a case for particular origins, later scholars like Carl Wilhelm von Sydow cared more for the migratory process itself. Von Sydow and his followers noticed the obstacles and channels governing the flow of tradition, the folktale “ecotypes” shaped by local peculiarities and concerns, the differences among “active” and “passive” tradition-bearers, and the migratory characters who moved tradition with themselves: peddlers, soldiers, and immigrants (Von Sydow [1932] 1948; Honko and Löfgren 1981; Hasan-Rokem 2000). While folksong scholars such as Kenneth S. Goldstein followed up this concern for the social shaping of oral tradition (1971), students of dialect, belief, and material culture devoted themselves to mapping projects—an interest renewed today through the availability of GIS technologies allowing scholars to plot not only the movement of repertoire but the geographical consciousness and implied circulation of narrators themselves (Tangherlini 2010). Specialists in vernacular architecture and folk technologies later looked more closely at the interaction of environment, purpose, and aesthetics, and eventually at place-making itself as a discursive practice (M. Hufford 1992).

Scholars of oral tradition focused instead on the human juxtapositions in shared space. Responding to national, ethnic, and immigration conflicts in the present, Mediterraneanist scholars reexamined the cultural evidence of urban coexistence across millenia (Herzfeld 1989; Bromberger and Durand 2001; Hasan-Rokem 2003) and the sharing of performance forms and narratives among apparent enemies (Marzolph 1996; Colović 2002). Sociability among rural neighbors as a counterweight to sectarian performance has similarly interested scholars of Northern Ireland (Glassie 1975b; Cashman 2008), and Jackson has demonstrated that patterns of ceremonial

intertribal visiting among Native Americans in Oklahoma invoke a past of vigorous exchange among Native nations prior to their forced relocation (2003).

Because the Americanness of American folklore had to be found not in remote common ancestry but in new common situations, Anglo-American folklore studies caught up comparativism's implicit interest in mobility and contingency (Abrahams 1978). Folksong was collected in prisons and mining camps and from union organizers. Along with new contexts, scholars sought out the new genres generated therein: new forms of worksong, like the chants of the "gandy dancers" who laid out railway lines; new forms of play, like the logrolling competitions of lumbermen; and new forms of religious practice, like the evangelical camp meeting. Particularly prominent in mid-twentieth century American folklore studies were new kinds of hero celebrated in song and tall tale for their extreme bravery, strength, mobility, independence, appetite, work dedication, and general audacity: figures such as Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Pecos Bill, Casey Jones, Paul Bunyan, and (with a racially marked tragic inflection) John Henry, who were associated with the opening up of particular regions or the expansion of particular trades and industries (Clark 1986). (Only later did scholars notice the extent to which these figures were enhanced by regional boosterism.) Their negative counterparts, the con man and the outlaw, were likewise recognized as expressions of the potentialities of American individualism, and regional variants were explored in studies of such figures as the trickster-like oil promoter (Boatright 1963) or more specific types found in "local character anecdotes," a genre uniting personality, ecology, and history (Stahl 1975).

The Americanist interest in situated action was theorized in the mid-1970s as "performance," ded by Bauman as "the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence" (1977, 11). Folklorists were to study the creativity mediating between genre and performance, tradition and situation (Hymes 1975). The transformation was felt in every subfield of folklore studies. Early work on urban folklore had given primary attention to the residual lore of migrant groups as they adapted to the new setting (cf. Paredes and Stekert eds. 1971). Now folklorists sought to identify a genuinely urban lore born out of the local environment: street vendor performance, subway customs, and crime legends (Warshaver 1986). After the nineteenth century view of children as conservative primitives reproducing old English pagan rituals, new research saw children's lore as ribald critique of parents, schooling, media, and other constitutive elements of their lives in the present (Sutton-Smith et al. 1995). From the guardians of group tradition in the intimate sphere, women became recognized as performing tales or songs that subverted the repertoires of men and, in seemingly trivial gendered genres such as the lullaby, expressing frequently violent criticism of their position (Jordan and Kalcik eds. 1985).

The idea that performance might redound back on its social base posed a dynamic contrast to the postwar culture concept. Inspired by Kenneth Burke, Abrahams argued that folklore was rhetorical, seeking to name situations and so transform them (1968). Genres began to be seen as reified intentionality, collectively designed over time to

address recurrent situations. Bauman urged attention to “emergence,” the unplanned dimension of performance that arises from contingencies and interaction effects (1977). The vocabulary of folklorists increasingly emphasized the active role of performance and performers: tradition became traditionalization, context became contextualization. Performance did not grow inevitably from either a generic or a social base, but declared its own ancestry and pointed to its own sphere of relevance. Emphasizing the conscious application of folklore to situation through performance, scholars also were able to look at the intertextual relations among performances and the effects of textual appropriation, showing how a religious hymn might hearten protesters at risk of arrest, a politician’s use of proverbs authenticate him as a member of the people, or a personal narrative in a mass-mailed charitable appeal excite the empathy and open the checkbook of the reader (Mieder 1997; Shuman 2005).

Recent research has taken the performance turn’s concern with agency to its extremes. At one end, folklorists study voluntary engagements in ludic, subsistence, religious, and professional activities: quilting, hunting, Scouting, gaming, dancing. They have been interested in the sociological question of how such activities build civil society (Fine 2012), the psychological question of how they build masculinity (Mechling 2004), the folkloristic question of how they build community (Feintuch 2001), and even in the phenomenological question of how they build parallel worlds of experience (M. Hufford 1992). Here performance is performative, in J.L. Austin’s sense (1962), creating realities both intentionally and incidentally.

At the other pole lies a growing body of work on folklore as a seizing of agency in situations not of one’s own making. The longterm stresses of social change and racial discrimination are known to generate rumor and legend; epidemics like HIV and social disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, September 11th, or the occupation of Afghanistan also call forth sense-making efforts when trustworthy information is not available (D. Goldstein 2004; Lindahl 2012; Mills 2013). The “spontaneous shrines” marking a roadside death or the site of the Madrid train bombings (Santino ed. 2005) seek to sew up the wounds of community with ritual. The play and memory arts of refugees, even among children torn not only from their homes but from their parents and the normal rites of passage into adulthood, work to process trauma and let life go forward (Slyomovics 1998; Westerman 2006; McMahon 2007).

In pursuing the performance approach to its logical conclusion, folklorists began to undermine their own differential identity. If everything is performance—as scholars coming from theatre, rhetoric, anthropology, and elsewhere were also concluding—then why draw boundaries? This dissolution of disciplines was explicit in the program of the early 1970s, a unified approach grounded in philological method. Addressing the vernacular layer, folklore studies could become the foundation of the human sciences. Institutionally, however, the intellectual convergence made it possible during the 1980s for the most theoretically adept American folklorists to “pass” into better-positioned fields with less historical baggage: cultural studies, American studies, linguistic anthropology, and the new performance studies. (Less theoretically inclined folklorists

did not so much pass as melt into departments of art, literature, music, area studies, and even history.) Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, while acknowledging her folkloristic roots, argued that reconfiguration was intrinsic to the natural history of disciplines (1998a).

But most folklorists would not or could not follow, and for years the annual meetings of the American Folklore Society bore witness to general anxiety, often objectified as argument over the name of the field. In the search for theoretical revitalization and a “truly contemporary ... subject” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998a, 283), a field already fragmented by institutional frameworks and ethnographic foci began to disintegrate within the US academy. In the early 1990s some of the most important university programs reconfigured themselves or closed down entirely.

In the same period, however, an accommodation between old and new approaches was created by “public folklorists,” those creating public programming in nonprofit organizations and state and federal agencies. The most ambitious organizations carefully transformed their mission from the celebration of identity to the critique of situations, typically in collaboration with the grassroots actors once defined only as informants. An exhibition on New York City street play noted the pressures on communal sociability created by real estate development and zoning laws (Dargan and Zeitlin 1990); a project on West Virginian sense of place produced early evidence of the impact of mountaintop removal coal mining (M. Hufford 2003); a longterm study of Cambodian refugee arts in Philadelphia revealed discursive inequalities in the city’s criminal justice system (Westerman 1994a); a conference on Italian-American hip-hop opened up heated community debate on the whiteness of “white ethnics” (Sciorra 2000). Just as subaltern actors have always shaped their social criticisms into symbolic entertainments, so these projects drew broader attention to social issues through the apparent safety of folklore, and revealed the pretty forms to be modes of social action.

Few folklorists followed some of the new roads through the performance turn to the social base. Warner’s influential notion of “publics” imagined and assembled by a text (2002) went a step too far for many nurtured on an idea of tradition shaped in longterm interaction. More useful was the concept of “scene,” appropriated by ethnomusicologists from their informants to describe a site of ongoing encounter around an artistic practice that begins to generate creative heat, potentially disrupting a prevailing aesthetic order (Straw 1991; Shank 1994). In these two conceptions, performance calls its own social base into being and may recruit it for wider social action. But even the scene has not crossed the disciplinary line to any great extent, though it would free us from the conceptual legacies of such words as folk or even subculture. Many folklorists are suspicious of too pure an analytical reliance on performance. The disciplinary subject has long been grounded in everyday life, material constraint, and discursive overdetermination. At least in the US, most folklorists are content to bear this burden.

Why should this be? Once again, the social base of folkloristics itself must be part of the answer. In throwing aside their own history of concepts, genres, and practices, folklorists would throw aside a communal identity they have long performed and therefore feel to be real and binding. They would also throw aside a body of insights into

cultural creation under conditions of social constraint that have not lost their relevance to most of the world's population. Many folklore scholars feel an obligation to the communities among which they have lived, from which they sometimes hail, and to which they owe their professional advancement. The only humanistic field calling explicitly for comparative attention to subaltern forms and therefore to subaltern people, folklore seems necessarily distinct from broader cultural or performance studies, however close the approaches in practice. If not theorized into a crystalline rationale for disciplinary existence, this folkloristic common sense nonetheless carried the day, and the crisis of US programs in the 1990s was reversed at the turn of the millenium with the expansion and revitalization of university folklore programs.

## Style, Emblem, and Stigma

The performance turn brought the field to a difficult question. Might folklorists themselves constitute the social base of folklore? At any rate, many suggest, "folklore" exists insofar as it is identified, entextualized, or created outright by the larger universe of literati, government officials, and entrepreneurs who have an interest in demonstrating the existence of a vibrant popular tradition. Suspicious Anglo-American critics have long looked for falsification in folklore, from Samuel Johnson's ridicule of the putative Gaelic bard Ossian in 1775 to Richard Dorson's 1950 denunciation of the legendary American lumberman Paul Bunyan as "fakelore" (see Dundes 1985). Central European scholars more calmly recognized "folklorismus" as the self-conscious creation of new works of art or commodities drawing on popular traditional models (Voigt 1980). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett eventually declared that there is no authentic tradition against which to weigh the derived. Once objectified in institutions, folklore becomes "a mode of cultural production" that must continue to generate new content to sustain national identities, heritage industries, and the academic discipline of folklore itself (1998a, 284).

This critique of the concept of authenticity was a central preoccupation of folklore studies in the 1980s and 90s. The idea of a folk tradition streaming unsullied from a pure social source, unclouded by mediation and unpolluted by self-conscious manipulation or foreign and commercial influences was not only romantically naive but socially exclusionary; ultimately it was geared to the creation of differential economic value as well as specious political unity (Bendix 1997). With this realization, the biographies of folklorists were critically revisited with a view to their ideological compromises. Field engagements and textual practices including folksong collecting, text editing, interviewing, ethnographic writing, and archiving became the object of both historical reexamination and present-day prescription (e.g., Kodish 1987; Lawless 1991; Briggs 1993; Bendix 2010; Fenske and Davidović-Walter eds. 2010). Critiques of misrepresentation in tourism, museums, and folk festivals gave way to a more positive interest in them as sites of cultural production (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998b).

In the US, the prominence of “public folklore,” the emergence of collaborative norms in fieldwork and the turning of the scholarly lens back on the scholar began to elide the distinctions between folklorist, “folk,” and professional cultural producer (Bendix and Welz eds. 1999). The theorists of verbal art saw that all of these actors were involved in the transmission of texts across performances and contexts; all had to devise routines for making texts speak within one situation while still remaining extractable for recreation in the next one (Bauman and Briggs 1990). Scholars of festival saw that folklorists and heritage producers live in the same kind of desiring bodies that dancers and musicians do. Regardless of the institutional setting, when these bodies meet in social interaction they cannot help being caught up in the conscious and unconscious play of imitation that Cantwell called “ethnomimesis” (1993).

Styles are by definition imitable through attention and practice. Oral ballad style invigorated English romantic and Spanish modernist poetry. Hiphop graffiti, clothing, rap and turntable styles have been adapted globally. There is also a generic folk style. Indigenous communities trying to open up tourism know the recipe for creating “traditional crafts” suitable as souvenir. Global subaltern populations seeking the sympathy of Western audiences for a politically inconvenient cause learn how to construct both oral testimony and salable crafts in a nonthreatening “folk” register: bright colors, simple shapes, the marks of production by hand, and a thematics of family life, spirituality, and proximity to nature (e.g., Westerman 1994b; Peterson 1988; Adams 2006). Even so new a medium as the Web has an identifiable vernacular style, imitated by designers of corporate sites in order to make product testimonials or political arguments look consumer-volunteered (Howard 2005). Howard notes that Cicero already speaks of the “indescribable vernacular flavor” that brought success to a certain Roman orator; today we have the stylistic imitation of popular social movements by American political action committees and lobbyists, recognized by critics as “astroturf” rather than “grassroots” activism. In such cases, the style is purely the emblem of the social base.

The intrinsic detachability of text, generativity of genre, and appropriability of style create vulnerabilities for producers and anxiety for consumers. Culture is designed to spread, commodity form reduces friction, and commercial incentives have greatly accelerated the process. Cultural resources are extracted like mineral resources from poor countries, with multinational corporations reaping the profits. Enthusiasts for traditional musics or therapies look for at least “traceability,” if not authenticity (Morisset and Dieudonné 2006). The communities identifying traditions as theirs and the scholars and policymakers interested in the welfare of such communities look to two kinds of remedy. Cultural heritage initiatives seek to protect traditions from the vicissitudes of circulation by fixing the authentic form to its social base in time and space. Intellectual property initiatives seek to enable circulation by establishing ownership to which profits can be returned and by which expressions can be monitored. Both strategies necessitate at least some objectification of the social base as a group and some occlusion of the tradition’s prior history of circulation and reworking.



A theoretical question is also raised. Does it still make sense to talk of the social base of folklore in a world of flexible networks and mobile traditions? Folklorists know that they create fixity out of flux; they recognize their habit of pointing to their own documents as evidence that a world of stable working classes and integrated communities once existed or might still be recoverable. In this, scholars build upon the strategies of those they study. Communities in a state of dispersal compress old lifeways into containable form: a professionalized genre like bluegrass that travels along with migrants, or a festival for which migrants return home once a year (Cantwell 1984; Magliocco 2005). They secure in representation what they can no longer maintain in practice. Entire regions, such as Appalachia in the United States, and entire populations, such as the Roma in Eastern Europe, have moved into an uncanny double reality. Their cultural production, notably music, is mobile, powerful, omnipresent: celebrated as national identity and world heritage, immortal in archives and cyberspace, profitable as commodity form. Their social base is increasingly spectral, subject in the Appalachian case to environmental transformation that is making old communities uninhabitable and in the Roma case to more forthright dehumanization and denial of citizenship. Cultural visibility in both cases seems to work in inverse proportion to social visibility and human rights generally (Silverman 2014; chapter 14). The gentrification that comes with touristic development follows a similar logic, multiplying the signs of the Other while expelling the Other's body (Welz 1996).

Some folklorists argue that the body cannot so easily be expelled. Commodity fetishes do not always compel devotion. The conspicuous markers of folk style can more easily be reproduced than their generative logic: attentive audiences can tell the difference between grassroots and astroturf protest, between fast-food sushi and the "real thing." The "real thing," in contemporary appraisals, is less likely to imply authenticity of origins than integrity of style and attention in the workmanship—and these entail the presence of a maker. In turn, the makers of complex forms—jazz musicians, cooks, quilters, preachers, community organizers—tend to be highly conscious of their own lineage, readily describing their apprenticeship and how they reworked their master's teaching. If we take seriously the idea of tradition as gift exchange and the inevitability of ethnomimesis, we may be more optimistic about the persistence of the social meanings attached to cultural forms and the consequent agency of their originators, even as tradition crosses social divides.

Two recent formulations, resonating respectively with the academic and the applied poles of folklore work, have traced back an arc from the performance turn to the field's beginnings. The more matter-of-fact comes from Richard Bauman, summing up the "prevailing theory" of folkloristics as "the philology of the vernacular" (2008). The methods are those of the performance approach, now extended diachronically into textual study and thus restoring the broad scope of the older philology. The object is the vernacular, which he now describes as one of two competing communicative modalities: "If the vernacular pulls toward the informal, immediate, locally grounded, proximal side of the [communicative] field, the cosmopolitan pulls toward the rationalized, stan-

standardized, mediated, wide-reaching, distal side” (33). He notes changing sociologies of textual circulation and changing “social bases” of interest to folklorists at different historical stages, instead finding folklore’s continuity in the nature of communicative process itself: the informal, immediate, local, and proximal have always been part of its quality space.

The subaltern body returns in the other definition, coined by Diane Goldstein in 2007 and later elaborated with Amy Shuman: “the stigmatized vernacular” (D. Goldstein and Shuman eds. 2013). In this formulation, the anxiety of folklore research is explicitly problematized, both in the ethical commitment to social justice and in the desire for disciplinary respectability. The stigma is the conspicuous visibility of something normally kept out of sight, in this case the marked term of modernity’s binary oppositions: the traditional, the non-standard, the low, the poor, the collective. Folklore—a word uniting the performances of subalterns with the scholarly framings and institutional packagings thereof—might then be seen as euphemism, the screen that simultaneously conceals and calls attention to an anomalous presence inside the modern nation state or global order. Folklore valorizes rubbish, turns pollution into sacrality. Addressing what is liminal, it cannot escape the instability of its subject; in receiving traditions, it assumes the trace of the subaltern body.

The delineation of folklore as a distinct academic field may ultimately become untenable not for its assumptions about the folk but rather for its conception of what is not folklore. The communicative field laid out by Bauman, presupposing the existence of a dominant order and bourgeois subjects, is starting to sound too tidy. As he himself has demonstrated, the rational cosmopolitan is as much an ideal type as the singing member of the folk, and the proliferation of media, vernaculars, and publics has made it difficult to declare any new utterance mainstream, unmarked, or transparent. As environmental and economic pressures close in on the global order, moreover, Western urbanites are no less subject to transformation over the long term than the people once called folk. The expressions marked as folklore hail back to a social base, as the performance scholars have demonstrated: they do not transparently reflect the social world but call our attention to aspects of it. By virtue of their exclusion, they may bring us insights not hitherto attained in mainstream debates. Even idealized or altogether fabricated commodity representations, by the very fact of labelling themselves folklore, point to something recalcitrant to incorporation in dominant narratives. Now that those dominant narratives are as vulnerable to conflicts of value as folklore itself, folklorists’ continuing interest in the base is looking wiser.

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## 4. Tradition: Three Traditions<sup>(4)</sup>

The following article was originally written as the entry “Tradition” for the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*. Intimidated by the responsibility of contributing to that monument of scholarship, I strove to counterfeit the ideal of density and comprehensiveness we Anglophones like to project upon German research. After a summer spent frantically amassing citations and jettisoning verbs, I produced an entry twice the allotted length; it had to be radically cut and refocused to concentrate exclusively on folk narrative scholarship. The editors of the *Enzyklopädie* generously agreed to allow the full version to be published in the *Journal of Folklore Research*. And in order to spare the reader a hailstorm of author-date citations, the editors of the JFR and, in turn, of this book kindly consented to a variance in their usual practice: citations will be found in a note at the end of each paragraph.

Despite the bibliographic delirium, I hope not to strain either the reader’s patience or my own competence beyond the breaking point. Due to the original focus on oral narrative, I have not surveyed important literatures on custom and on the transmission of craft knowledge. The cultural scope is likewise restricted. I do my best to reconstruct the lineage of the Western concept that has informed European and American folklore research, but I make no attempt to identify what comparable concepts in South Asia, East Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the indigenous Americas, or elsewhere might look like, nor I do survey the literature on emic conceptions of tradition—which in any case cannot easily be disentangled from larger societal discourses. A comparison across a fuller range of social structures, communicative practices, and historical situations would be of enormous interest to all of us trying to come to terms with the inevitably provincial character of our analytical tools, and, as one JFR reviewer noted, with the more immediately relevant question of the circumstances under which tradition surfaces as a metacultural problem.<sup>1</sup> I hope that colleagues with the requisite expertise will step forward to liquidate the lack.<sup>2</sup>

As both word and concept, tradition is inescapably ambiguous. Like other keywords of Western modernity, “tradition” circulates between general and scholarly usage and

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<sup>1</sup> See Noyes ed. 2005 for my first approach to this question.

<sup>2</sup> Since the publication of this piece in the *Journal of Folklore Research*, important syntheses by other folklorists have appeared, e.g., Cashman, Mould, and Shukla 2011; Vaz da Silva 2012; Blank and Howard, eds. 2013.

<sup>(4)</sup> “Tradition” has throughout been abbreviated as “t.” Originally published as “Tradition: Three Traditions,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 46 (2009): 233–268.

between analytic and ideological applications. Keywords traverse these boundaries most fluidly and thus accumulate most ideological weight when not interrogated too closely. But in the wake of the Second World War and decolonization the problematization of the concept of tradition became unavoidable. Thus it was examined and made reflexive by 1968-era folklorists and more influentially in 1983 by Hobsbawm and Ranger. Since then, this concept so bound to the identity of the ethnological fields has fostered intensive self-examination among academic folklorists and ethnologists as well as among public cultural practitioners and been surveyed in indigenous studies, law, theology, sociology, philosophy, and social theory. Underlying these contemporary meta-commentaries, we can identify a tradition of talking about tradition: not so much a progression of ideas as a continual reworking of base meanings and a continual interaction between theory, policy, and vernacular practice. After a survey of early usage, I explore what seem to me three principal orientations towards tradition: communication, ideology, and property.<sup>3</sup>

## Historical usage

The core meaning of *traditio* in classical Latin is “handing over” or “delivery”; clustered around this are notions of entrusting, betrayal, surrender, recounting, and oral teaching. All of these resonances persist as the word moves into the Romance languages and is borrowed into the Germanic (fifteenth century) and the Slavic languages (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries). Comparable semantic clusters may be found for the Greek *paradosis*, its Russian calque *predanie* (eleventh century in Old Church Slavonic), and, in early modern usage, the German *Überlieferung*.

In Roman property law, *traditio* referred to a mode of transferring ownership through the intentional hand-to-hand transfer of the property itself, a part of it, or a symbol of it. Contracts were executed by public *traditio* through the Latin Middle Ages, and the word was also associated with the handing on of authority, as in the early Christian iconographic motif of the *traditio legis* (Christ replacing the emperor as law-giver) or the *traditio instrumentorum*, the handing of the chalice and paten to the new priest in the medieval rite of ordination.<sup>4</sup>

Even more than law, religion has shaped the Western concept of tradition. Each of the “religions of the book” conceives of scripture as being supplemented by tradition,

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<sup>3</sup> Keywords: Williams 1983. 1968 era: Bausinger 1969. Invention: Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983. Folklore and ethnology: *Sovetskaya Etnografia* 1981–2; Honko and Löfgren 1981; Honko and Laaksonen 1983; Ben-Amos 1984; Hofer 1984; Bendix 1997; Bronner 2000; Glassie 2003; Anttonen 2005; Ó Giolláin 2000; Bauman and Briggs 2003. Public practitioners: Carril and Espina Barrio 2001. Surveys: Mauzé 1997 (indigenous studies); Krygier 1986 (law); Congar 1960, Pieper 1970, Pelikan 1984 (theology); Reinhard Bendix 1967, Shils 1981 (sociology); Allan 1986, Philips and Schochet 2004 (philosophy and social theory).

<sup>4</sup> Roman law: Sandars 1876: II, 603. Medieval *traditio* Green 1999: 41–52. *Traditio legis* Grabar 1968: 42. *T. instrumentorum*, Otten 1918: II, 386.

a parallel track of oral teaching that provides context, interpretation, and elaboration of the sacred texts. Thus, in Judaism, the Rabbinical tradition distinguishes between written and oral Torah, both understood as originating with Moses. Church Fathers such as Tertullian and Irenaeus identify apostolic teaching descending from Christ's own oral instruction as a source of divine authority. In Islam, the *hadīth* are said to preserve the sayings of the Prophet. This valuing of tradition, however secondarily, has fostered the preservation in writing of rich bodies of oral narrative in the Jewish Midrash, the Islamic *hadīth*, and the later legendary of saints and shrines in Christianity. At the same time, the long concern with authenticity stems from this religious context: Muslim scholars give careful attention to the chain of oral transmission connecting a given *hadīth* to the Prophet, and the Church from the beginning relies on the mechanism of apostolic succession to police what it considers genuine tradition against the "superstitions" of the people and the "heresies" of the educated.<sup>5</sup>

Tensions over the authority of tradition in Christianity explode during the Reformation. Reformers cite the incident in which Jesus criticizes the paradosis of the Pharisees as in direct contradiction to the divine *logos*. They denounce the "human tradition" of the Church as meaningless custom, "*un amas infini et importable*" (an infinite and unbearable heap, Calvin) that burdens individual spiritual freedom. The Church responds by pointing to other New Testament passages in which scripture itself is represented as one part of the "tradition" handed down from the apostles and thus from Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Council of Trent explicitly asserts "*libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus*" (written books and unwritten tradition) as joint sources of divine authority. But Protestant scholars work to widen the gap between the two, developing philological tools by which to cleanse those same written books from the corruptions of scribal and oral tradition.<sup>6</sup>

The Reformation critique of tradition is developed by Enlightenment philosophers. In 1682, Locke argues that the reliance of "the Jews, the Romanists, and the Turks" on tradition to interpret scripture results from a "defect of language" that makes the authority of the past inherently unreliable. Tradition is thus easily abused by power: hence the necessity of a turn towards natural religion as grasped by individual reason. David Hume and Adam Ferguson explain that traditions are adapted in the retelling to the needs of the present so that the historical fact contained in them erodes from generation to generation. In general, as Bauman and Briggs demonstrate, Enlightenment critics construct an understanding of tradition as the negative mirror to an ideal of transparent language, purified and stabilized and subject not to the test of authority but that of reason and the senses.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Oral Torah: Jaffee 2005. Midrash: Hasan-Rokem 2000. Church Fathers: Oberman 1986:12. *Hadīth*: Saaed 2005, Bowen 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Pharisees: Matthew 20:1–11; Mark 7:4–14. Human t.: Melanchthon 1530: V. xxvi.i; Calvin 1560, XIII. Scripture part of t.: 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Timothy 2:2. Joint authority: Concilium Tridentinum 1546. Philology: Grafton 1990:84, cf. 48–49.

<sup>7</sup> Locke 1997; Hume 1757: I; Ferguson 1767: II.i; Bauman and Briggs 2003.

Romantic thinkers, in turn, secularize the Catholic defense of tradition, now the fount of access not to divine truth but to the *Volksgeist*. Herder speaks of language and tradition as stemming not from a priesthood but from the Volk as a whole, though only the lower classes have kept faith to it in the modern period. Henceforth the referent of the word folk will veer uneasily between class and nation. From the Grimms' famous account of Dorothea Viehmann to the influential work of Richard Weiss, this counter-Enlightenment discourse will characterize the common people not by their intellectual submission to priestly authority but by their *Traditionsgläubigkeit*, fidelity to tradition: the vehicle is now itself sacred. Herder and his followers treat tradition not as a process of corruption, but as a dynamic process of individual assimilation, and more broadly as the vital life course of an organism, the nation. Herder further explains that oral tradition does not obstruct direct sensory perception but rather provides an inherited explanatory context for it, developing in active response to a given lifeworld. This debate—tradition as an instrument of oppression imposed from above versus tradition as an active force of self-creation organically engaged with the environment—will continue to inform modern scholarship as well as modern politics. Crucially, both the denouncers and the proponents construe tradition as vulnerable to disturbance. Thus it will be increasingly associated with social actors on the defensive and invoked in projects of reaction or revindication rather than as the idiom of ascendant power.<sup>8</sup>

## Tradition as Communication

Scholarship focusing on tradition as a communicative transaction often turns to more apparently objective terms such as transmission (English and Romance) or *Überlieferung* (German); the Finnish school, concerned with geographical spread, referred to “diffusion.” The concern with process fosters a dialectic of attention to global dynamics and single performances.<sup>9</sup>

In the late nineteenth century folklore theory in northern Europe moves generally from a model of tradition as inheritance (the Grimms and other Romantic nationalists) to one of migration, with tradition spreading in waves from its point of creation (Benfey, followed by the Finnish school). Von Sydow's critique marked the transition to a functionalist approach emphasizing the adaptation of tradition to a local ecology, which fostered its stability and resistance to outside influences. Von Sydow's attention to the differential importance of social roles, milieux, paths, and situations in the spread of tradition was developed by Goldstein and others and fully realized in Schenda's complex history of oral narrative in modern Europe. Studies of individual performers and of families began to examine the role of biography and of small-group dynamics. The turn to context in the 1960s and 70s showed that ritual settings might favor the

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<sup>8</sup> Fidelity to t.: Grimm (1819) 1980; Weiss 1946; Scharfe 1977. T. as dynamic: Herder 1778; t. and perception: Herder 1784–91: VIII, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Finnish school: Krohn 1926.

retention of archaic elements while more ludic situations encouraged free reworkings of tradition. Oral historians began to understand narratives of the past as community process in the present, which both conditioned their evidentiary status and might even transcend it. American folklorists started to concentrate on single performances of tradition as active and often agonistic transactions among participants, insisting on creativity in the moment, while scholars working on professional storytelling traditions began to study the mechanisms of apprenticeship.<sup>10</sup>

Attention to specific oral genres provided deeper insight into the tradition process. Jakobson and the Prague structuralists identified both parallelism and a special relationship of *langue* and *parole* as distinctive features of oral tradition. Scholars of epic, taking their cue from the Homeric question, began to explore the logic of orality, with Parry and Lord formulating the influential oral-formulaic theory of composition, later developed, modified, and challenged by Finnegan, Honko, Nagy, Foley, and others. The enduring contribution of this school was to validate tradition as “multiform,” existing in its varying realizations rather than decaying from a single Ur-form. French Africanist scholarship and the American ethnopoetics debate, emphasizing the internal organization of oral texts, provided further models, and classicists and medievalists developed notions of mimesis and *mouvance* as integral to oral poetic process.<sup>11</sup>

Legend and rumor provided a focus for closer attention to social networks and dynamics in oral transmission. Sociological, psychological, and communications studies as well as folkloristic work proliferated after the Second World War, profiting by the currency of these proto-narrative forms in contemporary society. Following the pioneering work of Bartlett, Anderson attempted to validate his “law of self-correction” experimentally, claiming that a normative version of the text stabilizes as each listener synthesizes the variants heard from different sources. Several scholars attempted to reproduce or improve his experiments. Dégh and Vászonyi formulated an alternative “multi-conduit hypothesis”: tradition follows conduits constituted of like-minded individuals that tend to conserve normal form. An important body of scholarship followed examining the role of social networks, social difference, and political contexts in the transmission of rumor and legend. The scientific bent of the earlier work continues in other applications of psychological methods to the study of oral memory and more recently of cognitive science and evolutionary theory seeking to understand what makes culture stick, as when Zipes applied the theory of memes to the canonical fairy tales.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Differential transmission: von Sydow (1932) 1948; Goldstein 1963, 1971; Velasco, 1986; Schenda, 1993. Individuals: Asadowskij 1926; Abrahams 1970; Pentikäinen 1978. Families: Roberts 1959; Rüütel and Kuutma 1996; Lindahl 2006. Context and textual retention: Cid 1979; Briggs 1988. Oral history: Vansina 1985, Portelli 1991, Tonkin 1992. Performance: Bauman 1977, 1986; Briggs 1988. Apprenticeship: Reynolds 2000, Bender 2003, Shepherd 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Prague School: Bogatyrev and Jakobson 1929; Jakobson, 1973. Oral composition: Lord 1960; Foley 1995; Honko 2000; Finnegan 2007. French Africanism: *Cahiers de littérature orale* 1976—; Calame-Griaule 1987. Ethnopoetics: Hymes 1981; Tedlock 1983. Mimesis and *mouvance*: Havelock 1963; Zumthor 1983; Nagy 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Post-war rumor studies: Allport and Postman 1947; Shibutani 1966; Morin, 1969; Rosnow and



Märchen scholarship has, however, taken a different path because of the visibility of the literary tradition. Röhrich, Schenda, Lavinio, and others have long examined the interplay of oral and literary transmission, and Ziolkowski argues that this interaction was vital to the medieval diffusion of folktales. Assuming the extremist position of Wesselski, Bottigheimer has asserted not merely the literary but the single-authored origin of the “rise tale.” Zipes, Bacchilega, Tatar and many others have explored the modern literary and cinematic transmission of the fairy tale, showing how individual authorship, new media, and changing social contexts reshape traditional material. Indeed, Bausinger—followed by many studies of folklore in new media—shows folklore expanding to fill the new environment of the “technical world,” and Uther et al. argue specifically for a boom in the *Zaubermärchen* or fairy tale, thanks to the multiplicity of channels of transmission: film, comics, cartoons, local monuments and tourist performance, self-help and therapeutic movements, celebrity culture, advertising, the storytelling movement, and literary reworkings. A more general literature explores the centrality of mediation and objectification to cultural transmission.<sup>13</sup>

Many studies challenged the degeneration hypothesis by challenging narrative form as a criterion of successful transmission. Coffin and Paredes argue that the ballad sloughs off its narrative content as the historical incident that gave it birth loses its relevance, retaining a lyric “emotional core.” Dégh, followed by others, shows that contemporary legend is typically co-constructed in debate or acted out in ostension rather than told as a well-formed narrative. Even the *Zaubermärchen* does not persist in well-formed narratives alone: Schacker demonstrates that in nineteenth-century England the normative form of the tale was domesticated in children’s literature while its subversive potential was maintained in popular pantomime. Conrad argues that the full texts of the best-known fairy tales have become merely background to an intertextual universe of transmission through advertisement, celebrity journalism, and other cultural references.<sup>14</sup>

The larger thrust of recent American scholarship has been to unfold the “natural history of discourse.” A dialectic of contextualization and entextualization—the formalizing and framing processes that convert a segment of discourse into a bounded reproducible object—moves traditions in and out of steady states. Metacultures of tradition or of newness accelerate cultural objects into circulation. Whereas earlier

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Fine, 1976. Transmission experiments: Bartlett 1920; Anderson 1951; Oring 1978; Dégh 2001:406–418. Multi-conduit: Dégh and Vászonyi, 1975. Rumor studies: Turner 1993; White 2000; Fine, Heath, and Campion-Vincent 2005. Memory studies: Hoppál 1981; Rubin 1995. Cognitive approaches: Boyer 1990; Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Blackmore 1999; Zipes 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Oral-literary interaction: Röhrich 1962–67; Schenda 1970; Lavinio 1993; Ziolkowski 2007. Literary origins: Wesselski 1931; Bottigheimer 2002. Fairy tale as literary t.: Zipes (1983) 2006; Bacchilega 1997; Tatar 2004. Folklore and new technologies: Bausinger 1961, Dundes and Pagter 1975, Uther 1990; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996. Mediation and objectification: Debray 1998; Bolter and Grusin 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Emotional core: Coffin 1957; Paredes (1972) 1993. Legend form: Dégh 2001: 406–418; Ellis 2001. Fairy tale: Schacker 2008, Conrad 1998.

scholarship assumed continuity and tried to explain change, today flux is assumed and it is stability for which we must account.<sup>15</sup>

## Tradition as Temporal Ideology

The idea that tradition has been handed down through time sometimes differentiates the concept from broader conceptions of cultural transmission. It implies separation as well as continuity: in Hungarian, *hagyomány*, the word for tradition, refers to both a bequest and a divorce. The theory of tradition is elaborated in tandem with the theory of modernity, to which it provides the binary contrast. Tradition is thought inevitably to decline as modernity rises; they cannot occupy a common space. Within modernity, isolated traditions can be identified as relics or survivals signaling the distance of the present from a lost lifeworld. Neither traditions nor their bearers are admitted to coevalness with the modern subject.<sup>16</sup>

This devolutionary premise promotes two kinds of reactions, both calling for salvage fieldwork. Nationalists, following Herder, collect traditions in order to save them: they cannot be allowed to die because they are the spirit of the people. Rather, they must be restored from their fragmentary form among the peasantry to an integrated whole in modern form—that is, printed text—that can be recirculated across the nation. They will at the same time be “purified” of presumed corruptions and made suitable for a more refined age (the Grimms) or restored to their “authentic” national form after foreign overlays (the Greeks), often reworked into a standard language to foster national integration around common texts (e.g., the editions of Asbjørnsen and Moe’s *Norske Folkeeventyr* in the 1840s). The middle classes are key agents of this transformation as well as its intended audience, and their intervention is authorized by the organic ideology of the nation: they too are Volk.<sup>17</sup>

Evolutionists, such as the British anthropologists who followed Tylor, would declare the necessity of documenting tradition for scholarship while eradicating it in practice, both in the colonies and among the lower classes. “The science of Tradition” proclaimed by Hartland in 1899 demanded not the sympathetic participation but the objective distance of the scholar-observer. At the same time, this scientific approach laid emphasis on accurate transcription that would not interfere with the evidentiary status of the material. To be sure, the metadiscursive practices declaring the transparent folk sta-

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<sup>15</sup> Entextualization: Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996. Metacultures: Urban 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Hungarian: Hofer 1984: 143 n.1. T. opposed to modernity: Bauman and Briggs 2003; Ó Giolláin 2000; Anttonen 2005. T. not coeval: Fabian 1983; Bauman and Briggs 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Devolutionary premise: Dundes 1975. National circulation: Goethe 1806; Wilson 1976. Purification: Herzfeld 1982. Standard language: Holbek 1983:147. Middle class as folk: Bauman and Briggs 2003:185.

tus of the recorded text were employed by Romantic folklorists as well; either way, traditional process was not allowed visibly to disrupt access to traditional content.<sup>18</sup>

Sociologists elaborated theories of a great divide between modernity and its predecessor: Marx's three-stage model identifying tradition with feudalism, the *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* of Tönnies, the mechanical and organic solidarities of Durkheim. Max Weber's ideal types of traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal authority would have a long afterlife in the sociological commonplace of the "traditional society," imagined as based in inherited positions, stable hierarchies, and personal ties. U.S.-led post-conflict reconstruction and economic development programs from 1918 into the twenty-first century would apply a presumed universal checklist of features charting the transition from traditional society to liberal democracy; the Soviets had a comparable checklist for the advance to socialism. Other great divide theories, informed by Enlightenment linguistic ideology, defined traditional mentalities or language as a distinct ideal type: Lévy-Bruhl postulated primitive thought as mystical and participatory rather than logical and Lévi-Strauss proposed his famous distinction between "bricolage" and "engineering" as rooted in different relationships to environment, an argument later historicized by Scott. Weber's typology was transmuted into discursive context by Habermas in his "ideal speech situation" and with a Marxist bent by Maurice Bloch, who argued that traditional authority was sustained by discursive and performative formalizations impeding referential understanding. Havelock found a comparable divide between traditional poetics and classical philosophical discourse in ancient Greece.<sup>19</sup>

Folklore scholarship from the mid-nineteenth century forward was often elaborated in opposition to the modernizers, typically in alliance with conservative politics. The semantic associations of tradition with respect and duty promoted "traditionalism" as a defensive posture in both religion and politics arguing for the submission of the people to authority. National tradition was defined as pious and patriarchal, in part to discredit workers' movements as foreign and inauthentic. A folk in danger of seduction by such movements as well as by modern consumerism, or demographically threatened by immigration, was encouraged and policed in its traditions, often taught how to perform them authentically. Like the European avant-garde in general, left and right, Fascist movements drew their immediate activist energies from an ahistorical primitivism rather than from the proximate traditional culture. Nonetheless, Fascist regimes cultivated folklore scholarship and encouraged the "folk"—that is, the working classes—to be faithful to their traditions, supporting these through organized corporate activities. On the other side, socialist and popular-front regimes, while in their initial stages often rejecting tradition wholesale as "feudal," found it a necessary tool for communicating with and mobilizing the masses. They too created curators of tradition

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<sup>18</sup> Hartland (1899) 1968. Metadiscursive practices: Briggs 1993.

<sup>19</sup> Great divides: Marx 1867; Tönnies 1887; Durkheim 1897. Modernization as checklist: Lerner 1958; see Bendix 1967: 310–311. T. vs. modern thought: Lévy-Bruhl 1910; Lévi-Strauss 1962; Scott 1998. T. vs. transparent language: Habermas 1981; Havelock 1963; Bloch 1974.

to purge it of ideological contamination, identify its genuinely popular and progressive aspects, and compose new texts on traditional models.<sup>20</sup>

Popular traditionalism arises in contexts of stress from rapid transformations of the lifeworld. In a manner open to denunciation by scholars as *Folklorismus*, provincial Western communities develop custodial institutions in defense of tradition, merging insider and scholarly perspectives and actively reconstructing traditions perceived as decayed. Although often proclaiming a localism free of any larger ideology, in practice traditionalism takes a political tinge in opposition to the perceived prevailing ethos. American conservative populism makes much of “traditional values” and the “traditional family” as regulatory mechanisms, but tradition has a liberating valence in many decolonizing, indigenous, and post-Soviet societies subjected to disruptive modernizing regimes and the stigma of backwardness. In reaction to a perceived detraditionalization, new regimes will frequently institute “oral literature” in the curriculum, undertake active revivals that bring about a charismatic and sometimes traumatic return of presumably repressed tradition, restructure legal systems according to putative custom, reconstruct epics as the basis of national unity, and once again set out to purify traditions of foreign influences, as if romantic nationalism had never been challenged.<sup>21</sup>

Civil rights movements, anticolonial movements, and postfascist *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* have a transformative impact on conceptions of tradition among academic folklorists. A discipline newly suspicious of both romanticism and empiricism undergoes its own 1968. Younger folklorists turn away from the humanities and toward the social sciences as model. They begin to seek an authentically contemporary subject, resorting first to immigrant and urban traditions. Later they seek to dissociate themselves from tradition altogether, sometimes with changes of name emphasizing communicative processes in the present: folklore to ethnology or *Empirische Kulturwissenschaft*; oral tradition to verbal art. Ben-Amos’ celebrated 1967 redefinition of folklore as “artistic communication in small groups” explicitly rejects both tradition and oral transmission as criteria. Bauman’s introduction to *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore* lauds “creativity and innovation” in scholarship and repeatedly characterizes the “tradition” of folklore studies as ossified and restrictive. American folklorists wrestling with their own Oedipal anxiety of influence turned away from the seemingly conservative domestic-based traditions of rural America studied by their predecessors toward the transgressive street culture of young African-American men, inaugurating

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<sup>20</sup> Respect and duty: Williams 1983:318. Conservative traditionalism: Riehl 1851; Salomone-Marino 1879; Torras i Bages 1892. Authenticity police: Klein 2000; Whisnant 1986. Fascist reworkings: De Grazia 1981; Ortiz 1999; Lixfeld 1994. Socialist and left reworkings: Oinas 1978; Green 2001; Balina, Goscilo and Lipovetsky 2005; Noyes ed. 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Traditionalism: Braun 1960; Jacobeit 1969; Hofer 1984; Abrahams 1972; Holmes 2000. Custodial institutions: Bausinger 1961; Bendix 1985; Noyes 1999. Merged perspectives: Moser 1964; Mohrmann 1990. *Folklorismus*: Bausinger 1969. Localism: Noyes 2003. T. values: Bronner 2000. Detraditionalization: Heelas, Lash, and Morris 1996. Curriculum: wa-Mungai 2005. Revitalizations: Lanternari 1960; Colovic 1994; Zanic 2002; Harkin 2004; Del Giudice 2005. Customary law: Keesing 1982. National epic: Prior 2000. Purification: Colovic 2002.

a long romance with all that is not pure but creolized, not normative but carnivalesque, not of the heartland but of the borderland, and not submissive but resistant. In the performance turn, American folklorists embraced charismatic rather than traditional authority as the fount of the field's authenticity.<sup>22</sup>

German folklorists, unable to slough off history or imagine an authentic subject position, turned directly to an often ironic reassessment of the disciplinary past, with Moser, Bausinger, Brückner, Scharfe, Köstlin and others interrogating the taken-for-granted concepts of continuity, tradition, and even the much-abhorred *Folklorismus*. Bausinger and Köstlin note that the holistic conceptual superstructure of tradition emerges as a compensation for the apparently fragmented and residual character of its empirical referent. Generally in this work there is a push not to purify the disciplinary object of scholarly, commercial, or political influences, but to recognize these as integral to the inquiry, themselves part of the tradition of tradition in Western culture.<sup>23</sup>

A less sophisticated but more contagious formulation came in 1983 with Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, a collection of historical essays arguing that the nineteenth century became a key ideological moment in which social custom was made self-conscious and modified or invented outright by nation-states and colonial powers. The former sought to construct national identity or pacify their working classes with mass-produced traditions, while the latter attempted to legitimate their rule through supposedly indigenous rites of sovereignty adapted to the putative understanding of a non-modern society. Innumerable case studies followed, sometimes as part of a critique of a current nationalist project and often with a debunking tone; a comparable impulse in Mörfchen studies may be found in Ellis' challenge to the authenticity of the Grimms' texts. In the 1990s, Nora's monumental study of *lieux de mémoire*, with a volume devoted to tradition, provides a less polemic model for future scholarship.<sup>24</sup>

Partially in response to this broader intellectual attention, American folklorists began to catch up to the Germans in their reexamination of disciplinary history. But in a political climate of emerging multiculturalism and the turn of many university-trained folklorists to the public sector, it was necessary to rehabilitate the concept of tradition rather than scrutinize it under a critical lens. Dell Hymes had already argued in

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<sup>22</sup> Social scientific models: Brückner 1971; Paredes and Bauman 1972. Contemporary subject: Dundes 1977; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998a. Immigrant and urban traditions: Bausinger 1961; Paredes and Stekert 1971; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1983. New definition: Ben-Amos [1967] 1972. Name changes: Harlow 1998; Klein 2000. Creativity celebrated: Paredes and Bauman 1972: introduction. Anxiety of influence: Bloom 1973. Street culture: Abrahams 1964. Creole: Abrahams 1983; Baron and Cara 2003. Carnivalesque: Babcock 1978. Borderland: Bauman 1972; Bauman and Abrahams 1981. Resistance: Abrahams 1972. Charismatic authenticity: Bendix 1997: 188–219.

<sup>23</sup> German revisitings: Moser 1964; Bausinger 1966; Bausinger and Brückner 1969; Köstlin 1969; Geiger, Jeggle, and Korff 1970; Bendix 1997. Holism as compensatory: Bausinger 1969; Köstlin 1995. For representative translations of the German work of this period, see Dow and Lixfeld 1986.

<sup>24</sup> *Invention of t.*: Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983. Nationalist case studies: Prats 1988; Marfany 1996. Debunking: Ellis, 1983; Juaristi 1998; Foster 2002. *Lieux de mémoire*: Nora 1992.

1975 that “traditionalization” was a basic cultural process, in which all people selected valued aspects of the past for cultural attention and custodianship. Others sought to democratize Hobsbawm and Ranger, arguing that communities themselves continually reinterpreted the past for present purposes, staging their culture for themselves and others. This emphasis on conscious manipulation both rejected the old idea of the folk as mindless tradition-bearers and distinguished tradition from such broader conceptions as mimesis, reproduction, and habitus, all terms that still seemed to reproach ordinary people for a lack of self-aware agency. Rather than invention, the term appropriation came to be favored in English-language scholarship to mark the agonistic dimension of the handover of tradition: power takes over the symbolic forms of the subaltern, while individuals borrow from the larger culture and make it their own.<sup>25</sup>

But the folk in question tended not to welcome this constructivist turn, which seemed to impute untruthfulness. Sometimes more than reputation was at stake in the reinterpretation: the historical narratives of indigenous communities often served as the basis for claims to land and other resources, just as the testimonies of indigenous peoples and refugees were typically the only available evidence of persecution, each in the absence of documentation. Both types of narrative lost evidentiary status in Western institutions when they were shown by scholars to be actively shaped according to generic conventions. The equally well-developed scholarly critique of documentary evidence is less acknowledged by institutions that depend on documents to maintain order and within which tradition has so long been discredited. Thus, in a material world, subaltern actors often find it necessary to invoke a positivist epistemology.<sup>26</sup>

While the main tendency of scholarship has been to examine the modernity of the category of tradition, several other streams reject the great divide altogether. Thus, for example, local traditions are shown to gain vitality, distinctiveness, and formal elaboration with the growth of trade in early modern Europe; the *Zaubermärchen* is less a survival of pagan myth than a narrative of entry into capitalism; colonized societies recuperate their historical experience into established oral genres; and, most consequentially, indigenous traditions can be mobilized to legitimate new practices and construct alternative modernities.<sup>27</sup>

Just as the traditional is modern, so the modern is traditional. A Durkheimian sociological tradition shows ritual to be as central to the nation-state and global community as it is to the so-called traditional societies, and myth is also a recognized instrument

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<sup>25</sup> American disciplinary history: Zumwalt 1988; Abrahams 1993; Bronner 1998. Multiculturalism and public folklore: Bendix and Welz 1999. Community traditionalizings: Hymes 1975; Honko and Laaksonen 1983; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Pouillon 1997; Tuleja 1997. Habitus, reproduction, mimesis: Bourdieu 1972; Willis 1981; Cantwell 1999. Appropriation: Ziff and Rao, 1997.

<sup>26</sup> Rejecting constructivism: Mills 1993; Mullen 2000; Briggs 1999. Land claims: Trask 1991; Hanson 1997. Testimonies: Arias 2001; Westerman 1998; Bohmer and Shuman 2007. Subaltern positivism: Spivak 1993.

<sup>27</sup> Local ts. and trade: Köstlin 1977; Hofer 1980; Bendix and Noyes eds. 1998. Märchen and capitalism: Mathias and Raspa 1985; Schneider, 1989. History incorporated into oral t.: Hymes 1975; Taussig 1980; Naithani 2001. Alternative modernities: Singer 1972; Gaonkar 1999.

of modernity. Quintessentially modern institutions of science, politics, and law have been shown to depend on habit and precedent as much as on codified protocols. Latour argues that all self-consciously modern forms are in fact hybrids. Just like oral narrative, single-authored literary texts call on precursors, generic horizons, intertexts, and inherited discursive resources bearing the resonance of prior uses. Avant-gardes endlessly replace themselves in a “tradition of the new.” A “metaculture of newness” is made viable through the reproduction of familiar commodities beneath the framing, creating in fact less cultural flexibility than in a metaculture of tradition that assumes continuity. Closely examined, all culture is recycled.<sup>28</sup>

## Tradition as Communal Property

Popular traditionalism points us to a final tension in the concept—that between identity and commodity. Just as in the *traditio* of Roman law, conceptions of folk tradition are not purely processual, but give material form to human relationships. The great epic compilations such as the Kalevala and the great tale collections such as the *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* and the *Biblioteca delle tradizioni popolari siciliane* provided an encapsulation, an “objective correlative” to the nations they sought to bring into being. But the vehicle that turned the national treasure into common property was the printed book, a commodity exchanged for money and not dependent for its diffusion on face-to-face relations with their attendant social control. The anxiety over folklore’s authenticity was in direct proportion to its easy alienability in a capitalist economy.<sup>29</sup>

Tradition’s specificity, passing *per manus* between particular senders and receivers, attached it early to conceptions of cultural identity, and this association is perhaps its most automatic today. In early modern usage, traditions are mentioned in relation to a given social group or locality: their circulation is understood as restricted. As modern thinkers begin to privilege the rationality of educated European men, tradition is sociologized, understood as proper to women, children, the rural population, and ethnic minorities. For some scholars this is a trickle-down inheritance from elites, as in Naumann’s *gesunkenes Kulturgut*. Gramsci understands folklore as the heterogeneous scraps of learning salvaged and kept over time by people in a scarce-resource cultural environment. His Italian followers will assert that folk tradition retains ancient practices in rejection of an oppressive social order in the present. Less concerned with peasants as keepers of the past, Chicago sociology understands the peasant community as a “part-society” whose “little tradition” stands in a contemporaneous but

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<sup>28</sup> Ritual as modern: Shils 1981; Alexander 1988; Dayan and Katz, 1992. Myth as modern: Cassirer 1946; Barthes 1972. Modern institutions: Polanyi 1958; Oakeshott 1962; Turner 1994; Krygier 1986; Latour 1991. Intertextuality: Eliot (1920) 1932; Kristeva 1967; Jauss 1969; Bloom 1973. T. of the new: Rosenberg 1959. Metacultures: Urban 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Bendix 1997.

dependent relationship to the “great tradition” of the metropolis. Boasian cultural relativism, enhanced by concern for the cognitive dignity of the folk, will have a stronger effect on American folkloristics, encouraging the representation of “folk communities” as coherent and autonomous and oral genres as organized in an integrated system. This functionalist scholarly discourse in fact is calqued upon the normative discourse of peasant communities, which privileges the cohesive authority of the elders.<sup>30</sup>

But fieldworkers’ practical dilemmas often reveal the presence of gendered traditions, women in same-sex gatherings telling stories distinct from those of men. These separate traditions can display quite a different evaluation of women’s roles from the male discourse formerly taken as normative, and low-status women’s folktales may even demonstrate a rejection of dominant ethical and cosmological understandings. Traditional modes of expression, with their lack of easy referential transparency, could be seen to provide women, slaves, serfs, and colonial subjects with a code allowing not only the expression of discontent but even direct challenges to authority without fear of reprisal. The same could be said for local communities, for whom self-conscious local tradition became an important vehicle of political communication to the metropolis as early as the seventeenth century. Folk voice, constrained as it was, could provide a vehicle for entry into the public sphere for actors not entitled to speak with Habermasian freedom.<sup>31</sup>

Folk voice offered commercial as well as political opportunities. Already in the eighteenth century, European peddlers and migrant laborers knew the value of traditional performance as a marketing tool. Middle-class cultural entrepreneurs also learned how to “distress” traditional poetic forms with signs of archaism and indigeneity to appeal to a market. Bourgeois Europeans took their holidays from modernity in those peripheral regions in which the national essence was said to reside, and tradition, objectified along with landscape and antiquities as *Erbe*, *patrimoine*, or *heritage*, became valuable to the development of a tourist trade.<sup>32</sup>

The paradoxes of heritage are well understood. Heritage recuperates a dead tradition of the lifeworld or even kills off a living one in order to bring it to a second life in print, in the museum, or onstage. There the tradition no longer serves ordinary social purposes but is an object of veneration in its own right, a monument of cultural identity; its form, “protected” from decay or corruption, becomes frozen in time. It has often been observed that representations expand as the lifeworld contracts, and tradition became increasingly visible as a folk concept in rural Europe as populations and opportunities moved to the cities. Just as a would-be nation justified itself by

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<sup>30</sup> T. and identity: Honko 1988. T. sociologized: Bauman and Briggs 2003. *Gesunkenes Kulturgut*: Naumann 1935. T. as retention and resistance: Gramsci 1950; Lombardi-Satriani 1976. Great and little t.: Redfield 1956. Community and genre systems: Gossen 1971; Falassi 1980; Glassie 1982.

<sup>31</sup> Gendered ts.: Thomas 1983; Jordan and Kalcik 1985; Hejaiej 1996. Women’s ts. and divergent evaluations: Mills 1985; Del Giudice 1988; Ramanujan 1991. T. as coded challenge: Scott 1992; Radner and Lanser 1993. T. as local voice: chapter 6, 7, this book.

<sup>32</sup> T. and marketing: Jeggle and Korff 1974. *Distressed t.*: Stewart 1991.



demonstrating the existence of an autonomous culture, so smaller communities asserted their distinctiveness and antiquity against a perceived existential threat. The consequent intensity of rural traditionalizing has encouraged groups of scholars in the Nordic countries, Occitania, and elsewhere to propose that the proper scope of the concept of tradition is not cultural continuity per se but this vernacular consciousness and that the object of folklore studies should be the “ethnotext,” the local community’s body of discourse about itself. To be sure, now that the folk concept of tradition has found institutional backing in both the multicultural policies of nation-states and the treaties of intergovernmental organizations, the 1968-era critique has become increasingly difficult to articulate in the public realm.<sup>33</sup>

Inalienably bound to land and essence as tradition is said to be, the disturbing fact of tradition’s mobility remains. Some communities recognize this as an opportunity. Musical and religious practices are increasingly repackaged as world culture or New Age therapy rather than folk tradition, but control of the profits is difficult. More common is resistance to circulation. The most learned academics can come nearly to blows over the origins of a beloved but migratory tale character such as Nasreddin Hodja, and competitive claims to ownership begin as soon as tradition becomes an economic or a political resource. In the twenty-first century, with folk tradition recognized as an instrument of economic development, these disputes have entered the legal realm. Some Latin American and African governments have attempted to mobilize the quintessentially modern tool of intellectual property to solve the problem of tradition’s alienability: with copyright they can both own it and sell it. Indigenous groups, more concerned with protecting their integrity, are exploring the legal concept of moral rights to prevent even well-meaning outsiders from having access to secret traditions; and entrepreneurial India, selling yoga and pharmaceuticals to the world, is creating a “prior art” database to preserve the prerogative of developing its traditional knowledge into commodity form. Not even the Brothers Grimm are immune: entered into UNESCO’s “Memory of the World” registry as universal treasures in 2005, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* became the subject of bitter dispute in Kassel between a tourist authority seeking to promote them as a city trademark and a museum trying to preserve them as sacred heritage. The World Intellectual Property Organization, charged with mediating among all such initiatives, is struggling with how to define ownership across the loose networks in which traditions travel and how to fix intangible processes into objects whose reproduction can be controlled. As it was for the ancient Romans, *traditio* has once more become a question of property.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Heritage as frozen t.: Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998b; Hemme, Tauschek and Bendix 2007. T. and urbanization: Honko and Laaksonen 1983: 233–49. Culture justifies nation: Handler 1988. Ethnotext: Klusen 1967; Bouvier ed. 1980; Honko and Laaksonen *ibid.* T. in national and international policy: Bendix and Welz 1999; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Hafstein 2014; part III, this book.

<sup>34</sup> World culture: Feld 1994; Del Giudice 2005. Nasreddin Hodja origins: Marzolph 1996. T. as state property: Hafstein 2007. Indigenous and national control: Coombe 1988; Brown 2003. Grimms disputed: Hemme 2007. WIPO Intergovernmental Committee.

So much for the encyclopedic view. What about carving a clean and usable notion of tradition out of this shaggy amalgam? If not a definition, I'll leave you with an image, conjoining as best I can ideology, communication, and property. Since ideological concepts demand a scene of origin, let us return to that Roman act of tradition: the hand-to-hand transfer of—something. A practice, a body of knowledge, a genre, a song, anything sufficiently framed and internally structured to be entextualizable or objectified or named: in Urban's term, a cultural object. Let us agree that what is being transferred through the object is not in the first instance authority, which fetishizes the giver, nor property, which fetishizes the object while eventually debasing it into a commodity. Rather, the transfer is of responsibility. For many of us this term is tied to the famous Hymes-Bauman definition of performance as "the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence." More than that, it resonates with the awareness of every performer I've ever encountered that the tradition is not at bottom either a badge of pride or an inheritance to display but a job that must be done. Performers may hope to hand on their knowledge to inheritors authorized by blood or formal affiliation, but above all they look for those who will be willing and competent to do the work. That hand-to-hand transfer we may take as a metaphor for the transmission of metaknowledge along with the practice itself: what it means, how it is to be used, everything that is shaven off when it is packaged as a product or an entry in a database.

Recall the Roman requirement of conscious intention on the part of both giver and receiver. In that touching of hands, real or virtual, responsibility is assumed towards both past and future as personified in particular individuals. The receiver must respect, but the giver must let go. The constraint is thus mutual, as is the room for maneuver. As an ideal type of social transaction, we can contrast tradition to the total control of authoritative institutions (including inheritance) and the total freedom of commodity exchange. Total control and total freedom are equally obvious fantasies, although the modern world has made extraordinary attempts to realize both in practice or at least naturalize them in the language. Both are easily discredited, though not easily dismantled. It is tempting to propose that tradition is foundational, closer to the ground of both cultural process and actor consciousness than are accounts of institutions or commodities. Interaction, we could argue, precedes both system and item.

But that would be to treat folklorists' own fantasies in turn as transparent representations or transcendent ideals. We know where that leads. Rather, assuming responsibility to our own past and our own hoped-for future, we have a particular body of knowledge and metaknowledge to transmit. Unavoidably constrained by its own dispersed and often stigmatized tradition, our accumulated disciplinary knowledge offers some insight into the nature of hand-to-hand transfers.

## Acknowledgements

My thanks to Moira Smith and the two anonymous JFR readers, to Ulrich Marzolph of the Enzyklopädie des Märchens, and, for linguistic assistance, to Dan Collins, Fritz Graf, and Margaret Mills.

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## 5. Aesthetic is the Opposite of Anaesthetic: On Tradition and Attention<sup>(5)</sup>

FOR GINNY NOYES

She seemed ... to sum it all up in the moment as she passed.

—Virginia Woolf (1925)

Aesthetics is not my field, as people in other disciplines are allowed to say. Why then am I up here talking? Because Professor Haring had a panel to assemble, because I am a friend and colleague of his, because his series of panels on the Philosophical Foundations of Folklore has illuminated my thinking over the years, and because the intellectual and social process of assembling the panel caught my attention. I was reminded of something I always say to my students. When they hear the word “aesthetic,” students are likely to think of decoration and embellishment, or of a realm of value set apart from life as we live it. The aesthetic dimension is an add-on, a luxury, something optional. But in folklore courses we are trying to convey a different conception, one that is integrated with the formal and social dimensions of practice. So what I tell them is that aesthetic is the opposite of anaesthetic: it’s about feeling. I have said this for years without ever actually having thought it through, and in any case many folklorists have done that already.<sup>1</sup> In beginning to puzzle out the assertion for myself, however, I realized I had to start closer to the ground. Prior to feeling and response is attention.

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, after this article was first published, fellow former Penn student Barry Shank reminded me that my title comes straight from something Henry Glassie used to say in class.

<sup>(5)</sup> This chapter elaborates a talk given at the double panel “Aesthetic Ideologies,” organized by Lee Haring for “Peace, War, and Folklore,” the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society in Bloomington, Indiana, in October 2011. I preserve in part the occasional character of the text, for reasons that I trust will become clear. Originally published as “Aesthetic is the Opposite of Anaesthetic: On Tradition and Attention,” *Journal of Folklore Research* 51 (2014): 125–175.

# The Aesthetics of Folklorists

Ideology and value have been core concerns of the treatment of aesthetics in US folklore scholarship. Like our students, folklorists have encountered the concept of the aesthetic in high-cultural and academic discourses to which our own field has largely lacked access. We've<sup>2</sup> responded by appropriating the concept, pointing out the classism of classical aesthetics and demonstrating the existence of other norms in non-dominant communities.<sup>3</sup> As Dell Hymes famously said, "the true problem of aesthetic experience as part of life would be posed by a study of the state of the arts" not in Florence, Italy, but in Florence, Oregon (1975, 346).

Usually less consciously, we've made a folk in our own image, or rather in the shape of our desires and aspirations. We confer our own aesthetic valuations on the stuff called folklore. Susan Stewart's account of "distressed genres" points out the dominant Romantic construction of folklore as fragment, its contours softened or broken by time, haunted by the voices of its lost creators (1991). Some nationalists preferred a classical aesthetic, like the Greek folklorists who claimed they could brush the Ottoman dust from the marble monuments of the national tradition (Herzfeld 1982). Early twentieth-century studies of handicraft in the United States and Scandinavia celebrated a domestic aesthetic (Klein 2000). In the 1920s and again in the 1960s we saw a primitivism that valorized the folk as irrepressibly expressive: consider the enthusiasm for transgressive black male street lore in the early work of Roger Abrahams and Bruce Jackson ([1964] 2006; [1974] 2004; cf. Roberts 1993). There is longstanding modernist interest in folklore as spare and suggestive: think of the ballad scholars' enthusiasm in the 1950s and 1960s for the "emotional core" that emerges when superfluous details are sloughed off over generations of oral transmission (Coffin 1961). With the performance turn, when Bauman (1977) talks about "form-function-meaning relationships" and when Hymes (1975, 346) cites Mrs. Blanche Tohet of Warm Springs looking at the string of eels she has just hung up to dry, saying "Int [sic] that beautiful?" we hear the categories of the seemingly alien industrial-era high modernism: form follows function. Since then, as we have gone feminist, postmodern, and green in turn, we've fallen in love with the shaggier affect of assemblage (K. Turner 1982; Santino 1986), motley (Abrahams 1982), and recycling (Cerny and Seriff 1996). Often these various acts of aesthetic valorization have an apotropaic purpose, deflecting the

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<sup>2</sup> The problem of pronouns always presents itself in attempts to generalize about what a field has been doing. The "we" on which I have settled is unabashedly ethnocentric; perhaps it is just a glorified "I." I am speaking from my own sense of the mainstream of US folklore scholarship in the post-Toward-New-Perspectives era in which I was trained and now participate. This is also the mainstream as constructed by someone trained in the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Folklore and Folklife and working on festival rather than verbal art or material culture or belief. Of course the field comprises a multiplicity of perspectives on aesthetic matters, most of them more developed than my own. I am not trying to present them all, only to frame a limited area of investigation.

<sup>3</sup> Here there is no end of potential citations. For examples of influential approaches, see Hasan-Rokem 1978; Goldstein 1991; Glassie 1993, or indeed anything else by Glassie.

stigma of another aesthetic category that is often applied to folklore by interpreters at a distance: kitsch (cf. Bausinger [1961] 1990, 96–100). One way or another, our own concerns have guided our attention toward particular expressive strategies and have shaped our naming of them.

At a deeper level our field has long anticipated the practical aesthetic concerns of the information age. How do messages resist entropy and get themselves transmitted in a noisy environment; how do messages attract attention to themselves amid so much competition? The early twentieth-century applied sciences of advertising and propaganda sought to design the projectile message that would shear through the noise and reach its target audience. (This quasi-military approach found its objective correlative in a hard-edged, streamlined aesthetic still associated with branding campaigns.) Later these concerns received more theoretical elaboration with the field of “attention economics.” As early as 1969, in a prescient summation of challenges to come, Herbert A. Simon (1971, 40) observed that “a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.” Attention was the new scarce resource; good filters and theoretical reductions were now more valuable than information per se. Subsequent discussions of the cultural impact of television and new media elaborated Simon’s insight that design would become the core discipline of the information age (Franck 1998; Lanham 2006). Georg Franck commented on the emergence of new modes of human inequality as attention became the new currency, accumulated as the capital of fame or prestige and measured in airtime or academic citations. The media themselves are full of the crisis of attention, not least dissecting their own role as “weapons of mass distraction.” The diagnostic childhood pathology of our age is attention deficit disorder; we debate laws over texting while driving; psychologists dispute the tradeoffs of multitasking; clerical workers are encouraged to take mini-seminars on “mindfulness”; news and product review aggregators offer rescue from the wasteful weariness of consumer choice.

Most scholarly and popular commentators take the nature, necessity, and desirability of attention largely for granted. In this respect they are the inheritors of the modern bourgeois tradition that constructs attention as the source of knowledge and a moral virtue allied to thrift, rationality, and self-control (Hagner 2003). Folklorists resemble these communication theorists in recognizing that the primary business of tradition is to get itself transmitted: much disciplinary labor has been devoted to describing the mechanisms that make this possible. But our understanding of the dynamics of attention in the social world has been rather more nuanced, ranging beyond the conscious and explicit attention that is currently valued as a scarce resource.

I pause to acknowledge that I am doing exactly what I’ve just called out other folklorists for doing. I too am allowing myself to be swept along by the *Zeitgeist*, legitimating our field by arguing for its purchase on the concerns of the moment. Nonetheless, this lens of attention is useful for more endogenous reasons.

The field’s own ambivalence regarding ourselves and our subject matter has precisely to do with attention. Do we want to be marked or unmarked, distinctive or normal? Are we victims of our own invisibility or complicit in it (Roberts 1999)? Or are we all

too obtrusive? The category of folklore itself manipulates attention to an anomalous presence through the logic of euphemism: it calls attention to what it conceals in the act of deflecting attention from it. (In proposing this very panel, Lee Haring asked us, “Is the aesthetic framing of folkloristics a cover-up for class?”) The embarrassing word “folklore” conceals, like a fig leaf, the shame of modernity: modernity’s failure to complete itself.

That anomalous presence, the agency of actors at modernity’s margins and interstices, depends on the constant manipulation of attention. The kinds of people who get called folk learn attraction and evasion as survival skills. Within communities, those who claim the authority of tradition must hold their own against compelling external distractions. In the larger society, when poor people, minorities, women, or children want to be heard, they must capture attention because they cannot command it. They must know how to use—seductively or aggressively—the negative visibility that comes with their status as socially marked. They must also cultivate the opportunities inherent in not being objects of normative cultural focus: they must know how to slip under the radar (Scott 1990). They must master multiple codes of performance for this purpose. If they choose to seek recognition as full human subjects and citizens they must make difficult choices regarding the reified categories of social perception. If assimilation is available, it carries its own price of subsequent inattention; if difference is chosen or unavoidable, it bears the burden of perpetual, ambivalent, and often unwelcome attention.

Below the layer of valuation that is the normative concern of aesthetic theory lies the layer of response that provides its analytical purview and practical application. This mundane aesthetics, if you will, is my immediate concern. In what follows I am aiming at something broadly descriptive, sorting out the different modalities by which the stuff we call folklore affects us in order to do its most basic job of getting itself received and reproduced. The partial autonomy of these forms and their effects, however, emerged from the interplay of human intentions and is continually harnessed for new human actions. Thus looking at the dynamics of response to form will not divorce us from social and ethical concerns, and will lead us eventually back to this meeting’s theme of peace, war, and folklore.

## Folklore as Form

The field of folklore deals with the social life of cultural forms. This is not news to anyone: it is implicit from the earliest studies of oral tradition and has been extensively theorized in the line of scholarship running from the Russian Formalists through the performance turn of the 1970s and into the present, although today the conversation has largely been relocated to the field of linguistic anthropology.<sup>4</sup> The point about

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<sup>4</sup> Mukařovský 1970 is the critical bridge in this transmission; Bauman 2008 gives a synthetic

form bears repetition because the everyday engagements of contemporary folklorists pull us in another direction, toward a focus on communities and on cultures as differential spaces of experience. As fieldworkers we necessarily construct a holistic account centered at our point of involvement and responsive to the immediate concerns of our interlocutors. As professionals we work in institutions and public discourses molded by the postwar culture concept that imputes bounded worldviews to performances of identity. We judge people and their purposes as more important than the careers of things. Nonetheless, those purposes take shape through the forms available for manipulation, and we do communities no service if we forget this.

What is form? Form is, first of all, how messages resist entropy. The kind of form we label as artistic or aesthetic or performance is more highly organized than the surrounding stream of discourse: it is set off by framing devices, held together with some kind of internal vertebration, fleshed out stylistically and semiotically in a register that points to its sphere of meaning. The interplay of these dimensions is the foundation of genre, which facilitates the production, recognition, and interpretation of new “texts” or works. Both the generic and the particular form of aesthetic works facilitate their transmission from performance to performance, aiding memory through a given work’s distinctive integration of the predictable with the salient.<sup>5</sup> In the course of circulation beyond the context of their first making, works are recontextualized and adapted, but form also carries its own force. It accumulates resonance from the history of its uses, exceeding the intentions and awareness of the immediate users. This life of form in time and space is what we study as “tradition.”<sup>6</sup>

We also study the situated work of form in “performance,” a kind of social action that provides the other axis of genre. Any given performance evokes conventional expectations within unique circumstances. Interacting with its complex social setting, form serves as both an independent source of value and a resource for actors to realize and negotiate intentions. Content itself has form, of course: the selection and arrangement of signs into relationships that guide the construction of meaning. Beyond and beneath explicit content, performers work with form at the level of sensory patterning: repetition and contrast, timbre or color, density, rhythm, pacing, scale, and amplitude. These nondiscursive features of performance are the most immediate

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statement incorporating the Americanist contribution; for a comprehensive overview of the principal developments in the poetics of folklore see Shuman and Hasan-Rokem 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Consider the combination of formulaic plot structure and striking imagery in the Märchen. The “rawhead and bloody bones,” a bogey-man image attested as early as the sixteenth century in the Oxford English Dictionary and later grafted into a Scotch-Irish story as a helper figure, has persisted as the focus of fear or fascination in an Appalachian tale (Lindahl 2006). Exceptionally, the identical phrasing is found in the 1550 citation, John Locke, Washington Irving, Lancashire nursery rhymes, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and late twentieth-century Appalachian tales, surely an indicator of the image’s enduring power to terrify. Complementing formulaic deep structures and salient images, surface-level poetic devices facilitating transmission in verbal art include metrical patterning, rhyme, and oral formulae (e.g., Foley 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Bauman and Briggs 1990 remains the most useful overview, and the essays in Hymes 1974 the still-inspiring formulation of this research agenda.

source of its efficacy. As perceived in modern Western categories (though not only there), this efficacy consists of impact on an audience, corporeal and emotional rather than cognitive.<sup>7</sup> In addressing the sensory or “formal” dimensions of performance, then, folklorists integrate the traditional concerns of aesthetics with the traditional concerns of rhetoric.

Thus far the accumulated and explicit learning of our field since the performance turn. The points that follow are, I think, also fairly consensual in practice but less frequently formulated.

Forms mediate between individuals. At times buffers, they are more importantly enablers of interaction, as John Laudun (2011) has shown us in this panel. Forms constitute the tissue of society. To live together we don’t need a common worldview; we do need a common language, common conventions, and common activities. Forms coordinate social attention both to themselves and to the actors who collaborate to realize them: think of Alfred Schutz’s (1951) “mutual tuning-in process” where he uses the players in a string quartet as a representative anecdote of social life. The depersonalized forms of modernity and their textual precipitations even convoke strangers to assemble around them, who by virtue of their common attention to the form become a public in relation to one another (Warner 2002)—more on this point later.

Forms mediate between consciousness and unconsciousness. Performers pass along a continuum from effortful acquisition to habituation to automatic pilot as they become expert (Carr 2010, 19–21). When boredom sets in or a new situation calls for it, the conscious creativity of revision and new invention asserts itself.

Forms mediate between attention and inattention. We notice them when they are new, cease noticing them once they become familiar, and can be awakened to them once more when they are twisted or renewed.

Forms exist at multiple scales, and folklorists are concerned primarily with the middle. Folklorists study those human-scale forms that assert themselves at the level of social interaction. We can grasp them holistically, see their boundaries, enter into them voluntarily (if never free of social constraint and formal compulsion). Conversely, we can detach ourselves from them, standing outside them in order to describe them. This scale of form, which we call art or performance, often sharpens, intensifies, distorts, and stylizes the lower-level, improvisatory but all-encompassing social patterning we call convention: everyday manners and routines (DaMatta 1991). Convention, in turn, is abstracted and reified into those high-level, codified forms we call institutions. Performance can relax itself towards convention or can stiffen itself into ritual in the

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<sup>7</sup> See Brenneis 1987 for a summation of what scholars of ritual can bring to discourse-based approaches to performance. Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990 offer a range of approaches to emotion in verbal performance. In folklore scholarship, Kapchan 2007 and Noyes 2003 followed Abrahams (e.g., 1982) in examining the nondiscursive impact of ritual and festival, while in material culture studies the work of Robert Plant Armstrong (e.g., 1971) has been taken up by Glassie and others. Ethnomusicology and its recent outgrowth of sound studies offers, however, perhaps the fullest exploration of the relations between expression and emotion: see Feld 1982 for an influential early example.

service of institutions, but the freedom associated with art in the modern West is not a wholly ideological construct. The scale of art is the scale of human agency, playful or purposeful. Performance is amenable to our manipulation and makes our messages memorable to others. Our deliberate interventions into convention, on the other hand, are usually drowned in the sea of social practice, while intractability is built into the very design of institutions.

## Aesthetic Form

Of course the social life of cultural forms is too large a mandate for a small, dispersed field like folklore. In practice we’ve limited both the social milieux and the cultural forms that receive the brunt of our attention, focusing on the vernacular arts (Bauman 2008). And just as the environmental movement captures public attention through the appeal of “charismatic megafauna” such as polar bears and tigers (Kaufman and Franz 2000, 342), so we have advertised our field through the appeal of fairy tales, epics, dances, sculpted masks, and other thickly framed and patterned genres that are aesthetic by almost any definition (cf. Hymes 1975, 351).

All forms are aesthetic, but some forms are more aesthetic than others. Roman Jakobson (1960) gave us a key to this problem with his model of the communicative act, which many of us studied in graduate school:

referential	CONTEXT
ADDRESSER	
emotive	MESSAGE
poetic	ADDRESSEE
conative	
	CONTACT
phatic	
	CODE
metalingual	

A good modernist, Jakobson is here interested in form-function relationships. He associates each of the characteristic functions of communication (above, in lowercase) with an *Einstellung*, the set or orientation of a given act towards one of its components (above, in uppercase). Thus if attention is directed to the context of the communicative act—the world around it—we have the referential function, which the modern Western ideology of language understands as the primary purpose of communication: to present new information, to share and debate propositional statements about reality. If attention is called toward the message itself—that is, towards the objective form of the message, the patterning of elements in the medium in which it is constituted—then

we have the poetic function, or what I'm here calling aesthetic. This is where form works most obviously on the senses to compel attention, though it also works under the radar while our attention is focused elsewhere.

Jakobson's writings vary in treating the poetic *Einstellung* as a property of individual communicative acts or a conventional property of genre. Of course it is both. The interaction between the two levels enriches individual works of art, complicates and diversifies the social labor of interpretation, and becomes a motor of generic transformation (Jakobson 1971). Jakobson takes the concept of *Einstellung* from Husserl's phenomenology, in which it has a still higher-level application, usually translated as "attitude." Husserl's *Einstellungen* encompass both broad stances towards the world—most importantly the "natural attitude," which takes the world for granted as a map of objects stably positioned in time and space—and particular acts of remembering, questioning, supposing, and so on, all directed towards particular objects in the world: a bending from the self towards the object that Husserl calls intention, whether there is a goal to be actively pursued or merely a phenomenon to be grasped according to the position held and stance taken by the observer (Bradford 1994, 15–16; Moran 2005). Broad attitudes toward the world, genre conventions, and momentary intentions all shape the communicative encounter.

Jakobson's model emphasizes, however, that the *Einstellung* is also an interaction among senders, messages, and receivers, and this was the critical insight for the emergence of the ethnography of communication. Here we might consider the fuller semantics of attend and attention in English and French: looking at and focusing on, but also accompanying and waiting on, and simply waiting and expecting. If the notion of *Einstellung* emphasizes the observer's position, Husserl's conception of intention as object-directed highlights its etymological kinship with attention, deriving from the Latin *ad-tendere*, to stretch toward. The act of attention is one to one: specific and potentially mutual, if not always synchronous. In a 1919 essay on Futurism and Cubism Jakobson observes that things in the world, as we encounter them over and over, are no longer perceived, but accepted "de confiance." He continues, "Painting opposes itself to the automatism of perception; it draws attention to the object. But, grown old, artistic forms also come to be taken on trust." The artistic avant-gardes, in making perception difficult, force us to look more carefully for the object being represented, and this has "a great charm. The picture that yields itself only slowly seems always to be waiting to be questioned" (Jakobson 1973, 29). Although Jakobson's main point has to do with habituation and attention (we'll come back to this), I note here that he is speaking of the interaction between viewer and artwork in implicitly social terms. It can be routinized and "trusting" but can also become an active mutual engagement with a not-yet-known partner: expectant, even erotic. Elsewhere he defines the artistic encounter as outright agonistic: "Form exists ... insofar as we feel the resistance of the matter" (1973, 12). If art lives at the scale of human agency and responds to our manipulations, we also experience it as having agency of its own to refuse our control or compel our attention. We interact with others through art as medium but also



with artistic form itself, all connected by that stretched cord of attention, intention, or tension tout court.

## From Einstellung to Attention and Back Again

What is the cord and how does it hold us? For performers and interpreters to do their everyday work it is enough to sense the cord's presence and observe it in action. At the level of interpretive scholarship, Jakobson's formulations fit plausibly enough with my own common sense as an inhabitant of a lifeworld not much removed from his. But of course there is hard social science that attends to these matters. Visual attention is a major focus of attention in cognitive psychology, key to understanding the nature of cognitive control (Gibson et al. 2008). (Notice, by the way, how completely in the previous two unrevised sentences the language of attention informs my account of what happens in scholarship, where cognitive control is what we choose to believe it's all about—though clearly I was on automatic pilot as I wrote.)

To be sure, when humanists attend to cognitive science, as they have so often done of late, the results are not always impressive. I will now call on a literature that I understand only in part and cite contributions that I am imperfectly qualified to judge, trusting to the peer review system while the old order lasts. The psychological research consists mostly of laboratory experiments that measure eye movements in response to limited stimuli designed to disrupt narrow prescribed tasks. From that clean micro-level I am extrapolating to the shaggy macro of life in the world and our messy multimodal responses to complex forms with histories behind them. Insofar as I am speaking to folklorists, however, who have little love for reduction, I'll ask you to acquit me of looking to the sciences for legitimation. Rather, I find heuristic value in the extrapolation, moving from solidly positivist findings to a zone of play with possibilities that stretches the concrete towards the metaphorical. And although I cannot produce a rigorous account of the involvement of our basic perceptual operations in the processing of complex symbolic forms, we can hardly deny that the involvement exists. So there is some use in pointing to it, however vaguely.

The ongoing scientific discussion of attention revolves around the tension—we really cannot get away from this etymological cluster—between top-down “executive control” of attention and involuntary “attentional capture.” In ordinary language, this is the relationship between the person who chooses to “pay attention” and the object that “grabs” her attention or “wrests” it away from a chosen focus. Even more than in Jakobson's account of the artistic encounter, this is at every level an effortful, contested negotiation: we most often hear “Pay attention!” as an imperative.

Much of the research, however, has a starting point in Western modernity's normalization of fixed, focused attention as both the default and the desirable state of human consciousness (Hagner 2003). Research on distraction examines the abstract properties (abruptness, motion, bright color) or the meaningful content (remembered

associations, ascribed value, evolutionary adaptiveness) of disruptive stimuli (Most and Simons 2001). Research on goal-direction and focus examines the “change blindness” in which we fail to notice stimuli irrelevant to a task (Cosmides and Tooby 2013, 206). Here the mind is cast as a rational actor calculating its use of the scarce resource, attention. Research on executive function treats focused visual attention as one variety of selectivity, “a central component of goal-directed behavior” at both high cognitive and low perceptual levels, in both simple tasks and enduring dispositions (Weber and Johnson 2009, 56). The liberal individualist valorization of choice is not far away.

Evolutionary cognitive psychology has, however, highlighted the importance of the involuntary and flexible aspects of attention. This research addresses real-life, albeit paleolithic, situations. Not all stimuli are created equal. Organisms benefit by attending to changes in the environment that pose threats and opportunities, even by preemptively scanning for them. Thus, while selectivity has its uses, we have additional neural networks for alerting (remaining sensitive to stimuli) and for orienting (aligning our attention to the source of significant stimuli, which we perceive as signals). These three networks interact in the processing we call attention (Posner and Rothbart 2007, 7). It has been demonstrated that contemporary urbanites pay more visual attention to animals than to such currently meaningful threats as speeding cars. Such experiments are invoked to support the claim that attentional processes evolved in relation to domain-specific tasks and in response to content-specific stimuli during our long species history as hunter-gatherers (Cosmides and Tooby 2013). Other experiments address human-to-human threat. One study reports that the perception of facial difference among members of an out-group is strengthened in contexts of perceived menace, in contrast to the more relaxed dismissal “they all look alike” (Cosmides and Tooby 2013, 207–8). This literature seems to carry its own, implicitly gendered, limitations of emphasis, insofar as hunting is privileged over gathering and threats over opportunities. My admittedly superficial roundup did not find any studies considering, for example, the attention of foragers to the vegetational surround,<sup>8</sup> or the attention to other people in situations where allies are being sought.

The brunt of the latest experimental research suggests—as humanists will perhaps not be surprised to hear—that attention is complex. While it is “largely determined” by expectations, intentions, and especially goals, attention is often much less conscious than we think, and it balances focus with flexibility, both needed for effective goal pursuit (Dijksterhuis and Aarts 2010). It has a temporal dimension especially important when one moves out of the laboratory. We can say that familiarity breeds contempt, or rather inattention: we do become habituated to familiar scenes as stored representations or schemas. But that is a little too simple. Many familiar environments are predictably dynamic—the morning commute is a favorite example of the

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<sup>8</sup> Of which popular American humor finds a survival in shopping behaviors and I, alas, another in my own scholarly activity. For the forager’s attention as a model of intellectual process, see Lévi-Strauss’s famous account of the bricoleur in *The Savage Mind* ([1962] 1966).

psychologists—and the attentional response is monitoring or scanning. Producers of the small-scale, framed and finite environments of engagement with which folklorists are concerned learn how to create this dynamism: they vary stimuli in order to sustain the attention of participants both in the moment and over the long run. The psychologists give video game designers as an example (Weber and Johnson 2009, 57), but we can also consider traditional storytellers (cf. Bender 1999). Our experience-near concept of “flow,”<sup>9</sup> the happy medium between boredom and anxiety in which the dancer becomes one with the dance and loses consciousness of her surroundings,<sup>10</sup> finds experimental confirmation in studies showing that, because of our limited processing capacity, complex tasks involving large numbers of relevant stimuli leave no attention available for distractors (Gibson and Bryant 2008).

This research also confirms current folkloristic understandings of change over time. The very existence of a schema creates sensitivity to new information, and this fosters a “perceptual cycle.” The schema guides attention, highlighting new stimuli. These, if intrusive, enter consciousness, their importance is evaluated, and they can be addressed. Innovations that remain and recur are incorporated into the existing schema, both modifying it and freeing attention to scan for still further novelties. Thus stored representations evolve with both the conscious and the unconscious participation of the observer (Most and Simons 2001, 10, following Neisser). Turning again from natural or social environments to our own province, we should recall the moving “horizon of expectations” that similarly guides the history of expressive genres (Jauss 1982). New, attention-grabbing features can be introduced as provocation, as when Victor Hugo introduced the enjambment to the alexandrine meter of French drama at the 1830 première of *Hernani*, or when Dylan went electric at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. These are conscious disruptions of a consciously held aesthetic, and such disruptions have been conspicuous as motors of transformation in Western art history since the Romantic movement (Poggioli 1968). But in the normal history of genre the horizon advances gradually and gently, as the metaphor suggests, through semi-conscious slight modifications of semi- or unconscious conventions: incremental re-formation.

More speculatively, the psychological literature might help us to think about the social base of folklore as creating a particular relationship to attention. The ahistorical cognitive psychology imagines a liberal individual seeking more perfect control of his environment (the unmarked masculine possessive here seems called for). Evolutionary psychology imagines a more vulnerable actor struggling to survive within that environment among other actors. If we take these postulations into a synchronic social world, we can propose that there are differential *Einstellungen* for actors who are differently placed. In the introduction I claimed that the people who get called folk need

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<sup>9</sup> Or in a more recent vernacular, being “in the zone.”

<sup>10</sup> As a matter of scholarly respectability we take this concept of flow from, in fact, a psychologist (Csikszentmihalyi 1975), but the best summation of its power as an ideal that many folklorists would recognize comes from Yeats’s great poem about modernity’s transformation of consciousness, “Among School Children” (1928).

to know how to manipulate attention. They are also called upon to pay it: attention is one of the many social taxes from which the powerful are exempted. Men can wonder “what women want,” but women have had to know the converse. Homosexuals must know how to read and perform the cues of normative heterosexuality. Servants must anticipate their masters’ demands; minorities must monitor the moods and deeds of the majority. The reverse is not true, except (as per the evolutionary psychologists on threat) in contexts of potential rebellion. Moreover, the modern division of labor places powerful individuals at an institutional scale above that of the multitude that works for them, is represented by them, or is served by their expertise. This reduces many of the face-to-face intimacies that once existed and evacuates the once dialogic character of respons/ibility, turning it into an individual disposition. Even where that disposition is strong, the diminution of one-to-one contacts and recognitions promotes a criterion of utilitarian efficiency and makes it structurally difficult for the few to attend to the particularities of the many even if they wish to do so (Noyes 2013). The consequences for the powerful are not wholly beneficial. As Nietzsche summed it up, “Macht verdummt.” Power stupefies you.<sup>11</sup>

The different attentional *Einstellungen* lie behind a celebrated conceptualization of two ideal types of practical knowledge: Claude Lévi-Strauss’s account of the engineer and the bricoleur ([1962] 1966), which James C. Scott updated in his contrast of modernist planning and traditional *mētis* (1998). As folklorists, we of course define these ideal types only to challenge them with the mess of reality. We note that the interaction between the two in practice matters more than either disposition on its own. Next, we’ll go back to our disciplinary focus on form in performance and remind ourselves once more that the dispositions of actors interact with the *Einstellung* of a given genre and the constraints and intentions of the situation.

A final caveat before I get down to those forms in performance. Thus far I have given a complacent account of what the psychologists have to offer us, tending to confirm propositions that I find useful on other grounds. But one dimension of it is uncomfortable, at least for US folklorists of my generation: the assertion that much of our attention, and thus the practice bound up with it, is unconscious. As a middle-class Anglo-American I grew up believing in the autonomous consciousness as the foundation of human dignity. When I was in grad school, part of the prevailing impulse to defend the folk (which somehow we felt they, or perhaps we, required) was to argue that they were always fully in control of their designs and their discourses, conscious of their meanings, intending their outcomes. Today you have to lead a pretty insulated life (or be awfully young) to believe that anybody has that much control over their actions. Nonetheless, in folklore we still lack a generally accepted account of consciousness and unconsciousness, much less of true and false consciousness. The latter challenge is beyond my present scope; here I attempt to get us started on the former problem.

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<sup>11</sup> I am eternally grateful to Johannes Fabian for introducing me to my now favorite aphorism, drawn from the *Götzen-Dämmerung* (Twilight of the Idols, 1888).

It should be understood that in the taxonomy below I'm not trying to privilege any quadrant, nor to set boundaries to what counts as folklore, only to sort out how things work.

So let us take some operating definitions from two helpful Dutchmen. Attention is “the extent to which incoming information is processed,” consciously or unconsciously. By information in this context, we mean not our commonsense definition of information as referential propositions, but information simply as new stimuli coming to the brain. Attention demands balance between “stability or focus (the ability to keep information active for action or further processing) and flexibility (the ability to be flexible enough to switch to, and take advantage of, contextual variations).” Conscious processes add another layer: they are “accompanied by awareness of certain aspects of the process [of attention] and/or awareness of relevant contents” (Dijksterhuis and Aarts 2010, 469–71.) Turning back to our own disciplinary lineage, we could draw on Hymes and say that conscious processes are reportable and interpretable (1981, 82–85): we both recognize that something is going on and have a language for talking about it. The unconscious processes are simply repeatable, though always susceptible to being brought into consciousness under special circumstances.

## Four Orientations toward Aesthetic Form

In the ensuing two-by-two diagram (Table 5.1), I hope you will all recognize an aesthetic act of homage to my mentor Roger D. Abrahams, remembering his all-enclosing little diagrams in such early work as “The Complex Relations of Simple Forms” (1976). With these parameters, I sort out the canonical folklore genres according to their orientation toward the message form: the actual verbal, visual, gestural, or material stuff as arranged in communicative action.<sup>12</sup> Thus I am taking a narrower scope within Jakobson’s model. Instead of distinguishing functions as they focus senders and receivers on distinct components of the communicative act,<sup>13</sup> I am looking at the single component of message form. I lay out four categories of folklore genre according to their characteristic patterns of conscious focus and unconscious attention, both focused and flexible, from users towards the message form. Of course these are ideal types; afterward I will address some of their characteristic instabilities.

TABLE 5.1

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<sup>12</sup> Drawing on Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Katharine Young’s paper on this panel offered a precise, detailed taxonomy of aesthetic features and their associated genres and affects, but her starting point was inherent qualities rather than orientations towards practices (Young 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Amy Shuman and Galit Hasan-Rokem (2012, 59) offer a brief but useful discussion of how folklore genres may be differentiated according to the dominance and combination of Jakobson’s various functions. I had not seen their article before composing this argument.

Message form is the object of ...	...unconscious attention— focused (form emphasizes coherence; experience is wanted)	...unconscious attention— flexible (form emphasizes disruption, fragmentation; experience is imposed)		
...conscious focus • storytelling, singing • images	I. folklore as ART			
• festival and ritual: complex performances incorporating multiple genres Sought out	II. folklore as OCCASION			
• oratory	• music, dance, game			
Play of schema and variation holds both conscious and unconscious attention.	Interrupts surround, followed by sensory and attentional overload: progression from conscious focus to unconscious flexible attention.			
Sought and wanted	Sought but imposed: ritual is obligatory			
Affect: pleasure-expectation and fulfillment	Affect: exhilaration-vertigo-possession-exhaustion			
...no conscious focus • built environment	IV. folklore as SURROUND III. folklore as NEWS			

The first cell of Table 5.1 gives us those charismatic megafauna of folklore: the genres that are consciously evaluated for their beauty and skillful execution. They are produced to be so evaluated. Their practitioners consciously intend to excel and have also assimilated as habit the sedimented intentions of earlier practitioners. All this conduces to the making of concentrated “affecting presences” (Armstrong 1971), objects with maximal internal coherence, maximal salience in relation to their surround, and maximal indexical connections with their audience, cultivated over generations of mutual attention. Explicitly marked as art, these forms compel us both socially and sensorily, both consciously and unconsciously. We seek them out with the intention of taking pleasure in both direct sensory indulgence and the artful tweaking of our expectations, the interplay of recognition and surprise.

With forms marked as traditional, this interplay emphasizes the pole of recognition, bringing closer to consciousness the dialogue that Portelli (1997), following Valéry, defines as essential to poetic form: between arbitrariness and motivation, between matter and design. Familiarity with the schema calls for more play with variation if attention is to be sustained. This is evident at every level of oral tradition, from the variety of tales or songs that furnish a genre, with their distinctively memorable realia, to the individual style cultivated by a performer, to the variation of formal effects within a single performance. Mark Bender’s (1999) study of Suzhou professional storytelling notes that many of its devices are the object of conscious audience connoisseurship. Good performers, though, maintain audience attention at a less conscious level by constantly shifting between song and spoken prose and also in more subtle variations of rhythm, register, and prosody.

## II. Folklore as occasion: conscious focus x unconscious flexible attention

In the previous quadrant, flexibility served to maintain focus. In this one, distraction is licensed. Festival and ritual take us to the limits of what we can process. In his early work on the language of festival and display events, Abrahams (1982) explores how sensory and cognitive stimulation are taken to the threshold of the bearable by amassing multiple genre frames in a single event.

Roger Cailliois ([1958] 1961) suggests a more precise progression in the experience of large-scale performance forms. Conscious focus surrenders to flexible attention in what he calls the move from mimesis to vertigo. Display events initially call attention to social patterns, distill them, enlarge them, and make them objects of focus (DaMatta 1991). Rituals with a limited purpose or strictly controlled large-scale rituals may assert one pattern only, but more often festivals and other traditional events with general social participation present an array of sometimes mutually contradictory performances, reflecting the plural positions and postures within the social setting and the negotiation necessary to achieve a performance that can claim to represent the whole (Gilman 2009). With repetition, time, and overload, with intoxication and sleep deprivation, the multiple stimuli start to dizzy and merge; the performance is incorporated into the self in ways that exceed the experiencer’s control (Noyes 2003,

121–39). An initial signal/noise distinction gradually dissolves: everything is signal and everything is noise.

It is important to note from the account above that although traditional occasions interrupt everyday life formally, they do not break with it semantically.<sup>14</sup> They assemble and concentrate, select, remix, reduce, invert, or emphasize, and always they underline and intensify. But they work with what is there, and this effect of familiarity in the content is enhanced by the calendrical or transpersonal repetition of the rituals themselves. Insiders never experience a Fourth of July parade or a wedding for the first time, but grow up always having known what they are. The forms of ritual cultivate flexible attention with such relentlessness because ritual's content without this reworking would be banal, absurd, unspeakable, or oppressive. It doesn't bear thinking about: better to dance it.

Like the experience of art, the experience of occasion is sought out, but it is not necessarily wanted, either in form or in content. Ritual is obligatory for a reason. The blurring of self and world offers to some a welcome release from consciousness, to others a fearful dislocation. Requiring extensive social sponsorship to achieve its large-scale effects, ritual typically has powerful interests behind it, and the aesthetic experience is often mobilized towards the reproduction of established power (Bloch 1989). Pushing beyond the human scale of perception to that of institutions, its aesthetic may become that of the sublime, the ungraspable. The affective range thus runs from exhilaration and terror to possession and exhaustion.

### III. Folklore as news: no conscious focus x unconscious flexible attention

In the third cell, we find those genres that are associated with surprise or shock, notably parody and legend. Here we may tentatively speak of folklore as news. Unlike ritual, these genres bear new information or unearth repressed truths; they come unheralded; they interrupt and contaminate the discursive surround rather than providing the normative, bounded hiatus of ritual. These genres don't foreground the aesthetic function of communication, but in their different ways they do show aesthetic patterning. They capture attention and guide the audience through surprise or estrangement to conscious, if not always reportable, focus.

The distortion of familiar things I will sum up with the label of parody. It can be up front and public, as with blasphemous acts of desecration meant to horrify; it can be oblique and seemingly trivial, as with the distorted renditions of familiar icons in popular entertainment or the gleeful obscenity of children's parodies. Under totalitarian conditions in which the performance of conformity is imposed, it can be as discreet as a raised eyebrow or an ironic intonation. Reshaping and revoicing the familiar reveals the news of a differential perspective while uncovering the less consensual dimensions of social orthodoxies. These practices are thus crucial instruments of

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<sup>14</sup> Compare Shank (1994) on the avant-garde musical "scene," in which the same festive logic of overload applies, but the goal is the overturning of the prevailing semiotic order and the creation of the new. Is this a difference of kind or of degree, and how do actor intentions match up with effects?



folk politics. In contrast to the liberal-democratic ideal of open, reasoned debate in transparent language famously described by Jürgen Habermas, the vernacular public sphere is characterized by aesthetic performance and symbolic coding (cf. Bauman and Briggs 2003, 194). This is often necessitated by repression and the fear of reprisal from above (Scott 1990). But even in more egalitarian situations, the need to sustain practical consensus among diverse actors fosters a preference for indirect communication and ambiguity (Fernandez 1988; Noyes 2003, 198–205). To be sure, conscious, reflexive awareness is provoked by the double take of recognition and estrangement we experience in parody—Bertolt Brecht, after all, learned his *Verfremdungseffekt* from folk theater. Unlike what Brecht hoped of his audience in the theater, however, the audience of vernacular parody and blasphemy is unlikely to convert its insights into explicit debate or activate them in revolution, though certainly such performances can reinforce the grumbling and muttering at the sidelines of power’s arenas. More typically, parody confirms the centrality of messages while unsettling their meanings. The monstrous Japanese “Slit-Mouthed Woman” who asks what all women are taught to ask—“Am I beautiful?”—ensures that we can never again feel quite comfortable with the question (Foster 2007, 722). This piece of the ideological surround has now been hideously awakened from its inertia and is set in motion. The less aggressive tactic of irony, an inflection rather than a full-blown revoicing, performs participation without identification. Though deniable at the conscious level, its bending of the message demands the unconscious attention of the listener.

If parody reveals the discomforts of intimacy, the news of legend is felt to come from a conceptual and experiential elsewhere. Legend marks a contamination of the everyday world with matter that is socially, spatially, or temporally out of place (Kaplan 2011, 16–17). The news of legend may be genuinely new: new social groups, new technologies, new fashions and habits. In this case the narrative attempts to rein in the disturbance by framing it in familiar moral and political categories, for example by attributing responsibility to already suspect actors and tendencies. Conversely, the legend may stage uncanny irruptions of the past into the present, bringing uncomfortable old news back into light.<sup>15</sup>

Overtly concerned with information, legend is known as a non-aesthetic folklore genre. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vászonyi (1975) showed us its typically conversational construction. Gary Alan Fine (1992) and Patricia A. Turner (1993) established the contemporary import of the issues legend raises, the disorder it threatens, and its

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<sup>15</sup> This latter kind of legend serves as a figure of folklore itself, construed by both medieval Christian Icelanders and ideologues of the modern as “matter out of time” (Kaplan 2011, 16). In Romantic poetry and opera, the legendary theme of supernatural intrusion found its formal analogue in the interpolation of a supposed folksong—inevitably sung by a peasant woman—within the authorial discourse of the text or score (chap. 7). Artistic folklorisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries typically mark the irruption of folk voice with such aesthetic devices as the dimming of bright modern interiors, the thinning of robust modern timbres, or the modal or chromatic unsettling of stable modern tonalities (cf. S. Stewart 1991).

capacity to inaugurate debate. Elliott Oring (1996) summed it up by pointing out that the closest genre neighbor of legend is, in fact, not Märchen but news.

Oring went on to point out, however, that legend is still aesthetically organized insofar as it defies the efficiency of the journalist's "inverted pyramid," which puts the most consequential information first. Legend, on the contrary, maintains narrative suspense by putting the new information at the end. Dan Barnes (1996) identified a structural resemblance to the joke, arguing that the contemporary legend builds up to the equivalent of a punch line. Barnes notes that the punch line excites a visceral response: this is aesthetic not just in the sense of formal organization but insofar as it engages our senses in a somatic response of disgust or horror at the eaten rat, the micro-waved baby, the hook in the car door. Gillian Bennett (1996) showed that narrators concerned with the veracity of their material recount legends in a more Habermasian rational mode, privileging transparency and evidence, while legends receive more artistic shaping from narrators who have no such investment. This more explicitly aesthetic shape, by providing an alibi, might also allow the most problematic topics to be introduced. For as all of us know from discussing contemporary legend in the classroom, any legend telling prompts immediate debate: legend is a vernacular tribunal allowing difficult social issues to be broached.

No news is good news, the proverb reminds us. The inverse of art in my first quadrant, news is unsought by its audience and imposed by its tellers; it can even seem self-imposed by its very nature as news, those threats and opportunities to which we have evolved to pay attention. The powerful rarely welcome the kind of news brought by parody and blasphemy, rumor and legend. The immediate participants may find some satisfaction in having the news aired, but rarely find it comfortable either. Affect in this quadrant covers the Freudian territory, ranging from laughter through anxiety to fear and anger.

#### IV. Folklore as surround: no conscious focus x unconscious focused attention

Folklore as surround or environment works inversely from folklore as an occasion interrupting quotidian time and space. (Recall that these are ideal types abstracted from a mixed reality.) In this fourth cell, we have aspects of practice that are not sought out as unusual experiences but taken for granted as already present and, at least in the modern West, devalued as trivial. The surround, which comprises the spatiotemporal, material, linguistic, and gestural frameworks of social interaction, is by its very nature not thoroughly anatomized by any discipline, although Bourdieu's ([1980] 1990) account of habitus provides a general theory for it. But folklorists have singled out aspects of it under the aegis of vernacular architecture and material culture; as foodways or as bodylore; as children's lore; as conversational commonplaces and routines.

Multifarious as these subfields are, they all turn academic attention onto phenomena that in ordinary life are only intermittently the objects of conscious focus. Most of human culture is background to what we recognize as significant action. It is reproduced and modified without much conscious reflection because it does what it needs

to do well enough; not until it breaks down under radically new circumstances do we think it over. We also tend to ignore it because it is not quite at human scale. Occasion bursts the threshold of the human toward the sublimity of institutions, while the surround inclines downward into the invisibility of convention. The patterning of the built environment as a whole, or even that of the house we inhabit, is too ample to take in without a special effort. Conversely, the smallness and seeming insignificance of a lullaby or a pottery glaze also takes effort for the receiver, if not the sender, to focus on. Moreover, we are embedded in this environment: inside the room, a participant in the conversation, cooking with the pot. We do not stand at a distance from which we can see the whole composition and theorize it, as the etymological link between theory and theater encourages us to do.

Scholars who do manage to stand at a distance from these phenomena disagree in their assessment of the folk surround. One tradition in material cultural scholarship proposes that principles of cultural, even cosmological order can be deduced from its resonant and redundant patternings (Glassie 1971; Deetz [1977] 1996); a later version speaks of “aesthetic ecologies” (e.g., Hufford 2006; Young 2014 following McDermott [1969] 1987). A different line, and notably the Gramscian tradition, emphasizes the contingent and accumulated character of surround: the ensemble is an assemblage of historical accidents and fragments, retained as potential resources in contexts of scarcity or insecurity (Gramsci [1935] 2000; K. Stewart 1996). The two accounts can be squared by a conception of attention found implicitly in Bourdieu’s ([1980] 1990) distinction between practice and motivated accounts of practice. The observer’s *Einstellung* guides description, as we have seen. Some descriptions carry more social authority than others; they turn the normative into the normal by constructing a selective representation of reality that confirms expectations and secures meaning.

The interplay of power, consensus, and familiarity shapes the accidents and accumulations of history into an ecology felt as natural or at least inevitable (Hopf 2002), while looser or more overtly conflictive social interaction may prevent this effect from taking place. But the nature of attention itself, which requires that most of what we perceive fall into background, tends to grind down the surround into something that will not stimulate us overmuch. Habituated to our surround, we are freed from the effort of addressing it and directed thereby toward consequential arenas for our conscious attention (Berger and Luckmann 1996, 53). Consider the restraint that often operates in surround: the limited color palette of a domestic interior; the limited melodic and dynamic range of lullabies; the tendency to conformity and habituation in conduct so that “action” stands out as an intentional seeking of notice. Still more important is the force of repetition and redundancy in surround, similar to though much less dense than that of ritual occasions. Both occasion and surround literalize social arrangements into material form and make them inescapable. But where the folklore of occasion squeezes us into the stiff tight clothes of social necessity or splashes and stampedes us with the presence of others, the folklore of surround inures us gently to the real, making it an old robe in which we can relax. We take the surround for granted: we are used

to it; as Jakobson says, it is “de confiance.” It is associated with comfort and having things nice around us, insofar as it is stable and also insofar as it is of our own making. Perversely, this effect holds even when we have been made to do the making, through socialization and even more overt pressures. The inmixing of our own labor creates a sense of property in the product.<sup>16</sup> The spectrum of affect in surround ranges from wellbeing and calm to boredom, lulling, and stupefaction.

Thus operating “on the lower frequencies” (Portelli 1997), the cultural surround plays a critical role in naturalizing social arrangements, for good and ill. It can reproduce prejudices and other social doxa precisely because they are not deemed worthy of attention, and the resulting historical lag slows social reform. Children’s routinized taunts can perpetuate ethnic stereotypes in a kind of mechanical othering that does not accord with avowed beliefs but remains a resource for conscious prejudice in future (Zhao 2012). A different way in which surround can reinforce power arrangements is seen in social class. Social class is particularly naturalized in the discourse of taste (Bourdieu [1979] 1984), for the materiality of surround entails an inequality of opportunity to shape it as desired, and the opportunity for true class mobility is stymied by the complexity of governing surround both completely and accurately. The upwardly mobile “hypercorrect” by emphasizing features of upper-class performance that are salient in relation to their own schemas (Labov 1972), and the result is to call attention to what properly should go without saying: hence the evaluation of *nouveau-riche* dress and decor as “vulgar,” “gaudy,” or “ostentatious.”

But although individuals have little control over the surround as it affects their own opportunities, the selective character of the dominant representation does allow more gradual change to take place. Beneath the account that is given of surround lies the zone of the overlooked. From this zone innovation can arise, both aesthetic (Jakobson 1971) and social (Thompson 1979). The cumulative emulation of an innovation can lead to a tipping point, a phase shift that creates a “new normal.” The new normal can in turn enable the establishment of a new norm in the codified, institutional sense, while the debate over norms calls attention to the transformed surround. The timing of this interaction is quite tricky, to be sure. Consider, however, the growing consensus (in a political climate of consensus about almost nothing) that the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States is inevitable: a view shared even by some actors who disapprove of the measure. The activist push helped heterosexuals to notice the now widespread presence of homosexual couples living openly in otherwise recognizable domestic arrangements, raising children, walking the dog, and doing yard work. That normalized presence in turn makes the legal transformation seem less of an intervention, more a simple acknowledgment of a *fait accompli*. Similarly, in the area of immigration policy, it seems that the reality of the national surround is finally

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<sup>16</sup> Although I echo John Locke’s (1689) theory of property here, the conclusion does not tend toward his own liberal politics. Locke’s exemplar is a lone individual in a wilderness, choosing where to invest his labor. But the experience of people in society is more often that of choosing what has been chosen for us (Bourdieu [1980] 1990).

beginning to impose itself on the institutional schemas.<sup>17</sup> These are complex transformations in which multiple implicit practices and explicit norms must be renegotiated, but their logic is not wholly different from the simpler phase shift that in the last ten years has transformed the default response to “Thank you” from “You’re welcome” to “No problem.”

## Slippings and Crossings

I have shown you ideal types or analytical foci; we know that reality is messier. Without altogether surrendering the beauty of my schema—for genres crystallize social intentions and thereby achieve some semblance of eternal verity, amenable to diagramming—I will now point to some characteristic compromises and maneuverings.

First, we see boundary relationships. Between art and surround we find such embedded structures as the proverb in discourse and ornaments for house or body. The proverb’s authority derives both from its repetitive inevitability and from its poetic artifice. The iconic folk art of the quilt lives at the divide of attention and inattention, a paradox encapsulated in the interplay of strongly contrastive visual pattern and softly worn tactility. Ornaments are both familiar and tightly organized, self-evident but also affirmations.

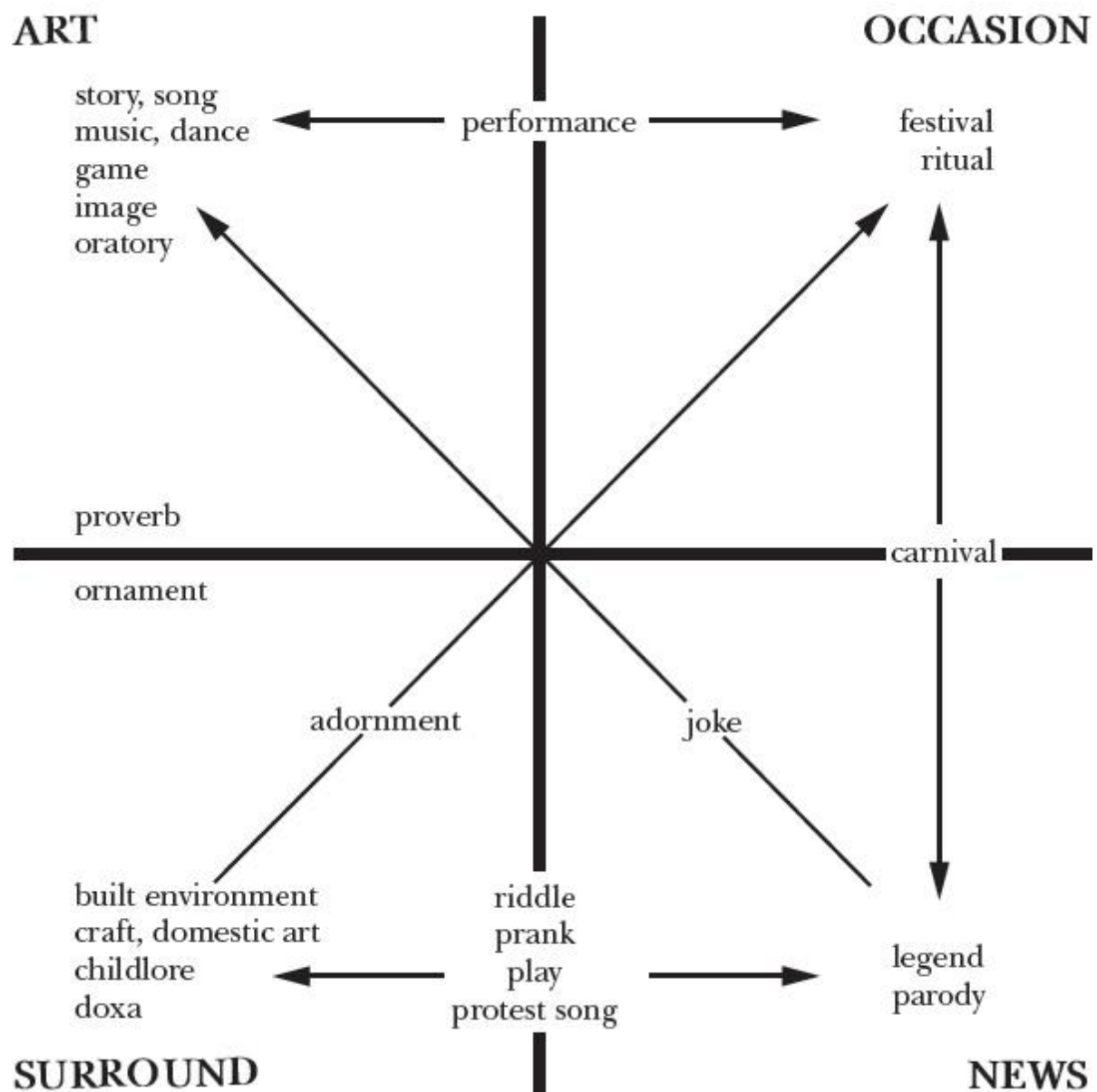
Between art and occasion we find many of the large-scale performance genres, including dance and drama. Sometimes these are artistic spectacles for contemplation; sometimes they are more enveloping and focalize a ritual event.

Between occasion and news stand carnival and similar forms of ritualized mockery. These combine the predictability of occasion with a license and collective mutual visibility that opens the way to the news. This risk makes carnival a source of perpetual anxiety for elites, and sometimes the news brought by subordinate populations transforms a recurrent ritual into a historic event of revolt (V. Turner 1975; Ladurie 1979).

An important boundary for both synchronic negotiation and diachronic transformation is that between surround and news, precisely because the surround is “de confidence,” especially for the powerful actors who delegate its production to underlings. The “triviality barrier” (cited by Brian Sutton-Smith in 1970 as the impediment to the serious study of children’s folklore) can allow the quiet cumulative shifts of practices over time, as I have said, but more immediately shelters subversive expression within its overall naturalization of things as they are. I’ve already mentioned parody as a kind of news that works off of surround or occasion; other kinds of play and “non-sense” similarly pivot between reassurance and refusal as they pass below the radar. The texts of lullabies can be savagely critical of prevailing arrangements: phonology

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<sup>17</sup> As of August 2015, my prediction regarding same-sex marriage is being borne out but immigration, alas, has remained an object of focused and conscious political attention to an extent that excludes much attention to surround.



and melody soothe the baby along with other auditors while the referential content vents the caretaker's fear and rage (Del Giudice 1988). The division of labor that in modern Western culture assigned women the role of sustaining the surround has made domestic undermining of the dominant ethos all the more inevitable, since women had to pay attention to all that men could take for granted and the surround was their domain of agency. Only exceptionally does such undermining go so far as to threaten the foundations of social reproduction: most coded revolt goes unnoticed by the dominant group, while giving emotional relief and some collective reinforcement to subordinates (Radner and Lanser 1993; Scott 1990). Social movements, however, can draw on the surround as they move into the news. Protest song often calls on children's rhyme or tavern song or hymn tunes to mediate its dangerous message. Chants of unthinking group feeling, already "in the blood" from years of repetition, lull anxieties as they furnish the rhythm that marches participants towards war or revolution (Noyes 2003, 196–203).

Play also serves to turn surround into news. Archer Taylor's (1951, 4–5) observation that the European folk riddle dealt only with the world to be seen from a farmhouse window is confirmed by other peasant traditions: riddles turn attention onto the familiar surround and make it strange. Why this should be so is suggested by A. W. Sadler's (1994) study of Halloween pranks in rural Vermont, the butts of which are neighbors judged to be irresponsible, lazy, or distracted. In dislocations and defamiliarizations similar to those of riddles, pranksters take a threshing machine that should already be locked in the barn for winter and put it on top of a nearby schoolhouse, or relocate an outhouse habitually visited in the late hours by a less-than-sober farmer. A student of mine from rural Ohio observed that a neighbor's pretentious new swimming pool was being neglected, still full of water and rotting leaves at Halloween. He and his friends marked this reversion to nature by stocking the pool with bluegill. The fact is that farm life is lulling and monotonous; farm work consists of repeating the same tasks, day in, day out, year in, year out. And yet cows must be milked, the garden weeded, the weather kept an eye on. Through humorous social control, through creative reframing that disrupts the schema to make it visible, farmers' play ensures that all community members pay the requisite continuous attention to what the land requires.

There are also crossings of the diagram. News moves towards art, as suggested earlier, when it addresses not the unheard-of, but unwelcome and intractable realities: perhaps it's not irrelevant that Ezra Pound ([1934] 1960, 29) defined poetry as "news that stays news." The matter of legend can be compressed, traditionalized, and aestheticized into a joke. Jokes are one instrument by which the repressed returns, as Freud explained, but they allow it to surface with relative safety. Jokes give the news of prejudice, oppression, stupidity, and irresponsibility. Whether condemning or endorsing this news, joke tellers spread it further, and such explosive content requires a tight container with a charge of pleasure to propel it forward.

Surround and occasion have their own complementarity. They fall respectively below and above the scale from the Habermasian zone at which message content can

easily be attended to, and are thus ideal for the inculcation of social and political dispositions that might not be amenable to reasoned debate. Each creates its own sense of inevitability through the experience of immanence, self-evident presence (McDowell 1995). Surround is leisurely immanence in space; occasion is crowded immanence in time. If mutually resonant and effectively coordinated, as they are in situations of strong traditional authority or strong totalitarian design, they can squeeze critical debate from both above and below in an ideological vise.

Conscious focus can always be brought to bear on any part of this diagram, and the *Einstellung* of a given genre may be relocated over time. The classification always depends on the classifier as well as the context. It depends on the personal *Einstellung* or point of view, as I have said. The crafts that furnish the surround for some are art for their producers, whose knowing eyes and hands can distinguish qualitative differences undetectable to most of us, and among whom performance in the craft is the basis of reputation. But form is always potentially opaque from any perspective (Young 2014), and folklorists play a role in making it so. This has obvious implications for research ethics. When we cast our gaze on forms recognized as art, we are indeed looking “over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong,” as Geertz (1973, 452) describes the interpretive ethnographer’s role, and the results are likely to enter into the kind of evaluative conversation that already takes place among participants; our interpretations can be endorsed, disputed, or dismissed on existing terms. But when we draw back from the whirl of occasion, put a magnifying glass to the surround, or call notice to the formal dimension of the news, we are going against the thrust of the practice and must think more carefully about the implications and consequences of our detached attention. To be sure, scholars are only one agent of disruptive attention, positive and negative.

## **Waking up Surround: The Effects of Modernity**

The surround (we may even call it the *infraculture* in relation to those salient phenomena that get labelled as national or communal “culture”) comes to awareness under particular circumstances, generating metadiscourses of evaluation and practices of codification. As I have said above, the necessarily selective character of any such act of account-giving stimulates actors in other positions to examine the surround for contravening evidence and to produce alternative representations that may in turn become dominant, in Jakobson’s sense. The surround is quietly dynamic in “traditional” societies where populations and economies are reasonably stable. Both the intentional processes and the unintended consequences of modernization bring attention to the surround, waking it up and in part transforming its logic.

### **I. Intentional transformation**

I have mentioned the gradual valorization of focused attention as a virtue. The Enlightenment attitude expands the universe of appropriate objects for such attention,



with the idea that self and world should be placed under the lamp of reason and known in full. Infused into the technologies of monitoring and documentation developed in religion, statecraft, commerce, and science, this conscious attention made the surround the object of accounting, assessment, and ultimately intervention and planning. The Protestant Reformation called attention to the discrepancies between the Church in practice and the accounts given of it, seeking to reshape the institution's reality in accordance with its founding texts. Later secular reformers invented a conception of nature as a charter in accordance with which society could be, in fact, re-formed. The aesthetic operation of reform at every level—from language to architecture to institutional design—was in general one of simplification, clarification, reduction. Revolutionary movements took this aesthetic of transparent logic to a greater extreme, attempting to sweep away the existing surround altogether and build a new society on a *tabula rasa* (or rather, on scorched earth, with ruins and remains contaminating the new design). Recognizing the power of surround in naturalizing ideologies, revolutionaries did their best to destroy the material and experiential foundations of the old order and construct a new one holistically derived from a single organizing principle. Thus we see the reorganization of time, with the French revolutionary and Soviet attempts to get rid of the seven-day week (Zerubavel 1985); the reorganization of work and living space, with the collectivizations and new villages that led to famine in so many new socialist states in the twentieth century (Scott 1998); and the reorganization of the self, as with the clothing reforms and forced name changes of nationalist republics like Turkey (Türköz 2004). Contemporary religious fundamentalisms conjoin the rhetoric of reform and return with these revolutionary practices of radical transformation. Gradually or with traumatic violence, modernization destabilizes lifeworlds, opening possibilities for progressive change but also disturbing the “confi-ance,” the epistemological and social trust, that belongs to surround.

This is not to say that a balance cannot be found, and it is precisely in the synergy that, in the best of circumstances, can be achieved between the overt, conscious work of political discourse and the quiet cumulative work of surround. The modernity which brings experts, planners, and state power also brings democracy, if only as an ideal to which lip service is given. Reformist legislative and policy interventions are slowed down by democratic process and complicated by public debate. I have mentioned above the current issues of same-sex marriage and immigration and suggested that these large-scale transformations of surround share a mechanism with change on the micro-level. Consider another example, which shows the full working of surround: to resist overt intervention but effect change obliquely, through evasion and indirection. In the 1970s, the US feminist movement came to a general recognition that gender inequality was sustained by innumerable features of the surround, individually minor but collectively constituting woman as a marked category rather than the universal subject of humanity. Efforts to revise deeply embedded practices such as the neutral use of the masculine pronoun were met with annoyance and ridicule, for they were disruptive of the flow of ordinary life and demanded constant attention to the once

taken-for-granted. Every attempted revision seemed cumbersome: “he or she,” “s/he,” “one,” a turn to the plural, the alternation of pronouns—none felt natural in American speech. Along with other attempts to institute bias-free language and habits of thought in US public life and institutions (and comparably in other countries), they provoked denunciations of “political correctness,” a discourse that persists to the present and that finds support beyond a small group of ideologues because of the annoyance of having the surround continually brought to attention and the effortfulness of changing it. That, however, is not the whole story. Individuals sought to avoid committing themselves in conversation, resorting to paraphrase to avoid either sexist phrasing or irritating interlocutors. The third way on which American English eventually settled is the extension of the pronoun “they” to serve as a gender-neutral indefinite singular. To be sure, this solution in cumulative informal practice is still hotly disputed among prescriptive authorities. This is one of many examples of practical accommodation under the radar where overt consensus cannot be achieved. It highlights the importance of surround for stabilizing plural societies, a point to which I’ll return in my conclusion.

## II. Domain-specific orientations

Explicitly aesthetic interventions into the surround have also been a feature of modernity. From Romanticism forward, artistic movements declared themselves avant-gardes of a new future, often as much social as artistic; they frequently made common cause with social movements and shared their activist, agonistic character (Poggioli 1968). Their procedures of critique, reform, and revolution sought, as the more general movements did, to wake up attention, not only to the taken-for-granted features of artworks but to the world itself (as per Jakobson’s description of Cubism, above). Romantics sought precisely to restore the holism of a world they felt had been analyzed into atoms by the Enlightenment gaze. But it was already too late for poets, in Shelley’s (1840, 1:57) terms, to serve as even “the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” The specialization of functions that is one of modernity’s hallmarks breaks up both surround and occasion into defined domains, each with its own *Einstellung* drawing attention to the dominant function: art, religion, medicine, government, etc. Thus, for example, the complex social surround that was the early modern aristocratic household and the complex social occasion that was early modern opera began to break up in late eighteenth-century France. Instead of furnishing the surround for aristocratic soirées, instrumental music moved towards the commercial concert hall where listeners attended to it in respectful silence, and even the expensive political ceremony of opera-going came eventually to focus on the stage itself (Johnson 1995). Music was to be sought out for its own sake (though this norm of course fails to capture the full reality), and it became an increasingly autonomous field, or game, with its own habitus born of its own *Einstellung* (Bourdieu [1980] 1990, 66–68). As elsewhere, the fact of a dominant allowed subordinate functions to work under the radar, but it became increasingly possible to ignore, censor, condemn, or dismiss the once-obvious sociopolitical resonances of aesthetic form; conversely the aesthetic dimensions of domains

defined otherwise could pass unremarked. Surround and occasions were categorized by modernity and disciplined accordingly.

### III. Erosion, preservation, curation

Even when sought and embraced, the modernization or globalization of everyday life creates an anticipatory nostalgia toward those features of surround understood as doomed to eventual disappearance (Jameson 1989; Noyes 2003). In the foothills of the Pyrenees, where I did my research from 1989 through the early 1990s among people convinced they had reached the “penultimate” moment of a coherent local order of things, there were two words for visual attractiveness. The Catalan lexeme “maco” was applied to the landscapes and people you lived with and loved, the environments and interlocutors that brought comfort. The word “guapo,” borrowed into Catalan from the state language of Spanish, was applied to things desirable but out of reach: fast cars, detached houses in new urbanizations, expensive dresses, really sexy people. “Guapo” paid the attention demanded by what at that time was still exceptional and salient. “Maco” marked the affectionate or rueful turn of the gaze back to one’s still habitual surround, in an effort to fix it in memory. Throughout the long history and perpetual renewal of the modernization process, this sense of incipient estrangement is followed by the marking of the most objectifiable components of the now-visible surround as “custom,” “tradition,” “folklore,” or “heritage.” I need not recount this well-known part of the story to folklorists, but I note again the role of *Einstellung* and attention in it. The “traditionalization” identified by Hymes (1975) and widely discussed as of the 1980s (e.g., Handler and Linnekin 1984) is another kind of account-giving or selective representation of a lived surround according to the concerns and preferences of a particular social stance. Preservation, as has also been amply explained, is a characteristically modern intervention seeking to reshape the actual surround in accordance with the representation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; Lowenthal 1996). The concurrent, often competing practice of curation accepts the disappearance of surround and names relics of it as new objects of attention in their own right (Kaplan 2013).

### IV. Diversity and self-consciousness

Even without the accelerated mobility of modernity, social diversity fosters the dynamism of the surround and calls attention to some of its components. The presence of different customs among trade partners, immigrants, allies, foes, or even old neighbors makes our own customs visible to us. Under pressure, this can foster intergroup hostility, as scholars have often noticed. Majority and especially dominant actors tend to valorize their own customs as universal culture or civilization: this is basic ethnocentrism. Noticing the difference of the other’s customs but failing to attend more fully to perceive their internal logic, they construct them as savage, demonic, or intentionally offensive violations of the proprieties (Basso 1979). Actors living under a culturally hegemonic power may develop a “disemia” in which their own customs migrate to the intimate sphere, becoming the object of both shame and positive emotional identification (Herzfeld 1987). In more stable plural situations where no group dominates, groups are likely to generate shibboleths: customs that, when observed, serve as initi-

ation or loyalty test (Michael 1998). Where the competition for resources is not acute, these customary differences may become the object of sympathetic aesthetic interest, even scholarly curiosity, between neighbors, and generate reciprocal social exchanges, such as the intertribal visiting practices typical of Woodland peoples in Oklahoma (J. Jackson [2003] 2005). We should also bear in mind the widespread resort to intercultural travel as a means of worldly and spiritual education, not only in elite practices such as the Grand Tour of eighteenth-century Europe but also in fosterage customs, in pilgrimages such as the hajj, and in the circuits of journeyman artisans.

With increased mobility, instability, and density of populations, people have less time and fewer incentives to pay sustained attention to their neighbors. Signaling must become more efficient, and shibboleths become highly valued emblems, objects of continual focus and enrichment. Less salient everyday differences are likely to erode in a surround structured by the demands of industrial capitalism or other forms of modern mass society. Competition and conflict tend to organize themselves around those shibboleths or boundary devices: vulnerable individuals seek security in the familiar, and ambitious actors seek a banner behind which a constituency can be assembled. Outsiders attracted to novel cultural surrounds will similarly focus on conspicuous points of difference, taking them as indicators of broader incommensurabilities. The surround fragments into bordered territories (of activity and habit if not of actual space) that naturalize the small groups they purport to embody. Consumer capitalism and new media can help group members to isolate themselves behind those borders, fostering the “echo chamber” effect that worries democratic theorists (Sunstein 2001).

The suspicion of outsiders (or the complementary exoticizing) that accompanies such self-segregation has consequences for public coexistence, as does the intensity of affect lavished on group emblems as the larger surround is eroded. Difference is less discreet and less possible to take for granted as a fact of the lifeworld. A shibboleth visibly gaining adherents will be felt as a threat by others. The obvious global example today is the head covering for Muslim women. To its various interpreters, the covering marks political repression, religious devotion, female submission, female self-assertion, anticolonial resistance, local or ethnic affiliation, and many other things. In a few cases the headscarf is still understood as a custom: Erickson (2011, 117) cites ethnic Catalans who are untroubled by the growing number of covered women among the North African population in their coastal town, remarking that their own mothers or grandmothers always wore a kerchief in public. And by the turn of the millennium the headscarf had become a commodity in the realm of consumerist self-fashioning for young middle-class women in cities such as Istanbul (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 78–113). But fewer individuals or governments, fewer practitioners or observers, can today ignore the head covering as a traditional habit or note it in passing as an ephemeral fashion. It catches attention and is interpreted as a statement in the present: message, not surround.

The transformation of surround into identity is the culmination of a long process in capitalist modernity: individual as well as communal identities follow this logic. Locke’s conception of property, noted earlier, provides the first step. In his Second

Treatise of Civil Government, Locke (1689, 215–38) posits that property begins with self-possession and is then extended by mixing one’s labor into the common surround, thereby creating ownership (cf. Hafstein 2004, 306). To be sure, Locke imagines a lone individual in a state of nature, hunting animals and clearing land for cultivation. But Max Weber ([1905] 1976) rehistoricizes Locke’s fantasy (played out, as he and Marx both observed, in Defoe’s 1719 *Robinson Crusoe*) by returning it to the social world of early Anglo-American capitalism, showing how the accumulation of property, as the evidence of labor in a calling, comes to provide objective confirmation of the moral worth of the individual who has achieved it. Weber writes of a moment when capitalism is creating economic mobility and visible distinctions among social peers: this situation fosters general attention to an increasingly differentiated surround. It also fosters self-examination by individuals anxious for both their salvation and their worldly status. Their relation to the material world, the social world, their own bodies, and the customs that integrate all these is less and less a habitus taken for granted, increasingly a zone of self-monitoring, active moral reform, and the display of self-worth. Thorstein Veblen ([1899] 2007) marks the next stage, describing the “conspicuous consumption” and “conspicuous waste” of the wealthy in Gilded Age America. In an urban society marked by rapidity and superficiality of social contacts, the visible signifiers of status become all-important, for first impressions may also be unique opportunities. Thus more and more labor must be given to the selection, purchase, arrangement, and deployment of these properties, and this becomes the special office of women in the modern division of labor. The twentieth century, with the growth of cheap goods, sees this creation of self-worth through consumer discipline extend itself socially and geographically. Late consumer capitalism sees the diversification of such disciplines along national, ethnic, religious, and more personalistic lines as well as those of class, with the formation of both niche markets and resistant but still consumerist subcultures. The surround of any individual, once taken as predetermined by social location, has become a performance space in which every signifier is assumed to be chosen, an active enunciation of personal and group identity.<sup>18</sup>

The signifiers of individual achievement—the house, the clothes, the car—remain within the everyday surround, as do, more conflictively, some group shibboleths. But many of the forms of group identity move into the realms of art or privatized occasion. In part, this is a mode of avoiding confrontation. In part it is a practical necessity, given that the time and space of the larger lifeworld is structured around mass individuals rather than small groups. The fragmented efforts of individuals cannot sustain a traditional surround: preservation entails compression as well as simplification. Objects of memory make the lost world graspable and portable, tighter and richer, like Mayer Kirshenblatt’s paintings of shtetl life or the reworking of Southern mountain music in

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<sup>18</sup> This is not to say that modernity leaves nothing unexamined, as its ideology would have it. On the contrary, its own ordering principles fade from view: the power of the commodity form, for example, or the quantification of time. Even material and conceptual items lapse into invisibility to become “rubbish,” available for eventual resignification and reuse (Thompson 1979).

urban bluegrass (Kirshenblatt and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2007; Cantwell 1984). Holidays sustain old skills, such as the slow food preparation techniques and traditional recipes many American families revive once a year for Thanksgiving. Heritage sites and celebrations, lobbied for, funded, and organized by larger coalitions of people, reconstruct the lost surround on a larger, more three-dimensional scale, but still in an enclave set off as art or occasion. In all of these preserved forms, the habitus or vernacular acquired over slow years is supplanted by ethnomimesis, the embodied communication of practices in brief, dense encounters (Cantwell 1993). Intensity replaces duration.

In a world of abundant objects, to be sure, contemplating the bounded intensity of art is often less compelling than immersion in an intense experience. Fetishized commodities must now compete for our attention with fetishized experiences, the “liminoid” occasions of spectacle, play and tourism that have emerged from and largely displaced the obligatory collective occasions of ritual (V. Turner 1982). Freely chosen, and capable by their complexity of absorbing attention fully, these experiences are increasingly central to individual identities; the more sustained and participatory, the more compelling. The signifiers of status attainable in the unmasterable surround may offer fewer satisfactions than the engagement in the framed environment of a church group, an activist organization, an urban garden, or a fan community. Moreover, these framed spaces need not derive from the immediate surround. Often they emerge as follow-up from a touristic experience, as participants deepen a sympathetic engagement with people and forms from elsewhere. Though frequently born of naive xenophilia, these activities create the occasions of interaction that can undermine it (Bock and Borland 2011; chapter 10). This effect points to the power of the aesthetic as a stimulus to social learning. If single texts and performances convoke publics of mutually anonymous but collectively focused individuals (Warner 2002), these sustained voluntary activities go beyond that. They construct what participants often feel to be a community as meaningful as the traditional kind, for it offers similar scope for social recognition and perhaps greater scope for individual agency: the pleasures, in short, of intensive multidirectional and mutual attention grounded in a common activity. Although the nature of mutual responsibility within and among such communities over the long term remains unclear, the emergence of these micro-surrounds and their “tiny publics” (Fine 2012) is seen by many contemporary commentators as the key to the social, cultural, and political future.

## The Work of Surround

That is the big history as best as I can see it. But like all grand narratives, it might be too high off the ground. So let me turn to the more immediate surround and suggest that it still operates and still matters. I will not draw on that stupefying element of

our academic surround, the PowerPoint presentation, but call your attention rather to some living illustrations in this room.

When my mother gives classes in flower arranging, one of her aesthetic principles is derived from her own mother's advice on how a young girl setting out in life should conduct herself. Flowers gathered in an arrangement, my mother says, should be "friendly but not intimate." This metaphorical tie between cultural form and social life becomes also metonymic or indexical in the so-called decorative arts, which do not exist in their own right as objects of conscious attention but furnish the surround of social life. The sociocultural links are tightened in the ephemeral genre of arranged flowers, which specially furnish occasions: rites of passage like weddings and funerals but also everyday social rituals like parties. The flower arrangement is a miniature of the social bond just as the festival is a gigantization of it. Some cultures recognize this power of surround and mark out its genres as arts with conscious aesthetic systems of their own: the Japanese colleagues visiting our meeting this year in such welcome numbers can tell us of the meticulous ordering and rich conceptual vocabulary not just for flowers in ikebana but for every other aspect of the social environment in Japan.

But in the case of my mother, who arranges quite a lot of flowers and has also been known to give two parties in a single day, I am thinking instead of Clarissa Dalloway, Virginia Woolf's heroine, who steps out one bright morning into the streets of London to buy the flowers for a party she is giving that evening. The ensemble of guests ranges from the Prime Minister and her husband's political associates to some long-unseen friends of her youth; there is even a tiresome impoverished spinster whom she feels is turning her adolescent daughter against her. Flowers in the novel are indicators of social relationships as well as the mediators of them: these upper-class English characters are always picking flowers, wearing flowers, giving them to one another, formalizing their social lives in flower shows and disordering them in spontaneously erotic strolls through gardens. In her desire to "kindle and illuminate; to give her party," Mrs. Dalloway insists on preparing herself the flowers that model the human arrangement she hopes will emerge. She also pays attention and homage to London. She looks around her; she takes it all in; she brings home not just the flowers but the people and the surround to be distilled in her drawing room. As the guests arrive she stands at the top of the stairs in a panic as to whether it will all come off or be a crashing failed effort.

Mrs. Dalloway's old lover, Peter Walsh, who takes pride in focusing on serious things (and has reached middle age frustrated after much pursuit of illusions), doesn't look at what is around him. He is always abusing Clarissa for wasting so much time on these ephemeral effects. Why does she go to so much trouble for a party, something that's done in a night? "All she could say was (and nobody could be expected to understand): They're an offering; which sounded horribly vague." Flowers, in their evanescence and their precarious emergence into arrangement, capture the possibility and fragility of social engagement. And the practice of flower arranging instills a disposition. I was not too surprised last night at the Indiana University reception when my mother, who

claims to have come to this meeting in my wake, ended up trailing me along in hers. The veteran hostess of fifty years of parties, she instinctively started working the room, chatting up the grad students, asking them about their dissertations and making them flower in the warmth of her attention.

I have pointed out my mother in the audience. I can get still more indexical and point to my right on the podium. This summer I spent two weeks in a rented house in Switzerland with our colleague Regina Bendix and the economist Kilian Bizer writing an article about interdisciplinarity for a group project in Göttingen. Some of us, in such liminoid circumstances, succumb at once to the absence of structure. We go out to eat every night; we might bring in takeout or bread and cheese, drink wine out of plastic cups, and clear it all up in the morning. But in this unfamiliar kitchen Professor Bendix baked pies—proper pies rolled out with a rolling pin and crimped with a fluted edge—out of the wealth of black currants, red currants, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, and gooseberries to be had in the house garden, having charmed our landlady by commiserating with the latter's voluble exposition of the heavy responsibilities of the jammaker in July. Inspired by Professor Bendix's example, Professor Bizer prepared one day a *lapin à la moutarde*—a rabbit stewed in mustard and white wine, preceded by little *croûtons* of fried bread topped with the butter-sautéed liver. And so the whole two weeks went: everything was cooked and eaten and cleaned up according to their everyday domestic standard, or in my own case well above it.

I was struck by the respect shown by my colleagues to the fine materials—the local berries, meat, and wines—as well as the respect for traditional recipes, domestic procedure, and social convenances. I believe there is a lesson to be drawn. Of course disruption has its place in the world along with order; my own office in this trio was indeed to provide the anarchic counterbalance to their domestic virtues and incite them to irresponsibility. But we were writing an article about the social requirements of interdisciplinarity, based on the experience of a multiyear funded project on cultural property of which Professors Bendix and Bizer were the coordinators, and which like all such projects was not devoid of interpersonal as well as interdisciplinary challenges. The observance of the domestic decencies in this situation created a climate of human decency within which we could bridge our national and disciplinary conventions in writing, we could manage the delicate ego balance of co-authorship, and more immediately, three unrelated adults could comfortably co-occupy a somewhat confined domestic space. Mrs. Dalloway's flowers prefigured her party. Our rabbit stew, you might say, incarnated and the berry pies fructified our sense of the fitness and fullness of things: in particular the fitness and fullness of our own collaboration. This writing environment, in turn, modeled the thesis of our paper. The pilgrimage of a funded interdisciplinary project—a liminal academic predicament fraught with personal, professional, and epistemological risk—must be traveled with a tent of social procedure and engagement inside which interpersonal trust can form: Jakobson's confidence once again (Bendix, Bizer, and Noyes in press). Time within the interdisciplinary project must be treated not as the temporary hiatus from departmental life which objectively



it is, but as a ritual or play frame inside which everything matters and merits—what else but—attention.

## Conclusion

In the flower arrangement, in the party, in the pie, in the interdisciplinary project, in Roger Abrahams's all-encompassing genre diagrams, and in Lee Haring's conference panels, aesthetic order is mobilized to address the fragmentation and disruption of the news. An offering is made. Let me conclude with something about what kind of offering it is and tie it to our meeting's theme of peace, war, and folklore.

Mrs. Dalloway's party takes place in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. We are told of the woman she most admires: Lady Bexborough, who opens a bazaar with a telegram in her hand, announcing the death of her favorite son. The upswinging narrative of Mrs. Dalloway's party is counterbalanced by the downswing of the twinned protagonist Septimus Smith, a shell-shocked veteran who commits suicide in the course of the day. His consciousness and hers vibrate sympathetically through the novel. Mrs. Dalloway herself is in remission from cancer. But in giving her party, like the gallant Lady Bexborough, she refuses to surrender to the news.

In the aftermath of the next world war, Kenneth Burke (1950) composed the second of his magisterial trilogy on "motives," really on representational devices. His earlier *Grammar of Motives* (1945) had dealt with the "universal resources" of verbal representation; his planned "Symbolic of Motives" would deal with individual cases; but in the postwar moment he felt he had to deal with human relationships—with what he called the rhetoric of representation. Rhetoric, Burke (1950, 23) said, "was concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall." The forms of language are mobilized in the attempt to create identification as a counterbalance to the inevitability of division and human difference. He saw war not as disintegration but, on the contrary, as a perversion of communion, "a disease of cooperation," given how much constructive collective action was necessary in order to get to the acts of mutual destruction (22). In this book, Burke deals not so much with the traditional rhetorical invocation of ethos or common values, but with more empirical commonalities: elements of surround that are not the object of conscious focus; in short, forms held in common.<sup>19</sup> Using the liturgically resonant term consubstantiation, he points to what folklorists know, that bodies can go where reason cannot. Physical attitudes serve as the vanguard of conceptual *Einstellungen*, as Pascal knew when he suggested that kneeling to pray would in due course induce belief. At a more elementary level of consensus, in the social process of

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<sup>19</sup> In a dissertation completed since the time of this talk, Elo-Hanna Seljamaa (2012) argues that "commonality" of surround and historical experience is the strongest force favoring peaceful interethnic interaction in post-Soviet Estonia. She further suggests that under neoliberal conditions a conception of commonality is likely to be more analytically productive and politically useful than any imagining of community.

the Göttingen interdisciplinary working group and more urgently in my own fieldwork during the aftermath of the uneasy transition to democracy in Spain, I have seen repeatedly that dancing or silly children's songs will foster collaboration where debate breaks down. Plain speaking, my friends in Berga knew, would start the Spanish Civil War all over again. A couple of weeks ago during the baseball playoffs, I heard someone interviewed on a news report from Milwaukee: "Wisconsin can't come together over collective bargaining; thank God it can come together over the Brewers." (Perhaps, since the Boehner-Obama golf game was on too small a scale, our DC colleagues need to stage an aesthetic intervention with Congress.)<sup>20</sup> Anyone who has truly engaged in the social world knows that we are never going to love one another. And we're not going to meet on "shared values" in the present millennium. If we're to keep from killing each other off, we need to cultivate collective relationships that are friendly but not intimate.

Form creates both the social relationship and the necessary mediation, coordinating us but keeping us out of one another's way. Where our differences are exacerbated, attention to the forms themselves provides a salutary distraction and reorientation that can enable communication to resume. Arthur Danto (2003), writing on high art aesthetics, and Bill Westerman (2006), there in the back row, writing on folk art

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<sup>20</sup> An update: I revised this talk in mid-December 2012, as the daily chronicle of a second discursive breakdown between Boehner and Obama and ongoing gridlock in Congress had been interrupted. In the immediate aftermath of the Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting, there were some indicators that collective feelings of horror and grief were pushing our political actors back toward to a recognition of commonality. As common as such events have become in the United States—constituting, in fact, a genre—they nonetheless continue to demand attention by awakening the most visceral and unavoidable concerns for our biological, ethical, and civic survival. A second update: As this article goes to press in spring 2013, the political surround has reabsorbed even this upheaval into the new normal of partisan standoff. Thus the challenges of maintaining focus on the surround and achieving consensual accounts of it reassert themselves. I need, however, to sustain an optimistic *Einstellung*, and search for evidence that surround will accomplish what reasoned debate cannot. Since Newtown there have been quite a few collective shootings and of course the legion of individual gang shootings, marital murder-suicides, impulsive suicides, children's accidents, etc., that both demand media attention and are so common as to desensitize us to them. Gun-legislation activists are prompted accordingly to search for new modes of refreshing attention and outrage (cf. the tally of Kirk and Kois regularly updated on the Slate website, 2013). (In summer 2015 as I prepare the book version, the tangle has only gotten worse, with acts of violence singled out differentially for attention by different interest groups and media outlets according to the narrative they can be made to support; the sustained pattern of both police and terrorist aggression against African Americans has, however, called forth a sustained response in the #BlackLivesMatter movement.) This painful escalation of gun violence, like the still more terrifying escalation of climate change, is gaining increasingly broad social recognition as another new normal, independent of views about causation and response. In contrast, however, to the rootedness in American society of same-sex couples and undocumented immigrants, gun violence and climate change can be viewed as benign or positive by no mainstream *Einstellung* and will be addressed to no one's satisfaction by legislation or policy that simply acknowledges the phase shift. The next step, of costly, precarious, and sustained intervention in the surround is unavoidable. The unintended consequences worked by the modern *Einstellung* on the societal surround now pose it with an existential challenge. A lot is riding on our capacity to pay attention.

aesthetics, have both said that beauty is not a luxury but a human value, insofar as it brings us into relationship through our common corporeal needs for comfort, order, and wellbeing. The people we call folk, denied authoritative discourse and also often denied the satisfaction of many of those corporeal needs, are in that most basic sense the world's authorities on aesthetics. The flowers are not optional.

## Acknowledgments

Thanks to the JFR editors and staff; thanks to Achim Spiller for economic insight at a rest stop along the Autobahn; and special thanks to Don Brenneis and Jason Baird Jackson for tactful but incisive guidance. Any lucidity this talk may have attained in revision reflects the surround of the Lichtenberg-Kolleg of the University of Göttingen; the residual and emergent muddle are my own.

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## **Part II: Histories and Economies of Tradition**

## 6. Voice in the Provinces: Submission, Recognition, and the Birth of Heritage in Lower Languedoc<sup>(6)</sup>

IN RECENT YEARS, scholars have described cultural heritage as the product of an economic process that creates value by recoding obsolescence as antiquity and provincialism as difference (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Hafstein 2007). But even in the absence of clear economic benefit, local populations often participate eagerly in the conversion of their practices to heritage. One reason is that heritage also derives from a political process. Heritage is a byproduct—the word is chosen advisedly—of identity politics, the current formulation of the long history of folk voice in modernity. As a privileged mode of local economic development under globalization, heritage builds upon the earlier history of folklore as the medium of political recognition within the nation-state. In the course of this history we can see a progressive focusing and stiffening of local culture, first as folklore, then as heritage, with a gradual reduction of local culture's functionality to the assertion of differential identity.

In this paper I want to call attention to an early episode in the formation of folk voice and the prehistory of staged heritage performance. I will take you to seventeenth century Languedoc, when a region ravaged by the Wars of Religion was seeking to reconstruct itself in the context of an emerging absolutist state.<sup>1</sup>

### Between Submission and Rebellion

Long before Romantic nationalists began their search for origins and authentic selfhood in the lore of the common people, local communities had to find a way of representing themselves to an increasingly powerful and centralized state. Of course

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<sup>1</sup> I offer here a radically simplified and preliminary account of a rich and problematic body of evidence. A more detailed and nuanced, though still preliminary, reading was presented at the Shelby

<sup>(6)</sup> Originally published as "Voice in the Provinces: Submission, Recognition, and the Making of Heritage," in *Prädikat "Heritage." Wertschöpfungen aus kulturellen Ressourcen*, ed. Dorothee Hemme, Markus Tauschek, and Regina Bendix. (Münster: Lit Verlag. 2007), 33–52.

French absolutism set out in theory to destroy local particularisms in politics, language, and ways of life, forcing all eyes toward a sun that rose and set in Paris. Paris proposed itself as exemplary, but local communities competing for scarce royal favors would not attract attention by becoming third-rate copies of the capital. Nor would they indeed win any favors by capitulating too easily to the center. Absolutism on the ground was a matter of negotiation, and local elites did better when they had economic power, historical prestige, or at the very least a large and potentially rebellious populace with which to impress the monarchy. Local communities attempted to perform distinction without overtly threatening rivalry or rebellion. They had to display both difference and conditional submission, and these have been key markers of the cultural practices we usually label as folk.

Folk voice is one of the communicative registers available to low-status communities in their negotiations with central power, distinct from both the rebel's shout of resistance and the aspirant's adoption of metropolitan codes (Scott 1990, Agha 2007). Folk voice is utterance inflected by body, inflected by place. Folk voice asserts the right to speak and be recognized without claiming a threatening universality.

Although subaltern peoples have always known how to shape their expressions to speak truth to power with safety, folk voice as a formulaic register in Europe and its colonies owes much to the participation of middle-class actors. It is largely a product of middle places: not the metropolis, not the colonies, but the provinces. To be sure, unlike subaltern, provincial is a term that nobody has sought to rehabilitate: it is tainted with the same fatal dowdiness as folklore. We like the glamor of extremes: we prefer to study domination and resistance, not accommodation and compromise. But accommodation and compromise are what most of us do most of the time. In cultural terms, this is the zone of folklore. Neither totally alienated nor totally identified, the folk are the inner Other of the nation-state—and by now the inner Other of global markets. Folklore is domesticated difference. (Domestication will be a key metaphor for me here.)

I want to talk, then, about the cultural and political tactics of this undertheorized middle. Characteristic of these tactics is their ambivalence, even their schizophrenia. Actors in the middle take hegemonic promises seriously. The king is your loving father; work hard and you shall be rewarded; support us and we will protect you. As a rule, the rewards of compliance are just enough to keep one hoping, not enough to satisfy. So actors in the middle continue to invest in the hegemonic scheme of the moment, but they also grumble, and consciously or unconsciously they voice their doubt. These voicings, which cannot safely be made explicit even to their speakers, take shape as folklore. And thus we are anxious about folklore as well as embarrassed by it. Folklore is unstable; it is inherently ambiguous. It oscillates between submission and rebellion.

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Cullom Davis Center at Princeton and at the Festive Culture Seminar of the Newberry Library (Noyes 2010). By the time I retire I hope to have accumulated time and competence for the construction of a proper history. My thanks to Laurent-Sébastien Fournier for tactful guidance on vital details.

Overt submission was the best option for Lower Languedoc in the first half of the seventeenth century. The Wars of Religion, which brought forty years of anarchy to this heavily Protestant region, had nominally ended in 1598 with Henry IV's Edict of Tolerance, but Henry himself was assassinated in 1610 and the conflict continued to rage. Nobles and local elites resisting the monarchy's concentration of power led other rebellions, fighting not for their dependent populations but for their own privileges. With war perpetually threatened or in progress, troops moved continually back and forth to the Spanish border and quartered themselves on towns to be fed and housed. Trade had stopped because of insecure roads. Agriculture, already damaged by the wartime destruction of crops, endured further periods of drought and depression, and peasants scraped to the bone by royal tax-farmers revolted or threatened to revolt year after year. Conflict was endemic and people were hungry. A strong centralized government seemed to many the best available alternative to anarchy and local predation. Therefore towns declared their allegiance to the French state. Towns of any political importance, especially those which had supported the monarchy against local Protestant nobles, sought to claim the rewards of their loyalty in the form of political and trade privileges, infrastructural investments, state offices for local elites, and the housing of state institutions.

Two kinds of civic performance give us a window into state-local relations in this period. The first has been much studied: it is the *entrée solennelle*, the solemn ceremony when a royal personage makes his first entry through the gates of a town and takes formal possession of it. This act receives the sanction of a religious procession and is also celebrated with as much pageantry as the town can afford, typically highlighting the ancient dignities and importance of the local community as well as praising the entering monarch. The vital elements of the performance confirm the contractual relationship between monarch and people. The people must be seen to acclaim the king and consent to his sovereignty; the king must return their reverence with a declaration of love and at the same time confirm the town's historic privileges. Central to the ceremony is the "harangue" by one or more local representatives, in which local loyalty but also local needs are given voice. In the context of ongoing local unrest, the *entrée* was no empty ceremony. Rather, it was an occasion for the negotiation of terms between the local and the state, with the threat of violence underlying the show of strength in numbers on both sides.<sup>2</sup>

Civic festival gives us a more comprehensive view of local concerns. In the town of Béziers, an episcopal seat of just under ten thousand people and a commercial and administrative center known since Roman times for its vineyards, the early seventeenth century sees an intensification of the Ascension Day festival known in Béziers as *Caritachs* or *Caritats* (Charity), owing to the collection and distribution of food for the poor taking place on that day. In addition to the typical cortège of corporations, confraternities, guilds, and so on, the festival stages three celebrated figures which become

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<sup>2</sup> This summary is drawn from Wagner and Vaillancourt 2001.

emblems of the town in this period. There is the Camel, a great chaser of women and peasants. There is the Galley, a float in the form of a Roman ship full of food, guarded by men in Turkish dress. And there is Pepesuc, the mutilated statue of a forgotten Roman emperor who is dressed up and made to speak burlesque harangues.

From 1615 through 1656, the festival program incorporated short plays, written and performed by educated townspeople: lawyers, printers, merchants.<sup>3</sup> The language of the twenty-four surviving texts reflects the community's divided investments. The local dialect of Occitan predominates, framed in French-language prologues and epilogues. Northern French characters speak only in their own language, but the Languedocians are diglossic and change code according to the occasion. Many of the plays are saynètes, realistic comedies commenting on current events in Béziers and above all on the town's relations with the outside world. In so doing, they declare their awareness of the festival's complex public: the diverse inhabitants of the town, peasants from the hinterland, soldiers of French regiments quartered on the countryside, residents of neighboring and rival towns, local nobles, and royal officials, sometimes accompanied by visitors from Paris. As in present-day heritage productions, the performances were tailored as much to outsiders as to insiders. The French prologues of the plays insist on the desire to cultivate good relations with these visitors. Nonetheless, in Béziers in particular, Languedocian historical memory was long enough to complicate this investment of faith in the French state.

In 1628 the printer Jean Martel adds a historical preface to his edition of several of the plays: "The Antiquity of the Triumph of Béziers." The feast of Caritachs is thereby cast as a Roman victory parade, but this once Roman town looks rather different now: "This town, although it has been frequently lifted up from its ruins to the highest level of its glory, was nonetheless once of much greater extent than it is seen today, according to tradition and the marks that can still be found, for it has been ruined many times." ([1628]1844, 6). The preface goes on to describe the innumerable occasions on which the town has been devastated by invaders. The Goths invade the Christianized Roman town; the Frankish king Charles Martel—Charles the Hammer—destroys the town to chase out the Saracens, who are not identified as invaders or agents of ruin. The Albigensian crusade against heresy in Languedoc, led by the French monarchy and culminating in the notorious 1209 massacre in the very cathedral of Béziers, is given a discreet mention, and then there is a long discussion of the festival Galley as a commemoration of the role of the Knights of Malta (influential in the present-day politics of the town) in chasing out the Vandal invasion of 435—a chronological impossibility but an opportune origin narrative. Every invader discussed comes from the north—and the plays routinely lament a more immediate invasion, the seemingly endless quartering of French troops on the town.

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<sup>3</sup> The plays were collected and published by the Béziers printer Jean Martel in three volumes in 1628, 1644, and 1657. All quotations come from the nineteenth-century edition by the Béziers archaeological society (*Le Théâtre de Béziers* 1844–1848).

To be sure, these were defensive troops, not at least nominally a force of occupation, but that did not prevent them from eating everything in sight and occasioning worse disorders. Several plays, which note the presence of soldiers in the audience, represent local women defending themselves from harassment and peasants denouncing the damage to their fields from troop movements.

## Figures of the Province

Local history does not represent the northern aggressors as invading the space of an indigenous population. Rather, there is a complementary history of settlers coming from the south: Romans, Christians, Muslims. Their colonization of the territory has a civilizing and fertilizing rather than destructive effect, and they have become in effect the ancestors. The three elements of the festival that become the emblems of the town—the camel, the galley, and the Roman statue *Pepesuc*—are each associated with this model of colonization from the south.

Standing perplexed on a balcony, the French visitor to the festival would observe a monster draped in green canvas led by a ragged man in notional Muslim dress with a big stick. The shield of the town was emblazoned on the Camel's coat, and on one flank a Latin motto was painted: *Ex antiquate renascor*, I am reborn from antiquity. The other flank proclaimed—incomprehensibly to the outsider, for the inscription was in local dialect—*Sen fosso*: we are many. The camel chased women and the peasants from outside the walls with thrusts of its neck; it approached the well-dressed with its mobile jaw snapping until its guide *Papary* was appeased with an offering of coins.

The camel of Béziers has numerous relatives from eastern Europe to West Africa, equine effigies constructed on a half-barrel framework carried by men concealed underneath and characterized by aggressive, sexualized behavior, often with a long mobile neck and snapping jaws. Such horse-masks are documented in the Languedoc region from the twelfth century forward (Baumel 1954, Schmitt 1976, Achard 1981). They share a narrative and ritual foundation. Linked in legend to the settlement of the territory, they perform at festivals associated with communal fertility and prosperity as well as in popular protest (Fabre and Camberoque 1977, 203–211).

Folklorists are familiar with the Indo-European story of the dragon-slaying hero, which has entered Languedoc again and again through Greek and Roman settlement, medieval hagiography, Renaissance erudition, and, indeed, Romantic folklorism. But the local narratives offer not the clear victory of good over evil, but an uneasy accommodation between two kinds of power. Typically a founding saint domesticates rather than killing the dragon, which is called upon to perform its submission by processing along the boundaries of the territory. As Jacques Le Goff (1980) and Peregrine Horden (1992) have explained, the medieval narratives of dragon-taming saints are associated with the draining and settlement of marsh areas near rivers, terrain both fertile and unhealthy. The poisonous breath of the dragon recalls the miasma of the malarial bog.



The celebrated Tarasca of Tarascon, the oldest effigy in the region, is associated with this riverine landscape and famed also for blocking the bridge traffic at this crucial crossroads on the Rhône delta—as is the Drac of Beaucaire across the river (Dumont 1951). Throughout the region there are legends of a demonic horse dwelling near a river; at times the horse's back extends miraculously to save many people from a flood, but it may then carry them all into the river and drown them there (Guilaine 1963; Dontenville 1966, 101–102; Fabre and Camberoque 1977, 208 n.6). Thus the legendary horse and its mask incarnate the imperfectly tamed forces of nature.

The Tarasca was sufficiently well-known in the early modern period to lend its name to festival dragons throughout Spain, and some scholars have suggested that it also provided the model for Béziers' camel (Achard et al. 1981, 6).<sup>4</sup> Although there is scattered documentation of these effigies during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, there is a sudden explosion of them in both Languedoc and Spanish Catalonia in the first half of the seventeenth century—a period in which royal power in both countries is seeking to subdue and incorporate its political periphery.

But Catalonia would go to war against its king in 1640, not for the last time, while Languedoc grudgingly submitted. The animal incarnations and legends surrounding the festival effigies in the two places arguably reflect these differing political stances. This is not surprising, for the money to dress and perform the effigies, along with the literacy to document them and the impetus to publish this documentation, came from local elites caught between the state and a hard place. The different elaborations of the effigies depend on a blend of local tradition, classical erudition, and political positioning that creates subtle surface variations to a still identifiable, bedraggled, neck-stretching, jaw-snapping, many-legged incarnation of local desire and frustration.

In Catalonia, this thing is called a mule, and the learned tell a legend derived from classical antecedents about how it defends the town from a siege by the Saracens: in the middle of the night, when the besiegers are asleep, the people take the town's worst-tempered mule, set it on fire with pitch and torches, and send it out to run through the enemy camp. The mule is associated with caves, with blackness, and with Moors, who in popular tradition are spoken of as prior inhabitants, always already there. It is autochthonous. The mule was, moreover, a frequent metaphor for the lower orders in both France and Spain during this period. Strong, capable, necessary, but also stubborn, recalcitrant, sexually erratic, requiring a strong hand to keep it in order, the mule requires continuous domestication rather than being subdued once and for all. The mule effigies persist to the present day in many Catalan cities, and their performances continue to enact rejection of both state and upper-class power in favor of deeper energies (Noyes 2003).

In Lower Languedoc, where the people submitted, however reluctantly, to the occupying state, the effigies were dressed differently. The erudites of the village of Mèze played with the etymology of the nearby lake of Thau to explain their festival Ox.

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<sup>4</sup> For the heritagization of the Tarasca during the present century, see Fournier 2011.

The ox is the castrated taur, or bull, that is, the natural energies domesticated in the service of culture, and this origin legend echoes innumerable classical narratives of the hero led by his herd animal to the site of foundation. In Languedoc the animal is not autochthonous but accompanies the founding hero; it is already domesticated, its labor already given. The legend of the camel of Béziers is of this genre. The camel accompanies Saint Aphrodisias (whose legend fails to live up to the promise of his name, alas) when he comes from Egypt to convert Languedoc. Decapitated in Béziers, the martyr picks up his head and carries it to the site on which his church is to be established, again putting the emphasis on this act of foundation. The people of the town keep the camel in memory of the saint, and when it dies, construct the effigy from its skin.

Pézenas is the principal and successful rival of Béziers for the favor of the crown: it becomes the seat of the Estates of Languedoc, and its effigy, a pony, is the least menacing of any of them. According to the legend, Louis VIII left his favorite mare behind when he went off crusading. On his return, the mare had given birth, and the king left the pony with the town as a token of his affection in exchange for their loyalty (Achard et al. 1981, 8).<sup>5</sup> But this charming story has a disturbing underside, for the crusade in question was the one in Languedoc itself, the Albigensian Crusade with its massacre of the rival town of Béziers and the political subjugation of the province.

In Montpellier, the largest city of the region, the Chibalet or “little horse” is ridden by the king Peter of Aragon in his entrée to the town with his pregnant wife Marie of Montpellier after their honeymoon in the countryside. This apparently contented story of the fertile union of locality with outside power is undermined by an earlier legend of this marriage, which dates from the actual period of Aragonese rule: Peter did not want Marie, and had to be tricked by the town counsellors into going to bed with his disguised wife in order to secure an heir to the throne with local ancestry (Delpech 1993). By the time the horse is documented Montpellier has been reconciled with the now French state, but it was a Protestant capital with a vivid memory of siege and punishment.

Thus the generally submissive appearance of the Languedocian effigies does not resolve the ambiguity of the horse mask. The origin legends were calqued upon present-day tensions at the town walls. Sometimes they were besieged by the monarch or another powerful lord; sometimes they opened their gates to a visiting prince, who might bring benefits or further misfortunes. The totemic animals whose legends metaphorized these encounters also participated in them in the present. A pamphlet published in Paris after the siege of Béziers by the duc de Rohan portrayed the camel as defender of the town, bringing the antique legend to life (*La défaite des troupes du sieur de Rohan*, 1616). But the duc de Rohan was on the losing Protestant side: outside powers were rarely rebuffed with such openness in either narrative or performance. In Pézenas, the festival pony performed at solemn entries without winning much appreciation from

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<sup>5</sup> The legend seems to have been invented at the beginning of the eighteenth century, after Pézenas consolidated its privileged position.

the local nobles or their royal guests. A “curious manuscript” found by an eighteenth century chronicler speaks of the visit of Louis XIV with his entourage in 1660:

MM. les consuls étaient hors la ville près le pont de l’Observance, accompagnés des plus notables citoyens, du corps de ville, de leurs valets, trompettes, violons, hautbois, tambours, drapeaux des arts et métiers et du poulain. Cette machine effraya si fort les chevaux que les belles troupes du roi se jetèrent dans le lit de la rivière de Peyne avec précipitation et confusion, n’ayant point de muraille comme à present.

The consuls were outside of the town by the Bridge of l’Observance, accompanied by the most notable citizens, by the corporations of the town, by their lackeys, trumpets, violins, oboes, drums, guild banners, and by the pony. This machine frightened the horses so much that the splendid troops of the king threw themselves into the riverbed of the Peyne precipitously and confusedly, there being no wall as there is now (quoted in Poncet [1733] 1992, 194).

So even the mild pony is still the horse-dragon that haunts the rivers, spreading its demonic contagion to the well-trained animals of the French military.

When the young Dukes of Bourgogne and Berry, grandsons of Louis XIV, arrive in 1701, the inhabitants of Pézenas

...se flattaient d’avoir l’honneur de les recevoir dans leurs murs. Mais leur désir fut contrecarré par la haine qu’avaient conçu contre eux M. le Comte de Broglie, commandant en cette province et M. de Basville, intendant, à cause du poulain, dont ce dernier avait une si grande aversion que lorsque MM. le maire et les consuls voulurent lui en parler, il leur répondit qu’il fallait le mettre au feu. Et Pézenas fut privé de posséder ces princes quoique la ville eût tout disposé pour les recevoir.

...counted on having the honor of receiving them within their walls. But their desire was thwarted by the hatred conceived of them by M. the Count of Broglie, commander of the province, and M. de Basville, the intendant, because of the pony, to which the latter had so great an aversion that when the mayor and the consuls wanted to talk to him about it, he responded that they should throw it on the fire. And Pézenas was denied the possession of these princes although the town would have made any arrangements to receive them (Poncet [1733] 1992, 197)

The chronicler goes on to explain that as the princes passed through the outskirts of the town the inhabitants brought out the pony despite the prohibition—and the visitors were delighted. In short, at a deeper level the horse-mask is the indomitable local: asked for or not, it emerges and does its will. It is the intimate resentment that prudence can never wholly repress. All of these horse-masks are dragons under the skin, dangerous but necessary instruments of communal fertility. They thus require

trainers to control them as far as possible: remember Papary the Moor, with his stick to control the camel of Béziers.

Like literary equivalents of Papary, the authors of the plays seem to have wished for a more illustrious public than they generally got. Accordingly, they composed French-language prologues for Occitan plays, and their hope was realized at least once in 1635 with the visit of the duc d'Halluin, the new governor of the province and son of the celebrated general Schomberg (Gardy 1983, 21–22). More often, however, they were disappointed. Another play, with the prologue in Occitan this time, excuses the triviality of the comedy to come by explaining that since no one knew whether the Estates of Languedoc would be convened in Béziers or elsewhere, it hadn't been worthwhile to compose an important drama (*Les amours de la Guimbardo*, n.d.)

The disappointment was recurrent. Languedocian festival legends seem to encode the recent memory of the solemn entries, so similar to the invasions in their visitations of a foreign power that is simultaneously fecundating, rapacious, and threatening.<sup>6</sup> The royal entry is a delicate negotiation in the best of cases, with gifts and mistrust on either side (Wagner and Vaillancourt 2001). Nothing is spared to honor the visiting prince: it is an important occasion to make the town known to him, but success is not guaranteed. His Majesty is not always in a good humor, in view of the need to keep smiling through every town and hamlet of an endless route on the muddy roads of the provinces. During his entry into Pézenas in 1622, Louis XIII is uneasy from the crowd and the heat. He is not anxious to inspect the curious allegorical details of the triumphal arch they have built for him with such care and forethought, nor is he charmed by the capers of the pony, monarchist though it proclaims itself. The king leaves the scene early to go hunting with the Prince de Conti (Poncet [1733] 1993, 190–191). Parallel cases of royal indifference are numerous in the chronicles. If the pony grows more aggressive during solemn entries in the course of the century, it is not surprising.

The two other emblems of Béziers echo the ambiguity of the Camel: the Galley and the statue Pepesuc. The Galley is poorly documented, but seems to have resembled other festival floats of the Mediterranean coast in representing a ship sailed by Turkish pirates. Filled with food given in charity by the wealthy Knights of Malta, the float was assaulted by the populace, which fought the supposed Turks to carry off the galley's contents.<sup>7</sup> The imagined relation between Turks and populace is unclear and further complicated by the 1610 passage through the region of the Moriscos, forty thousand Muslims expelled from Spain and headed for the port of Agde for transit to Tunis. Many of these were quite wealthy; others were recorded in a Béziers chronicle as having engaged in pillage and thievery to make their way to port: the ragged Moor Papary who leads the Camel is a possible reminiscence of the struggling cortège.<sup>8</sup> In any case,

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<sup>6</sup> As the tourist will later become.

<sup>7</sup> Compare the *macchine di Cuccagna* described by Del Giudice for early modern Naples (2001).

<sup>8</sup> In Noyes 2010 I elucidate this complex situation as far as I can at present.

Turkish masks were apparently sold in the town, and we can guess that, as in other Mediterranean festivals, the symbolic combat between Muslims and Christians figured endemic tensions within the local community (Ariño 1988, 46–66; Albert-Llorca and González Alcantud eds. 2003). The Galley itself is an exotic object from the south—a south at once Roman, Christian, and Muslim—and brings important resources for the collective welfare of a hungry people.

The figure of Pepesuc appears to be modelled on the well-known Roman character Pasquino, a mutilated statue near the Piazza Navona that was dressed up during Carnival and decorated with satirical verses—hence the French word *pasquinade* for a lampoon. Pepesuc is also the descendant of the *miles gloriosus* in Roman comedy and of King Carnival, who are both evident in his rhodomontade:

TABLE 6.1

Nevout de Mars, fils de Latoune, Pus puissant qu'un Diables quan troune, Masse quatorze bras de fer, Lou Rodomon qu'ero en Enfer, Mange murailles, brise picques, Seco Tonnels, vuide Barriques, Mestre de gousses enratgeats, Gaigne Castels, sauto Foussats, Gardo cantons, fermo Carryeys	Nephew of Mars and son of Latona, Stronger than a devil when he thunders, Weighing fourteen lengths of iron, A Rhadamanthus from Hell, Wall-eater, spear-breaker, Dries up barrels, empties winecasks, Master of rabid dogs, Castle-capturer, ditch-leaper, Guardian of the district, holder of the highway,
Grand empregniayre de Chambrieyres	Great impregnator of servant girls

(Les Tiltres, Qualitez, et Pourtraict du Grand Capitaine Pepesuc, 1644)

The statue was simply the ruined torso of an emperor, one of many Roman remains on this landscape. It was situated on the Rue Française, the principal entry of the town to the north, thus conferring on Pepesuc the reputation of town guardian. In the plays he is explained as Peire Pezuc, a local army captain who drove out the English when they invaded France, presumably during the Hundred Years War. This French identification is, however, denied by the printer Jean Martel, who in his commentary of 1628 explains that the Rue Française was so named “comme ayant esté conservé franche” (for having been kept free) by the valor of Pepesuc. Here we see a further variant on the theme of invasion from the north. And in forming part of the visible history of Roman settlement on the landscape, Pepesuc too recalls the origins of the town in relation to a center of power older and more prestigious than Paris. His name connotes ancestry of an immediate kind, with *pépé* an informal term for grandfather and even Peire meaning father as well

as the name Peter.

Roman, Christian, and Muslim colonization follow on one another without interruption or trauma in the Béziers imaginary. Saint Aphrodisias, a Roman bishop, comes

from Egypt with the camel, currently looked after by Papary the Moor. The origin legends reinforce these confluences of southern identities, as do the stories of the Roman emperor Pepesuc as a plebeian soldier in the Hundred Years War. It is a history which can be called coherent and reasonably dignified. Nonetheless, if one considers these three emblems synchronically, local pride is no longer justified. We have the Camel, a carnivalesque creature with its gaping, snapping jaws; the Galley, a foreign ship of a kind associated with piracy, and Pepesuc, a ruin. These figurations of the local offer no viable relationship to a living center of power: there is only the mouth, the Moors, and mutilation. We must remember that even Saint Aphrodisias, like Pepesuc, has lost his head. Nowhere does Béziers possess an image of itself as a whole, undamaged body politic.

To add insult to injury, the forms of local identity are themselves copied from other places. The Camel was probably copied from the Provençal Tarasca and Pepesuc from the Roman Pasquino. Labelling the festival a “Triumph” recalled Roman performances that much-conquered Béziers could not appropriate without a massive dose of irony. The legend of the head of Saint Aphrodisias, worse yet, seems to ape that of Saint Denis, patron of the French monarchy in Paris. The emblems of Béziers boast of potency while enacting dependence. Local people recognized their ambiguity: during the French Revolution they burned the Galley and the Camel, which the militias would have interpreted as vestiges of feudal loyalties (Thomas and Segui 1942, 183; Achard et al. 1981, 8). This was not the first time.

## The Limits of Prosopopoeia: Speaking When You’re Spoken To

The plays of Caritachs comment reflexively on their own transformations of these figures into personifications of the local. They too condense local ambivalence. The prologue to the second collection of texts, published in 1644, explains that the festival was restored in 1615 after several years of suppression:

...bien que le tout fust d’une sainte institution, si est ce qu’avec les temps, il s’y était glissé quelques désordres et abus qui auroit obligé les principaux habitants, de fayre rompre la Machine du chameau et la Galere qui estaient les plus belles pièces de tout l’ornement, à cause de quoy et de l’injure du temps le tout fut discontinuée pendant quelques années, mays tout ainsi qu’un torrent qui se trouve retenu de sa course ordinaire, pousse son fleus avec plus d’impetuosité, de mesme le peuple de Beziers ne pouvant plus se contenir et le temps s’tant un peu amelioré auroit fait refaire la machine du chameau et la Galere avec ceste devise,

EX ANTIQUITATE RENASCOR

...although the ensemble was of holy foundation, it’s true that with time certain disorders and abuses crept in, which seem to have obliged the prin-

cipal inhabitants to break up the Machine of the camel and the Galley which were the most splendid pieces of all the décor, because of which and the injury of the time, the whole was discontinued for some years, but just as a torrent that is held back from its usual course pushes its flow more impetuously, so the people of Béziers, no longer capable of containing themselves and the times being somewhat better, seem to have remade the machine of the camel and the Galley with this motto, EX ANTIQUITATE RENASCOR (I am reborn from old)

This metaphor of the river breaking its bounds should remind us of the demonic horse, even when the violence of the preceding years is displaced to a remote past.

The first surviving play, in fact from 1615, thematizes the consequences for the town of the festival's interruption. An ambassador representing Pepesuc enters on stage and warns the town in oratorical French of the furious rage of this personage, owing to his abandonment and the destruction of the camel and the Galley. He describes Custom as a ruined statue requiring restoration and finishes by exhorting the public to recall the importance of the festival to the prestige of the town as well as its economy.

Pepesuc himself now enters, speaking in patois. He has emerged from his corner, he says, to defend Béziers from the destruction wrought by Saturn, who seems to have devoured the houses, the people, and the ornaments of the town, without which it cannot live<sup>9</sup>:

TABLE 6.2

<p>Et so que say es de pus viel,  Es la Galere, et lou Camel.  Gatge precieux, cheres reliques,  Comme de Bachus las barriques,  Gros pilotins, vieux ornemens,  Cheres ombres, chers oriflans,  Vousautrés say ses tant utiles  Comme las torrés dins las villes,  Comme l'armo dedins lou cos,  Et la mouzelo dins lous os,  Et comme cauco grasso poulo  Per poutatge dedins une oulo;  Car qu'es Beziez sans lou Camel  Qu'un gros brouniou sans ges de mel?  Qu'es Caritats sans la Galere  Qu'une feste sans bonne chere?</p>	<p>And that which is the oldest here  Is the Galere, and the Camel.  Precious gage, dear relics,  As the barrels are of Bacchus,  Great pillars, old ornaments,  Dear shades, dear oriflammes,  You are as useful here  As towers are in towns,  As the soul within the body,  And the marrow in the bone,  And as a fat hen  For soup inside a pot;  For what is Béziers without the Camel  But a great hive without honey?  What is Caritats without the Galley  But a feast without a good meal?</p>
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(La Colere, ou furieuse indignation de Pepesuc, 1615)

<sup>9</sup> Fabre and Camberogue (1977) will, indeed, describe the festival effigies as totems.

Camel and galley are sacred relics of a lost past, but also oriflammes, battle flags equal to the standards of the French monarchy! Thus, in addition to the representation of the recent prewar past as remote antiquity—the creation of non-contemporaneity that is typical of heritage processes—we see other aspects of heritage discourse emerging: the sacralization and emblemization of local practices. But the camel and galley are not yet pure signs: they support and defend the town like towers, they animate it as the soul does the body. They nourish it as well—and here we must recall the originating motive of the Feast of Charity.

The theme of fertility returns when Pepesuc protests his own condition. He has lost his, er, little parrot. A group of young Protestants has assaulted him and hammered him and attempted to penetrate him as if he were the gate to the city, he says. They have taken his wig and his moustache and, still worse, they have knocked off “*les four-nitures de ma ceinture et testimoines de ma nature!*” (the furnishings of my waistband and witnesses of my nature). Thus lamenting, Pepesuc withdraws, but he advises the audience to neglect him no longer, since his tongue remains and he still knows how to bite. The play’s epilogue is more tentative: it explains that Pepezuc’s soul has survived the mutilation of his body, but demands the restoration of his virile member so that he may recover his lost pleasures and continue to defend the town. Thus, as with heritage performance, Pepesuc displays the memory of cultural vigor in a context of present impotence.

In any case, Pepesuc soon disappears from the plays as an actor. In the calmer year of 1635 it is the camel that speaks, in the “Story of the Caritats of Beziers,” a comedy entirely in patois which presents the festival to itself. The argument centers on the lovemaking between the young men of the town and the young women of the villages. The youths cajole the girls with confectionery while the camel chases them with open jaws—and it was of course the villages that fed the voracious town. A pair of shepherds are shown watching a pastoral play in the theater and criticizing its lack of verisimilitude, saying that a real shepherd minds his sheep. In this general ambience of sexual, alimentary, and economic revitalization, Papary, the camel’s keeper, intervenes to address the relationship of Béziers with its rival towns, identified metonymically with their animal totems:

TABLE 6.3



Yeou souhetario fort de veyre lou duel De l'ase de Gignac ambe nostre Camel Quand mesme Pezenas ville prou resolgudo Ly gausario bailla soun pouli per ajudo Yeou cresi fermomens que sans aucun debat Ma bestio aurio lo	I'd really like to see the duel Of the donkey of Gignac with our Camel. Even if Pezenas, a fairly valiant town, Were to dare to dance its pony there in aid I'm firmly convinced that without any arguments u pres et l'hounou del com- bat.	My beast would have the prize and honor of the combat.
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(Historio de las Caritats de Bezies, 1635)

The deepest game of mirrors in this complex text comes at the end, when one of the young men complains to Papary that the camel is harassing his village sweetheart:

TABLE 6.4

<p>LICIDAS, parle à Papary  Ont avez lou Camel, que m'a mourdit Félice!</p> <p>PAPARY  Moussur, excusas-lou, nou fa pas de malice:  Vous scavez q'el a fach comme aquo de tout temps,  Mais s'el y torno pus, li escrasaray las dens...</p> <p>Au surplus, apprenez qu'el parlo comme un gach,  En tout be que jamays non avio pas tant fach,  El a vey destacat lous ressorts de sa lenguo  Qu'on avio de long temps parlat que m'en souvenguo.  Se lou voulez ausi, vautres meritas trop</p> <p>Per non ly dire pas que parle un autre cop!</p> <p>LICIDAS  Yeou soy d'aquel avist que vous nous fassas veyre  Ce que nous semblo dur et difficile à creyre!</p> <p>PAPARY  Aro-meteüs meteüs vousautres l'ausires,  Galan, aussas lou cap incaro un autre fes:  Tout lou monde ez ravit que vostre corpu-  lence  Enfin age parlat apres un long silence!</p> <p>LOU CAMEL  Non vous estonnez pas, aro ez tournat lou tens  Que las bestios saviou parla comme las gens...</p>	<p>LICIDAS, addresses Papary  Where are you keeping the Camel, who's bitten my Félice!</p> <p>PAPARY  Sir, excuse him; he doesn't do it out of malice.  You know he's behaved like that from the beginning of time,  But if he does it again I'll knock his teeth out...</p> <p>And furthermore, learn that he talks like a jay.  Although he had never done this before,</p> <p>He has seen unleashed the resources of his tongue,  Though he had not talked for a long time, that I remember.  If you wish to hear, your merit is too great  Not to order him to speak again!</p> <p>LICIDAS  I am of the opinion that you should show us,  What seems to us hard and difficult to believe!</p> <p>PAPARY  Right now, right now you'll hear him,  My boy, lift up your head once again:  Everyone is delighted that Your Corpulence  Has talked again at last after a long silence!</p> <p>THE CAMEL  Don't be surprised, the time has now returned  When beasts knew how to talk like people...</p>
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(Historio de las Caritats de Bezies, 1635)

The camel follows with a long harangue—that favorite provincial genre—on the decadence of local customs.

In this scene we see in microcosm the character of local voice under absolutism. The local is all mouth: hungry, aggressive, vocal. It needs a keeper to domesticate it, feed it, surveil it, license it to speak, and of course to profit from its talents. This is Papary, ancestor of both the folklorist and the heritage interpreter. The metropolitan audience, mediated by this keeper, grants voice to the creature. In rhetorical terms, apostrophe enables prosopopoeia, or as Hafstein has explained of community under contemporary heritage regimes, Béziers is subjectified (2007). In the time-out-of-time that is festival, locality can speak. When its animating audience departs, it becomes once more the inert sign of an animal, a foreigner, a ruin.

The earlier comedy shows us Pepesuc finding his tongue in his rage with the depredations of outsiders. But Pepesuc loses his protagonism over time and cedes his place to the camel, which speaks only when it is spoken to and which displays exclusively parochial interests. This is the history of local voice as constructed by provincial elites—the Paparys of their respective camels—and recognized by the center: over time it can say less and less. In Languedoc this is a centuries-long history, during which Occitan literature is slowly reduced to the carnivalesque register and then disappears. Later cultural revivals find themselves trapped in these earlier idioms. They may recall antique glories, engage in carnivalesque and highly temporary rebellions of the body, or alienate themselves deliberately, as did the 1968-era Occitanistes who declared themselves an internal colony not so different from Algeria in their relation to Paris. Today the south has José Bové as a new Pepesuc and the new Galley of Mediterranean multiculturalism, which is practiced in dozens of invented festivals in the cities of the south—Toulouse, Montpellier, Marseille, Barcelona—that are competing to play the European Union’s Papary for North Africa.<sup>10</sup>

Philippe Gardy, a key intellectual of the Occitanist revival, later lamented the further reduction of the Occitan language to still less than the lower half of a diglossia (1990). According to him there remains only the emblem, the language employed as label: Brand Occitania.<sup>11</sup> Gardy’s earlier researches make clear, as I hope my case study does here, how deeply rooted this reduction is. It does not date from the heritage response to the globalized economy, but from a much earlier moment of peripheralization and dependence within the nation-state itself—the same nation-state that today administers heritage policy. Pomp and protocol gradually lose their efficacy in the provinces: the province can no longer perform dignity. Increasingly, the domesticated carnivalesque becomes the single register of expression recognized as authentic, not

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<sup>10</sup> As of 2015 this Occitan métissage, though still a rhetoric of choice for the culture industries and in the civic discourse of large cities such as Toulouse and Marseille, is struggling to survive against a very different identity politics. Today Pepesuc votes for Marine Le Pen, and in 2014 Béziers elected a mayor from the National Front party.

<sup>11</sup> Gardy did not foresee the rise of Occitan-language hiphop and fusion (Marx-Scouras 2005), but the branding logic is more prevalent (cf. chapter 10).

just in intimate settings but in addressing the external center, whether in submission or reclamation.<sup>12</sup> More and more the province is folklorized. In this early formalization of local practices in the seventeenth century, we see the beginnings of the current hallmarks of heritage:

- Objectification: culture becomes fixed, processes become things
- Semiotic reduction: the diversity of possible messages is reduced and their indexical connections to everyday life are cut off
- Differentiation: each locality marks itself out as distinct, on an increasingly decorative rather than structural level, promoting rivalry rather than solidarity between marginal communities
- Denial of coevalness (cf. Fabian 1983; Stewart 1991): local culture is no longer contemporary, but a relic of the past
- The emblemization of cultural practices as signs of identity
- The targeting of outsiders as the primary audience for local culture

In this process, flexibility and autonomy evidently diminish over time. Why then should local communities choose to immobilize themselves in this way? What is gained?

A partial answer, familiar to us from the history of folklore studies, has to do with the opportunity of brokerage for the local elites: representing the province to the state and commandeering any state largesse to the province. The professional classes who stand in this mediating position furnish the majority of the provincial intellectuals who embellish and explain local traditions. Why, though, do communities go along with them? The incentives and constraints are of course enormously complex, but one factor may be primary.

The trope of *prosopopoeia*, in which an inanimate object is made to speak, comes from the Greek *prosopon poien*, to confer a mask or face. The *prosopopoeias* of the festivals of Lower Languedoc confer a face and voice on the local. Although this face is animal, foreign, or mutilated, it is not a small thing to possess an awareness of self that persists over time and a face that receives the recognition of others, particularly that of the state. It is this that we call identity and this upon which we insist as a mode of inclusion in contemporary politics. But when personifications of the province multiply at the very moment of the central power's consolidation, when representations flower as the fields are laid waste, we have reason to be mistrustful. The domestication of the Camel did not bring even his keeper Papary out of rags, much less satisfying

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<sup>12</sup> Much too schematically but for the sake of argument I'll propose that this early modern reduction of the provincial to the carnivalesque, mostly gendered male as it attaches to lingering presuppositions of autonomy, agency, and exteriority, gives way in the industrial period to the feminization and

the beast's own appetite, and today's rush to convert exploratory practice into self-contained heritage is equally unlikely to sustain the community over the long term.

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domestication of the folk and a genre shift from carnival to lament (chapter 7).

## 7. The Work of Redemption: Folk Voice in the Myth of Industrial Development<sup>(7)</sup>

TABLE 7.1

Cantant, cantant nasqué la infamia, i descantant, la redempció: el comte l'Arnau tenia l'ànima a la mercè d'una cançó.	Singing, singing gave birth to infamy, and descanting, to redemption. Count Arnau had his soul at the mercy of a song.
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THIS QUATRAIN SUMS up a nineteenth-century European bourgeois myth in which capitalist aggression is redeemed by repetitive feminine labor. Within this myth, folksong is the channel of communication and the medium of social and ideological accomodation between an owner class gendered male and a working class gendered female. The ballad is made to bear the image of the capitalist adventurer. In the mouth of a working woman, the song both seduces the singer herself and reassures its subject of his identity.

We must speak here of myth at two levels. The first is narrative deliberately instituted in order to legitimate and mystify a given social order. As is well-known, throughout the nineteenth century intellectuals reshaped folk materials and rediffused them among the people to energize consent to new social and political formations. Narrative ballads were one medium in which literati attempted to reform class and gender as well as national identities. The goal was to induce the folk themselves to revoice these reformations.

The scale and intensity of the period's invention of tradition gave rise to myth in the deeper sense: a core narrative pattern with a long history and a wide distribution, moving across particular social and ideological locations, and localized and redundant in its manifestations. Myth of this kind achieves its power by addressing rather than repressing the complexities of central social formations. In the case I discuss here, this second myth provides an ambivalent metacommentary on the first process of mythmaking. In

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<sup>(7)</sup> Originally published as "El hueso cantante: vox populi y mito capitalista," in *La ciudad es para ti. Nuevas y viejas tradiciones en ámbitos urbanos*, ed. Carmen Ortiz García. (Barcelona: Editorial Anthropos. 2004), 309–323.

this second myth, the bourgeoisie recognize the impact of their mystifications upon the folk asked to perform them. Bourgeois appropriation of oral tradition is equated with sexual possession on the borderline between marriage and rape. The uncanny character of the ballad hero has to do with the ambiguity of this act of conception. At the same time, the myth acknowledges oral tradition's power to vary and reshape, the need for folk performance to provide what the bourgeois text cannot accomplish. The working class cannot be passive reflectors of ideology: their active voicing and recreation is called for. Their cultural labor is as vital to stable class relations as their material labor.

I want to capture this capitalist ventriloquism by recapitulating four successive re-takes of the broader myth: Goethe's *Faust*, completed in 1832, Wagner's *Der Fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*), from 1843, Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, from 1867, and Joan Maragall's *La fi del Comte Arnau* (*The End of Count Arnau*), completed in 1911. In each of these, a singing woman at a spinning wheel becomes the agent of redemption for an enterprising hero who has wreaked violence both upon her and on the larger human and natural world for which she stands, betraying at once the marriage contract, the social contract, and the divine order.

The myth builds on a relation between women singers and male poets that can be traced back to the medieval *pastourelle* and beyond, but takes new shape in the Romantic lyric. Let me begin with gender relations in German poetry. David Wellbery writes of Goethe's love lyrics from the 1770s as inaugurating the characteristic Romantic "specular moment" (1996). For Wellbery, romantic subjectivity is constituted in an exchange of gazes between a male poet and his beloved, the addressee of the poem. The speaker's selfhood is validated when he sees it mirrored in the eyes of the beloved as she looks lovingly back at him. In the earliest Romanticism, this is an evanescent moment, no sooner achieved than dissolved. Later, as the lyric becomes a formula, the mutual gaze is also essentialized into a permanent relationship. A good example is Friedrich Rückert's "Widmung" (*Dedication*). There is specularity already in the title: the poem is dedicated to the woman who is dedicated to the poet. The beloved intervenes between the speaker as subject and the speaker as object. She is both his interiority and his exterior space: he floats in her; she encloses his afflictions and shows him on her mirroring surface only his better self, "mein bess'res ich." You may know this poem from the rapturous setting by Schumann—a lightness available to the man who has succeeded in shifting his responsibilities elsewhere.

TABLE 7.2



<p>Widmung</p> <p>Du meine Seele, du mein Herz,  du meine Wonn', o du mein Schmerz,  du meine Welt, in der ich lebe,  mein Himmel du, darein ich schwebe,  o du mein Grab in das hinab  ich ewig meinen Kummer gab!</p> <p>Du bist die Ruh, du bist der Frieden,  du bist vom Himmel mir beschieden,  Dass du mich liebst, macht mich mir  wert,  dein Blick hat mich vor mir verklärt,  du hebst mich liebend über mich,  mein guter Geist, mein bessres ich!</p>	<p>Dedication</p> <p>You my soul, you my heart,  you my delight, o you my pain,  you my world, in which I live,  my heaven you, in which I float,  o you my grave, in which eternally  I buried my afflictions!</p> <p>You are rest, you are tranquillity,  you were allotted to me by Heaven.  That you love me, makes me worthy to  myself,  your gaze has clarified me to myself,  you raise me loving above myself,  my good spirit, my better I!</p>
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(Friedrich Rückert, before 1840)

(Notice in passing—it will come back—“Du meine Welt.” This metaphor is reversed in *Faust* and the later texts of the bourgeois myth, in which the entire world is dedicated to the man and made to mirror his intentions.)

In these lyrics and much more later in the nineteenth century, the beloved is elided with the mother. I can't do justice to the Lacanian analysis of Wellbery and the other scholars I'm following here—let's just take their word for it that the mother is the donor of the phallus—but I think we can all agree that the mother is invoked in such poems as the realm of primordial plenitude, and, as Wellbery notes, primordial orality. It's in the union-in-separation with the mother that the masculine self is originally constituted. The lost womb is recalled in the enveloping sound of the mother's voice—and here we come to singing. Folksong is the voice of the nurse, the voice of the mother, metaphorically and often literally for the writers of the period. Herder's writings on the mother-tongue are well-known. Of Homer's verse he declares “Infinite and untiring it flows in gentle cascades, in repeating epithets and cadences, such as the ear of the people loved. These features...are the soul of its harmony, the soft cushion of rest, that at every line's end closes our eyes and puts our heads to sleep so that they might awaken to new vision with every new line and not tire on the long way” (cited in Wellbery 1996, 190). Thus even oral epic is lullaby at bottom, restoring the hearer for his exertions.

Like the song of the nightingale so often invoked as a figure of orality (Nagy 1996), oral poetry is both infinitely varied and infinitely repetitive. The singer herself is stable and provides rest. Here we come to the ballad and to Wordsworth. Although Wordsworth composed new poems in ballad meter, claiming to write in “the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation” (Wordsworth [1800] 1991, 287), his more personal lyrics position the speaker as unwillingly cut off from a Romantic nature to which women have unmediated access. In a brief 1807 poem, “The Solitary Reaper,”

Wordsworth describes an encounter while on a tour of Scotland with his sister Dorothy (absent, this time, from the poem). The speaker passes by a “solitary Highland lass” working in a field, singing to herself in a language he does not understand. Her seemingly endless song fills the valley with sound as if she were (of course) a nightingale in Arabia or a cuckoo from the Hebrides—the remotest outposts of civilization. He speculates about the theme of her song: is it from the heroic past, the “humble” present, or “some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,/That has been, and may be again?” Unlike the specular Germans, the timid Wordsworth does not seek a face to face encounter that might elucidate the problem, but listens for a while and proceeds on his way.

Nancy Jones has described the poem as a reworking of the northern French medieval *pastourelle*, in which a wandering knight comes upon a singing peasant woman as she works in the fields. After some dialogue in which she rejects his advances by remarking the social distance between them, he rapes her and then goes on his way. Jones argues that here, although Wordsworth himself is careful to maintain the distance between speaker and woman, the speaker commits the poetic equivalent of rape, taking the woman’s song for his poem and continuing his road. “The music in my heart I bore,/Long after it was heard no more.” There is an implied historical violence that will bring such Highland singing to an end.

The more immediate genealogy of poetry proposed by Wordsworth, Jones observes, is recapitulated in the evolutionary views of later critics as E.K. Chambers, who described “masculine Art-Poetry” as emerging from “feminine Folk-Song” (cited in Jones 1991, 263). Familiar from innumerable Romantic poems in many languages, this ballad encounter is of course more prosaically echoed in the accounts of Victorian folklorists. Debora Kodish has described the narratives of their discovery of female ballad singers as *Sleeping Beauty* tales in which the woman is awakened to self-consciousness when a male collector transcribes her songs and thereby makes them both public and immortal (Kodish 1987).

The singer herself must be kept at arm’s length. In Goethe’s “Der Fischer,” in Heine’s “Loreley,” we see the siren whose singing pulls the man into a watery death, an excess of identification in which his singular identity is drowned. Wordsworth is careful to avoid direct contact with his singer—indeed, while his sister Dorothy’s diary records her efforts to communicate with the Highland women of the *Gaeltacht*, Wordsworth simply does not speak their language. The woman’s song would not make a poem if he understood it. Keats’ *Belle Dame sans merci* “makes sweet moan,” ambiguous and thus erotic vocalizations. And women of less pastoral status are distinguished as inarticulate, nearly inhuman in Romantic lyric, as Sarah Goodwin notes: consider the youthful “harlot’s curse” of Blake and the “orphan’s cry” of Wordsworth, not to mention the professional singer, whom Coleridge characterizes as a squalling harlot. The market economy haunts the Romantic poet, Goodwin argues, and in reaction he claims the authentic inspiration of folksong, untouched by wage labor (1994).

Of course the harlot’s curse is a denunciation. We might want to recall where the nightingale of European poetry comes from—the nightingale so often invoked by the

Romantics and associated with the oral singer as a figure of primordial song. The nightingale is Philomela, who was reincarnated as a bird after being raped and having her tongue cut out to prevent her denouncing her assailant. Postclassical poetry forgets about the “voice of the shuttle,” the narrative account she weaves before her death, and even more does it fail to recount the hideous vengeance worked by Philomel and her sister upon the criminal, but compensates for this repression by transforming her from the twittering sparrow of the original myth to the melodious, full-voiced nightingale.<sup>1</sup> The bird’s apparently inarticulate melody can thus tell a tale to those who know how to listen. Behind the oral song of women in Romantic literature, then, is what folklorists know as the singing bone motif: the voice that continues after death to denounce its murderer. Goethe invokes this folk idea explicitly in *Faust* when Gretchen, in prison for the murder of her child, has gone mad. An uncanny voice emerges from the prison singing the bird’s song from the fairy tale of “The Juniper Tree.” It is Gretchen, alienated from herself, singing both of the violence she has done and of the violence done to her.

TABLE 7.3

Meine Mutter, die Hur, Die mich umgebracht hat! Mein Vater, der Schelm, Der mich gessen hat! Mein Schwesterlein klein Hub auf die Bein An einem kühlen Ort; Da ward ich ein schönes Waldvögelein. Fliege fort, fliege fort!	My mother, the whore, Who murdered me! My father, the rogue, Who ate me! My little sister Took away the bones To a cool place; There I became a pretty little forest bird. Fly away, fly away!
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(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust* I, 4660–4668, 1808)

The singing bone, or in this case the singing bird reveals the guilty conscience of the bourgeois myth: Gretchen’s voice lingers with Faust too, though not so fatally. For the bourgeois tries to have it both ways: he wants the look of love with the lingering song—the all-embracing comfort of one, the repetition of the other, merged into faithful wifedom. The myth fortifies specularly by locating the man’s image not in the evanescence of the woman’s gaze, but in the stable, reproducible, appropriable form of song. Thus the male poet gains not only a song as source for his own poem, but reassurance of his own being in the world and a model self to which he can return at his own convenience. Gretchen’s ballad of the King of Thule, a song of masculine fidelity to the eternal feminine, envisions Faust as he ought to be; as she thinks he will be; as he will be justified at the last.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rowe 1986 on Philomela as the prototype of the female storyteller and Pfeffer 1985 on the poetic inheritance of Philomela as nightingale.

The Loreley's threat can be countered by the simple expedient of moving women inside. Domesticated women, divorced from the energies of the natural landscape, also have limited vision: one can keep them from seeing anything but the lover as he chooses to present himself. Both bourgeois marriage and industrial labor are made to participate in a fantasy of total enclosure during this period: the angel in the house and the worker in the industrial colony live in a world of controlled inputs, in which they will learn not only to echo but to elaborate the messages given them. Goethe, characteristically clear-sighted at the very beginning of this historical moment, acknowledges that both the lover and the bourgeois are planting the image they want in the song of the Other, but observes that without the Other's active cooperation the exercise is useless. In "An Lina" (1800), he pleads with his beloved:

TABLE 7.4

Liebchen, kommen diese Lieder Jemals wieder dir zu Hand, Sitze beim Klaviere nieder, Wo der Freund sonst bei dir stand.	My love, should these songs Ever return to your hand, Then sit down at the piano Where your friend used to stand beside you.
Lass die Seiten rasch erklingen, Und dann sieh ins Buch hinein; Nur nicht lesen! immer singen! Und ein jedes Blatt ist dein.	Rush to let the keys resound And then look into the book; Only, don't read! always sing! And every page is yours.
Ach, wie traurig sieht in Lettern, Schwarz auf weiss, das Lied mich an, Das aus deinem Mund vergöttern, Das ein Herz zerreißen kann!	Oh, how sadly in letters, Black and white, the song looks at me, That from your mouth can make a god, Can tear open a heart!

(translation modified from Wellbery 1996, 211)

Her voice can make him a God—his alienated page cannot.

As Wellbery points out, Goethe's rather dubious review of Arnim and Brentano's folksong collection, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1806–1808) echoes this language notably:

If under such conditions these songs were carried from ear to ear, from mouth to mouth, by their own element of sound and tone, if they gradually returned enlivened and glorified to the people from which they had as it were in part originated, then one could say that this little book had fulfilled its purpose and could now be lost as a written and printed book because it had passed over into the life and cultivation of the nation (cited and translated in Wellbery 1996, 223)

In both cases, the erotic and the social, the purpose of the book is to provoke performance, and to be superseded by it (cf. Klusen [1967] 1986).

Now we come to the spinning. Most famously, we see Faust's Gretchen at the spinning wheel, obsessively rehearsing the love that will destroy her, and each subsequent version of the myth features women spinning. We should see the spinning wheel as an uneasy, diminished reminiscence of Philomela's loom, and spinning is of course a common metaphor for oral songmaking (for example, the Catalan verb for what a nightingale does is *refilar*, to re-spin). But the activity of spinning also bridges the old world of the rural folk with the new world of the industrial worker.<sup>2</sup> In these key texts it becomes increasingly clear that not just women but workers are called upon to play the specular role, the still mirror. There are, after all, two halves to the bourgeois universe—the expanding, progressive realm of capitalist adventure, and the enclosed, repetitive realm of productive labor, which includes the domestic sphere.

The period is, indeed, characterized by the paradox of progressive enclosure—*Du meine Welt*—so that a new outside must always be sought. Faust tells Mephistopheles he will be damned if ever he says to the moment, “Abide with me, thou art so fair.” The capitalist by his nature can never say this for himself, only for others. The stability of women and workers is a necessary counterweight to the mobility of adventuring men.

At this point we should consider Susan Stewart's notion of “lyric possession,” which she raises to address the ambiguities of intentionality in lyric poetry. She cites the ballad as key example, noting the rigid carriage and uninflected voice of the ballad singer. “A singer performs as if spoken through.” “Of all the singers of Western lyric, the ballad singer is the one most radically haunted by others.” Lyric possession stabilizes the singer as it moves the song. The ballad can thus bridge the dichotomies of industrial capitalism, introjecting the exterior world into the inner space of workers and women, as if it were owned, when in fact it possesses.

The themes of labor, enclosure, active re-creation, and possession are brought clearly together in Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*, a more uncanny work than has sometimes been realized. The current standard critical account of the opera's plot is that a young woman with hysterical tendencies escapes the narrow petty-bourgeois preoccupations of her milieu by conjuring up the demonic intrusion of the outsider Dutchman. She invites the intrusion by singing a ballad that brings the myth back to life.

But the critics might be as mesmerized by the music as the heroine herself. In truth, Wagner has dressed up a thoroughly bourgeois social relation as romantic tragedy. The heroine, Senta, already has an outsider lover: Erik, the hunter. By all the laws of genre, she ought to run off with this young tenor rather than deserting him to fall in love with the bass-baritone. The Dutchman, furthermore, is a rich old man who has been brought home by her father as a suitable husband. In a comedy, such a figure should be humiliated, relent, and provide the young couple with capital. In a tragedy, he should prevent their happiness and bring about their undoing. Instead of either, confronted by the Dutchman with the evidence of her earlier relationship, Senta proves her eternal

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<sup>2</sup> See Schneider 1989 for an account of this textile transition as it affects the Märchen tradition.

fidelity by drowning herself, and instead of bringing the Dutchman home to rest, she is absorbed into his mythical world.

The opera is full of lyric insertions represented as folksongs. The sailors sing of returning with gold to their waiting sweethearts. At home, the sweethearts—grouped at their spinning wheels—sing of their complementary expectations. The young women are like any group of workers, distracting themselves with fantasies of a happy ending. The oldest woman urges them to sing so they will produce more: “So singt! Dem Rädchen lass’t nicht Ruh!” “Keep singing! Don’t let your wheels go still.” Their song encapsulates the economic arrangements of marriage by representing the spinning as a direct quid pro quo for their lovers’ wage earnings. They sing of their lovers’ gold, “Er gibt’s dem Kind, wenn’s fleissig spinnt.” “He’ll give it to the child, if she spins diligently.” Senta takes refuge in the same self-infantilization when Erik tries to bring her out of mystification to reality, telling her the ballad has beglamoured her: “Ich bin ein Kind, und weiss nichts, was ich singe.” “I am a child, and know not what I sing.”

Although they are usually contrasted to the trivial lovers of the chorus, the Dutchman and Senta differ from them only in their mythification—or mystification—of the economic transaction of marriage. Their language is higher, more rarefied; the chorus dismisses it as alien, mad, or ridiculous. (Senta’s father understands it better as the exaltation of the moment, when he leaves the moonstruck lovers alone together.) But just like the helmsman whose song opens Act One, the Dutchman is wind-driven in pursuit of wealth, with the (unrealizable) intention of converting this wealth into domestic bliss and ultimate stability. And Senta, though she decries the banality of the spinners’ song, is, just as they are, singing for a Seemann. The difference is only of style. As Nietzsche noted, “All of Wagner’s heroines, without exception, as soon as they are stripped of their heroic skin, become almost indistinguishable from Madame Bovary!” ([1888] 1967, 176). Like Emma, Senta seeks a real-life counterpart to the hero of her imaginings, and, like Emma’s, Senta’s imaginings are less romantic than appears at first glance.

Carolyn Abbate offers a subtle discussion of “the myth of intrusion” in Romantic opera (1991). In a series of libretti so numerous as to constitute an operatic subgenre, a supernatural being irrupts into the everyday world of the characters. As a metanarrative prelude to this upheaval, a strophic song with a refrain interrupts the operatic discourse. A character sings a ballad, and suddenly, music within music, we are drawn into a repetitive, archaic communicative space within which the larger narrative is miniaturized: a mise en abyme conferring inevitability on the coming events (1991, 85). In Marschner’s *Der Vampyr* (1828), for example, the heroine sings a song of a young woman lured to her end by a vampire; the living vampire enters the stage shortly thereafter. A threshold has been crossed from the numinous into the human. But just as the embedded narrative is contained within the main story, the demonic itself comes from within: it is a projection onto the other, not a genuine external force. According to Wagner’s stage directions, the Dutchman’s picture, presumably a woodcut from a cheap broadside ballad, has been there pinned on the wall of Senta’s house

all along. Furthermore, although her ballad spooks us into feeling that she has called him into action, we must remember that he is already on his way; her father Daland is bringing him home and the marriage bargain was already sealed in Act One. As Freud points out, the *unheimlich* is merely the revelation of the *heimlich* ([1919] 1958)

Abbate suggests that Senta's ballad acts as a distancing device, placing the Dutchman's story securely within the realm of fiction and incapacitating it; Erik's dream of Senta's encounter with the Dutchman is needed as a more local, literal invocation (1991, 85–94). But Wagner is at any rate drawing on a longstanding view of oral tradition that understands its repetitions and formal restrictions as having less a narcotic than an incantatory effect, giving poetry the power of making present and bringing to life, and in turn of lending the appearance of eternity to the moment. This, according to Eric Havelock, is the power Plato fears in mimesis (1963). Oral poetry creates the reality of a society's myths, the more so as it is an active process of appropriation and recomposition. For this reason, we see Senta actively recomposing the ballad, as Thomas Grey notes (79–83): her portion of authorship gives her an investment in the patriarchal order and maintains its life. Senta marvels at the “mighty magic” that compels her to save the Dutchman, but she has spun the spell herself. Her ballad is ideological mystification par excellence. Even the opera as it stands is ambivalent: although the plot denounces the power of music to mystify, the music does everything it knows to exploit that power. A young woman's rejection of her longstanding lover for the first rich old man brought forth by her father becomes both uncanny and inevitable in Wagner's music—as indeed such outcomes were in reality.

In Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, the pattern is bizarrely reduced. The heroine Solveig appears only to plight her love to Peer at the beginning, to be faithful to him during his fifty-years' absence, and instantly to redeem him upon his return. In Act Two we see her like Desdemona listening thirstily to Othello's adventures—except that Peer himself is out roistering among the trolls and it is his mother who retails Peer's youthful, largely fantastic escapades. Solveig falls in love with Peer because of the narrowness and boredom of her village life; she lives vicariously through his adventures during his long desertion of her, while he is off trading slaves and founding colonies. In Act Four, after Peer has been robbed and abandoned by an orientalist fantasy of a woman in Morocco, the scene shifts suddenly back to Norway, where we see Solveig at the door of her hut, spinning and singing: not a ballad now, but a song assuring Peer that she will wait and be faithful forever. An act later, a destroyed Peer returns at last after an encounter with the Button-Moulder, who assures him that his soul is so debased and troll-like that even his sins cannot buy him a place in Hell, so that he must be melted down and start over again. Stumbling through the forest, Peer hears a woman singing. He has come upon Solveig—still in the hut—and instantly she welcomes him back, declaring “You have made my life a beautiful song.” Refuting the Button-moulder, she assures him that his soul has been with her, “in my faith, in my hope, and in my

love.”<sup>3</sup> She calls herself his mother—from whom, of course, she has received Peer’s image into her keeping—and the play ends with his head in her lap as she sings a lullaby (with, to be sure, an off-stage threat from the Button-moulder). Here we have all the elements of Wellbery’s specular moment, complete with the mother as in this case a literal donor of identity. But it is significant that Solveig is seduced by an act of storytelling: Peer and his mother have been conarrating their reality throughout his childhood, and Peer, a village Faust nurtured on folktale rather than books of necromancy, is marked throughout the play by his inability to distinguish fantasy and reality—which indeed, in the extended world of capitalist adventure, merge all too easily. Peer provides Solveig with the matter of her song: his is the adventure story that keeps her entertained during fifty years spent spinning in a hut. (We could have a whole excursus here on Adorno’s views of mass culture.)

The Catalan Count Arnau presents the myth in its fullest form.<sup>4</sup> There is, in fact, a traditional ballad called “El Comte Arnau,” collected in 1843 in an industrializing mountain region, which describes the apparition of a dead nobleman to his widow. He questions her about her conduct after his death, and her responses reveal her fidelity to a series of contractual obligations relating to marriage, property, and salvation; she is managing the household and governing her daughters and her servants. Her questions to him, in turn, force him to reveal his breaches of contract in all of these domains, climaxing in the confession that he has been damned for failing to pay those same servants.

Legends collected in the same mountain region through the second half of the nineteenth century elaborate on the Count’s violence both to workers and to the local landscape. As I have argued elsewhere (Noyes 2000), it is clear that in their feudal fancy dress the Count Arnau stories are denouncing the abuses of contemporary capitalism, the more convincingly as the manufacturers themselves are speaking in this period of “industrial feudalism” as the social model that can keep the working class under control, while the most important among them are receiving titles from the crown for their services in building Spanish industry, becoming the Marquis of Comillas, the Count of Fígols, and so on.

The Catalanist intellectuals of the period jump on this ballad the moment it is published: more than fifty literary works on Arnau were created in the second half of the nineteenth century alone. In these works, the unpaid workers are largely forgotten: instead, the Count becomes a fighter of Moors, a founder of the Catalan nation, and, more crucially, a rapist of nuns. The convent was a key metaphor in the period for all the traditional modes of enclosure keeping from circulation the resources Spanish capitalism needed to prosper. Political actors ranging from bourgeois liberals to working-class anarchists to proto-fascists engaged in discursive and sometimes literal violence to church façades; they celebrated the imagery of rape and abduction

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<sup>3</sup> I am using the Watts translation (Ibsen [1867] 1970).

<sup>4</sup> See Noyes 2000 for a fuller account.



as liberating all that had been held back from use by the Church or tradition (Noyes 1995).

The Arnau myth clearly equates the mountain landscape, the labor of workers, the bodies of women, and oral tradition as resources for national development. But in a context of vigorous and disruptive labor movements, the working class had to be conciliated as well as exploited. The literary versions of the myth engage in various narrative maneuvers to soothe the vengeful violated nun into the reassuringly specular role of the faithful wife. But this work could not remain enclosed in print that would be read only by the anxious bourgeoisie. By the turn of the century, nationalist literati expressed an urgent desire to “whiten the song” of Arnau in the mouths of the working class (Maragall [1900–1911] 1974, 45).

In 1900 one such attempt was inaugurated, when the composer Felip Pedrell wrote to Joan Maragall, the leading modernista poet of Catalonia, proposing that Maragall’s long Arnau poem be adapted into an opera.<sup>5</sup> This would be the centerpiece of a Wagnerian “Festival of the Art of the Fatherland” to be held in the bullring of Barcelona, thus displacing that violent “foreign” entertainment by a ritual for the production of Catalan communal identity across class boundaries. Class reconciliation within the nationalist framework was clearly on the mind of the composer. “How can we return to the people what has come from them?” he asks the poet (Terry 1959–1960, 40). He proposes a key change in the libretto. Maragall’s count is redeemed, as per formula, by his wife:

Sing, wife, spin and sing,  
for you make my suffering light!  
When the wife sings and spins,  
the household sleeps in peace.

Pedrell takes this stanza for the choral finale of the opera, with crucial changes:

Sing, o people, sing and pray  
When the people sing and pray  
Then the household sleeps in peace.

Singing, spinning, praying textile workers will redeem the capitalist.

But in the event, they don’t: labor conflicts in Catalonia would remain endemic, with violence on both sides reaching maximum ferocity with the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. More immediately, the opera doesn’t come off. The funding for the performance never comes together, in large part because the entrepreneurs of the bullring doubt that the textile workers necessary to fill the seats will actually turn up.

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<sup>5</sup> Excerpts from Maragall’s version are taken from Maragall (1900–1911) 1974.

One can also wonder whether Maragall was convinced by Pedrell's recasting of the myth. After their failed attempt at choral ventriloquism, Maragall produces a final section of his long Arnau poem in 1911: this comes also after the savagely repressed general strike of the Tragic Week of 1909, during which the Catholic poet exhibited a certain appreciation of anarchist church burnings. The new poem's conclusion presents yet another female singer, but her uncertain status suggests the extreme instability of redemption through specular song. Like an emblem of folklore itself, she first appears as a young shepherdess in a fertile landscape, but ends up sucked dry, almost the singing bone.

TABLE 7.5

<p>És una veu encara viva. No ve del cel, ni ve dels llimbs:</p> <p>ve de la terra, tan festiva, amb verd als camps i amb sol als cims.</p> <p>En un pendís de la muntanya hi ha una pastora de l'ull blau que, tot cantant la cançó estranya, se'l va estimant, el comte Arnau.</p> <p>Un campanar sona en l'altura les gents se mouen pels sembrats; esquellejant salta i pastura l'escampadissa dels ramats...</p> <p>I la pastora enamorada canta que canta la cançó; li ha mudat tota la tonada i ha redimit el pecador. Que des de que ella l'ha cantada amb altra veu, amb altre acord, ja no hi ha ànima damnada...</p> <p>La cançó ha mort, la cançó ha mort. Seguiu el pla, seguiu la serra, vila i poblat, per on vulgueu; la cançó és fora de la terra i ja mai més la sentireu. Alguns diran que la sentiren; altres ni en tenen cap record; quins l'oblidaren, quins ni l'oïren...</p> <p>La cançó ha mort, la cançó ha mort. Jo, d'una vella ja afollada pel pes dels anys, la vaig sentir ja sense to, a glops, trencada. I aquella vella es va morir. Cantant, cantant nasqué la infamia, i descantant, la redempció: el comte l'Arnau tenia l'ànima a la mercè d'una cançó. Lo que la mort tanca i captiva, sols per la vida és deslliurat: basta una noia amb la veu viva per redimir la humanitat.</p>	<p>It is a voice still living. It comes not from heaven, nor from below: it comes from the earth, so festive, with green in the fields and sun on the summits.</p> <p>On a slope of the mountain there's a blue-eyed shepherdess who, while singing that strange song, goes falling in love with him, Count Arnau.</p> <p>A belltower sounds on high; the people move across the seeded fields; the scattering of the flocks jumps and feeds, bells ringing...</p> <p>And the shepherdess in love sings and sings the song she's changed all the melody and has redeemed the sinner. For since she has sung it with a new voice, with a new concord, now there is no more damned soul...</p> <p>The song is dead, the song is dead. Follow the plain, follow the mountain, town and hamlet, wherever you like: the song is out of the land and never again will you hear it. Some will say they heard it once, Others don't even remember it; the ones who've forgotten, the ones who never heard it...</p> <p>The song is dead, the song is dead. I, from an old woman already maddened from the weight of years, heard it with no tone left, in gulps, broken...</p> <p>And that old woman died. Singing, singing, infamy was born, and descanting, redemption. Count Arnau had his soul at the mercy of a song. What death shuts up and captures, can be delivered by life alone. A girl with a living voice is enough to redeem humanity.</p>
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From “La fi del Comte Arnau,” Joan Maragall, 1911. Ellipses are the poet’s.

A written poem, a dead song on the page, will not redeem the bourgeoisie: they need the living voice, the descanting, the recomposition: they must take the risk of allowing the folk to speak if they hope to find their image there. So they have to leave just enough flesh on the bones to keep them singing—and they have to make the repetitiveness of industrial labor endurable with the variation of culture.

But it should now be clear that this is not simple opium for the masses. Immanuel Wallerstein pointed out that industrial production does not, as was once thought, promote full proletarianization of workers (1983). On the contrary, it is more profitable to leave certain kinds of labor uncommodified. Adult male workers can be paid lower wages for the work of production if the work of reproduction is carried on by unpaid women, children, and the elderly; the plot of garden for the worker’s use in the Catalan industrial colonies used the worker’s own labor to replace a full subsistence wage.

By the same token, neither does complete cultural commodification work to the bourgeoisie’s advantage. Adorno’s phantasmagoria, the cultural product that conceals the process of its production ([1952] 2005), is less effective as an instrument of hegemony than the oral tradition of an earlier dispensation. The evident labor of women singing, not under compulsion but out of love, in wearing down the rough contours of violent men, offers a promise to both sides: that someday the Dutchman will come home for good and the household will at last sleep in peace.

## Author’s Note

There are (at least) two gaping holes in this paper: I have not carried out the most important part of the task. As in the previous chapter, I am interested in reconstructing the intimate exchanges that produced not just the category but the stuff we know as folklore. And as in the previous chapter, I feel it is worth putting forward an incomplete argument for the time being in order to broaden the field’s scope of inquiry. When we make our habitual gesture to the origins of folklore research in the rise of nationalism, we take certain actors at their word and fail to attend to the larger social situation that makes a nationalist discourse opportune. The left-wing genealogy usually brought in as corrective, connecting folklore’s self-consciousness to worker and liberation movements, is helpful but partial. Bauman and Briggs, in their magisterial *Voices of Modernity* (2003), have gone deeper to locate the linguistic ideology of modernity and its need to constitute the psychic field on which it will conduct its operations of improvement. But they are primarily concerned with philosophers and scholars. In contrast, most American folklorists have been less attentive to literary history and what it can tell us about the bourgeois imaginaries that sought simultaneously to engage with and to define the folk.<sup>6</sup> There was more to the desires and anxieties driving this movement

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<sup>6</sup> The works of Robert Cantwell constitute one exception (e.g., 1993, 1996); see also Stallybrass

than simple nostalgia for an imagined communal past. My account of the “political unconscious” (Jameson 1981) of the turn to folksong, therefore, will be largely familiar to literary scholars but will, I hope, help folklorists toward a thicker genealogy of their practice.

The holes may or may not be fillable and will at any rate take long sifting and serendipity to uncover relevant evidence. I have described a bourgeois mythology that seems cumulative and quite consistent across various countries of Western Europe, but I have not traced its circulation from text to text. A massive project, it is certainly a possible one as regards the literary and operatic manifestations. The crucible of the nineteenth-century Parisian stage would have to be one focus of any study of international narrative exchange and accommodation, and more local connections are also easily found: for example, the industrial class of Barcelona was famously mad about Wagner, and Maragall even translated Goethe and Nietzsche. Folklore’s “Finnish method” is perhaps more useful and at any rate more practicable for the study of bourgeois motifs and tale-types than for the more evanescent utterances of rural and working people.

But I return to the intimacy of folk and folklorist. More interesting to us than the myth’s literary transmission, unknown to literary scholars, and, alas, much harder to capture is the evidence that the bourgeois myth is not autonomous. Rather, it evolved in tandem with or was even responding to worker expression. The literary treatments of Count Arnau draw on and revise texts from oral tradition in a way that suggests that bourgeois literati are reacting to a plebeian critique of industrial transformation. This critique is certainly fragmented and encoded, both consciously and unconsciously, for deniability, but is still accessible in shared social space and interpretable by its targets (cf. Scott 1992). In most cases, the literary response is defensive, although at least one troubled poet of humble background appropriates the critique in his own struggles with an industrialist patron (Noyes 2000). Surely many of the folksongs captured in literary texts ranging from the medieval *pastourelle* to Faust point back to covert dialogues with other local traditions of complaint and protest? Whether such dialogues are recoverable will depend on the contingencies of documentation and will require a broad linguistic and bibliographic sweep across Europe and its colonies.<sup>7</sup>

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and White 1986 for a celebrated study of the English bourgeois imaginary with many implications for folklore studies.

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## 8. Festival Pasts and Futures in Catalonia<sup>(8)</sup>

### Participation and Coordination

In a gesture to Catalan nationalism, every guidebook to Barcelona will send you to the Plaça Sant Jaume on Sunday morning to see the sardana, the national dance, in front of the old palace of the Generalitat, the Catalan government. You are instructed to observe the opening of the ring to admit all comers, young and old, known and unknown. The newcomers take up the nearest hands on either side and join the dance, an energetic “pointing” of feet to the rhythms of a cobla, a dark-voiced but strident wind band. The best primers add that the dance was persecuted under the Franco regime, that the sober footwork bespeaks a classical spirit of order and good sense derived from the first Greek settlers, that the expansive ring indicates commitment to equality and openness and that the intricacy of its timekeeping marks the national aptitude for business: “Catalans count even when they’re dancing,” as the saying goes.

No tradition has been as thoroughly mythologized as the sardana. Nationalist youth today are likely to wince at the mention of it and direct the outsider’s attention rather to the castells, intricate human towers erected with dizzying speed. Both traditions were invoked in the opening ceremonies of the 1992 Olympic Games. If the sardana was made an emblem of Catalan tenacity from the nineteenth-century *Renaixença* through the post-Franco Transition, the castell, drawn historically not from Old Catalonia but from the southern towns of New Catalonia, became from the 1980s forward a sign of the nation’s power to renew itself.

Both forms had less idealistic beginnings in the dances held as diversions and occasions for courtship during *festes majors*, the “big” festivals held annually by every town and village in honor of its respective patron saint. Each form split off in the late eighteenth century from a dance of which it was the final, fastest, and most aggressive figure, becoming a vehicle for male display. The young men of the town of Valls in the Alt Camp, inland from Tarragona, became known for their increasingly daring reworkings of the athletic conclusion to the so-called Dance of the Valencians. They invented “pillars” of single men stacked up on one another’s shoulders, “towers” with

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<sup>(8)</sup> Reprinted by permission of Boydell & Brewer Ltd. Originally published as “Festival and the Shaping of Catalan Community,” in *A Companion to Catalan Culture*, ed. Dominic Keown. Woodbridge. (Suffolk: Tamesis Press, 2011), 207–228.



two men holding hands in each layer, and “castles” of three or four interlocked. As they rose skywards younger and lighter boys scrambled up and folded inward until finally a single small child stood up at the top. The whole edifice was supported by a *pinya*, an intricately ordered “pinecone” of men on the ground, hands to backs, dissolving ultimately into the pressure of the surrounding crowd. By the mid-nineteenth century, small crews of men toured the summer festivals to make money, spreading knowledge of the practice. Soon these *colles* developed more explicit affiliations with specific towns or factions within them and began competing among themselves to erect the most elaborate formations, often through the full course of a summer festival season.<sup>1</sup>

The North had instead the *sardana*, a fast finale to the sober *contrapàs* danced in the *Empordà*, the northeasternmost counties bordering France and the Mediterranean. In the middle of the nineteenth century the *sardana* broke off and became a fashion: it was popular with young men, who vied to control the ring’s movements, and also offered an arena of distinction for ambitious local musicians, who incorporated cosmopolitan elements from opera, military bands and French salon balls into new compositions for the dancers.<sup>2</sup> Initially associated with liberal politics, the *sardana* extended and intensified its popularity through the century just as a more conservative cultural revival was building steam in that same northeastern region. Accordingly, Catholic Catalanist writers reconstructed this modern craze as an ancestral peasant ritual. The *sardana* could easily be assimilated to bourgeois disciplines of the body and generalized in participation, as the *castells* in that period could not. Once tamed and codified, the *sardana* encouraged the presence of women and the upper classes. Its structure lent itself to calculation, its movements to formalization. The dance became the standard participatory component of Catalanist public ceremony, embodying the inclusion and the consent of the people.

In their different fashions, *sardanes* and *castells* distill the general challenge of collective life: participation and coordination. Festival, with dance at its heart, is distinctive as a cultural form because there is no divide between the representation, its subject, and its author. It is an operation upon the body, conferring a position and a stance, instilling gestures in memory, teaching individuals both their place and their room for maneuver. A festival is beneath all else a configuration of co-present bodies, whose mutual orientation is alone sufficient to frame off festival time and space from the everyday surround.

Contemporary cosmopolitans imagine traditional festival as a space of relaxation and voluntary coming together as a community. Catalans, with their conflictive history, know better. Festival is a labor and participation is obligatory: a small culture cannot sustain itself through the quiet identification of individuals in private space. There is no *sardana* until dancers step forward.

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 9 for a fuller account.

<sup>2</sup> This early history is reconstructed in Ayats ed. 2006.

The castell requires much wider, diverse participation: the *anxaneta* at the top (who today is usually a young girl) must be supported by physiques of all dimensions in the lower stories, with burly men at the base. But the *pinya* does not end at the boundaries of the *colla*: they must be supported in turn by the crowd around them if the castle is to stay up. Passive spectatorship is not an option. Indeed, *fer pinya* is a basic idiom of unity in diversity: a community makes a pinecone around a crisis or a person in need, while its members remain distinct, sticky, and prickly. The castell dramatizes the challenge of this coordination. Participants must be minutely sensitive not only to their interlocking positions but to one another's breathing and slightest shifts in body weight if a difficult castell is to be raised; its dismounting must be managed with equal care and mutual attention to avoid serious hurt. It is pedagogy in the possibility and the fragility of social formations.

## Qui perd els orígens...

In the late 1960s, Catalanist intellectuals in search of the primitive betook themselves to the Pyrenees to see the descent of the *falles*: huge torches rolled from mountain grasses, lit with pitch, and paraded down from multiple mountainsides to the village of Isil in the Pallars Sobirà. They went to Centelles in Osona, where at the end of December a giant pine tree is cut in the woods and borne into the church to be hung upside down before the altar. They went to Berga, where the vine-laden, firecracker-wearing horned devils of the *Patum* set themselves alight in what Xavier Fàbregas tellingly described as “a happening straight from prehistory” (Fàbregas and Barceló 1976, 153).

For the young of the period, St. John's Eve on June 23rd became the key national festival. Activists ran torches down from the peak of Mount Canigó, on the French side of the border, to towns all over Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands to articulate the primordial unity of the Catalan-speaking regions. The traditional bonfires of Sant Joan promised a resurgence of all the sexual and political energies repressed by Franco's regime, and were described accordingly as a survival of summer solstice rites of fertility. The more immediate and, in those days, unspeakable significance of fire was its communicability and resistance to containment.<sup>3</sup>

Why should these nineteenth-century anthropological fantasies acquire such sudden currency among sophisticated Barcelonese and the university-educated young? In fact, we can do little more than speculate about pre-Christian ritual in the Pyrenees. But origins are always a metaphor. Community members—and not only in Catalonia—will often tell you that their festival is primitive, ancestral, “in the blood.” They talk of it as deep in history because it is deep in biography. Catalan infants are danced on their fathers' backs as the giants are paraded through the streets on the first day of a festival, taken to touch the hand of the giantess as she is resting in the *plaça* afterward, given

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<sup>3</sup> The following discussion draws on Noyes 2003a, chapters 6 to 8.

an exploded firecracker to handle after Sant Joan. They learn how to dance like the bigheaded dwarves while they are still mastering the art of walking. They grow up inside the festival. It is never experienced as a first time, always as a recurrence.

In the 1960s, this capacity to create shared bodily experience made festival a primary vehicle of civic pedagogy in a context of censorship, bilingualism, political division, and social mistrust. For the activists of the period, festival had to be prehistoric so that it would precede all divisive names, all languages, all political formations. Catalan festivals were not of a single tendency but for everyone; so too then, could Catalonia be despite its deep history of civil war, class violence, and immigration. The value of vagueness and ambiguity persist in the present, for neither recent history nor present diversity are comfortable topics for communal discussion.

The 1960s activists were reacting to earlier formulations. The conservative Catalanism of the turn of the twentieth century generated an elaborate legendry of how various festivals were instituted during the high Middle Ages, supposedly commemorating royal largesse and military victories and tragic love affairs. It is not coincidental that this was a period in which Catalonia was the economic and political heart of an independent imperial power, the Kingdom of Aragon. But the Middle Ages were useful for other reasons too. As part of the paternalism christened “industrial feudalism” by Enric Prat de la Riba, worker families attached to particular factories and mines were encouraged to participate in folk performances that were explained as age-old survivals of popular medieval tributes of affection to their local lord. The proprietor of a given industrial colony typically possessed a neo-medieval castle on a hill above the somewhat less impressive worker housing, and in many cases had been given a title of nobility by the Crown for his services to Spanish industry. The performances in question were often dressed-up versions of the same matter-of-fact social dances from which the sardana emerged (Noyes 2000).

Origin narratives and explicit festival interpretation were also used to create political cover for risky performances. Suspicious bishops, civil governors, Catalanist leaders, potential tourists and other important outsiders were provided from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the Franco regime with a series of audience-appropriate allegories to account for the mysterious wordless danced combats of the Patum of Berga. One says what is necessary for the festival to be permitted to continue, and multiple explanations persist for any festival of a certain historicity.

“Qui perd els orígens perd la identitat” intoned the great protest singer Raimon in the 1960s, quoting the poet Salvador Espriu; since the Transition Raimon has been quoted in turn by conceivably every Catalan mayor who has ever composed a festival welcome. Who loses origins loses identity. It is taken for granted by all sides that this matters. The division of opinion about festival origins expresses an enduring ambivalence about the communal past. It is sought as a documented, legitimate, and recognized possession but also stored in the inarticulate body, knowledge “in the blood.”

# History

Although a comprehensive history of Catalan festivals remains to be written, we can say something of the mixed social, economic, political and, of course, religious and ludic factors that brought them into being. For the Middle Ages we know primarily about court, church, and urban celebrations. These sometimes incorporated earlier ritual practices, but popular observances also emerged in contestation with institutional celebrations in a noisy dialogue that has continued to the present.

The best-known early Catalan festivals are the elaborate Corpus Christi celebrations that began in the early fourteenth century. Initially declarations of theological orthodoxy, they quickly became occasions for competitive civic display. The Corpus Mysticum, the mystical body of which Christ was the head, articulated itself in a great procession of the consecrated Host. The various corporations and elements of the local community lined up in a much-contested hierarchical order of proximity to the Sacrament. This assembly of Christ's kingdom on Earth was complemented by representations of allegorical figures or tableaux of Biblical figures, saints, and all the company of heaven.

Interactions among the theological program, guild energies, and courtly and plebeian traditions to assemble the procession produced the characteristic Catalan festival vocabulary of *entremesos* or interludes, today more commonly called *comparses* or troupes of performers. This label encompasses masked dances, mimed combats, and large mobile figures of humans and animals, molded from reinforced plaster over wooden frames (today often replaced by lightweight fiberglass) with one or more carriers underneath. Some performances were supported by music, while others called upon noisemakers and pyrotechnia of various kinds to attract attention.

The most popular *comparses* persisted alongside the procession or relocated themselves to the *festa major* in many Catalan towns. A full ensemble of them can be seen today in the *Patum*, a celebration that gradually detached itself from the procession in the city of Berga to become an autonomous series of dances: a combat of Turks and Christians; one of angels and devils; the *guites*, a pair of aggressive, long-necked mules; the elegant crowned eagle; majestic giants and the dwarves that joined them in the nineteenth century as emblems of middle-class emulation; and the *plens* or "full devils," a fierce final dance of devils laden with slow-burning firecrackers.

During the Counter Reformation, the Church suppressed as many of these representations as it could and promoted new cults and confraternities to foster popular devotion. Many pilgrimages to local sanctuaries date from this period, as does the *Festa del Roser*, the devotion to the rosary brought by migrants from Languedoc to become deeply rooted in much of the countryside. In the same period, as plebeian communal customs became more assertive, the aristocracy and merchant bourgeoisie of the cities began to distance themselves from the intimacies of collective performance. This "retreat to the balcony" intensified an emerging identification between festival, the street, and the common people (Amelang 1986, 195).

In the modern period urban festival became increasingly plural and commercial.<sup>4</sup> Nineteenth-century elites celebrated Carnival at private balls held in theatres, while working people had dancehalls such as Barcelona's notorious La Patacada. More institutionalized sociability took shape with the liberal regime of 1833 and the growth of industrialization. The middle and upper classes founded intellectual "atheneaeums" and ludic "casinos," divided along political lines. Workers' atheneaeums and mutual aid societies, many allied to labor unions, others born in conservative reaction, pursued recreational, educational, and social agendas. Best known for their musical activities, the popular choirs founded by Anselm Clavé joined with the neighborhood shopkeepers of the Societat del Born in 1858 to revive Carnival in Barcelona as a street event, which soon had more than one hundred competing costume balls, a massively attended parade and a strong, though regulated, satirical component.

Until late in the century, social formations and competition rather than traditional performance genres were the focus of attention at festivals. The state began to join the Church in providing occasions. Military and political victories; coronations and royal births; and local triumphs such as the electrification of a town, the construction of an industrial canal or the canonical coronation of a local religious image all called for celebration. Neighborhood associations, which had replaced guilds as primary mobilizers, raised money to rival one another in elaborate street decorations of branches, hangings, arches and lights.

As the conflicts between liberals and traditionalists at mid-century modulated into the acute class tensions that held sway from the 1874 Restoration through the Civil War, festival became increasingly bifurcated into paternalist folklore and ritualized riot. The new fortunes of the Restoration put money into celebratory display events, expressions of an emerging Catalanist sensibility as the need to incorporate the new proletariat into the national project fostered renewed attention to popular forms of celebration. In 1902, Francesc Cambó's bourgeois Lliga party reconstructed Barcelona's patronal Festa de la Mercè as a Catalan national holiday. Giants were invited from all over the region to a massive gathering, the sardana was propounded as a symbol of national brotherhood and the first formal competition of castells was held. Local tradition was henceforth definitively conscripted into the national service. However contestatory, urban, or outright radical they might be, popular observances were also appropriated by municipal governments and the employer class. They were re-clothed as Catalan, medieval and/or rural in origin, and respectful of hierarchy: in short, as folklore.

New ceremonial elements, dances and dramas, and festival figures—particularly the giants and dwarves that gave compelling visual testimony to supposedly natural class distinctions—enriched festes majors everywhere. Teachers organized folk dance groups; literati fabricated poetic local legends or composed paeans to Catalan festival

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<sup>4</sup> An excellent collection of histories from the nineteenth century through the end of the Franco regime can be found in Capdevila and Garcia Larios eds. 1997.

as a spiritual contrast to the brutality of the Spanish bullfight. Social conflict spelled itself out in ritual spaces. Anarchists attacked the Corpus Christi procession and the bourgeois temple of the Liceu, Barcelona's opera house. Popular revolt of many stripes expressed itself in the burning of churches and the profanation of images and relics. The powerful ritual dimension of the Tragic Week of 1909 was recognized by the bourgeois Joan Maragall, who saw the church burners as restoring the sacred to circulation after its long stagnation in institutional enclosures.

Such explicit politicization continued. Primo de Rivera, the dictator of the 1920s, outlawed the sardana. Under the leftwing Second Republic and during the war, town halls privileged the conspicuously plebeian elements of Corpus Christi and the festa major while condemning the clerical and "feudal" ones. The crowns of giants were replaced with workers' caps. Purely religious festivals were often suppressed, while the worker liturgies of May Day and republican anniversaries were made official.

After his victory, Franco immediately Castilianized and re-Catholicized festival. Names were translated into Spanish and new origins were invoked. Traditional religious festivals were inflected with the heavy ceremonial of national-Catholicism, including outdoor masses and military parades. Carnival was banned outright or made unrecognizable: in 1939, a month after the republican defeat, Igualada's carnival was celebrated with special daily masses and the town's patron saint was observed to have been martyred by "the antecedents of the present hordes Without God or Country" (Torelló 1999, 8).

Festivals became an occasion to rub the nose of the defeated in the new order. New Catholic observances were promoted and a massive Eucharistic Congress was held in Barcelona in 1952, designed as a cautious re-opening of Spain towards the world in its new self-conception as the repository of traditional religious values, at the same time discreetly showing off Barcelona's potential for industrial investment. While fear and self-interest spurred much submission to state-sponsored Catholic devotion, popular religiosity also burgeoned for a variety of reasons. Many Catholics had experienced persecution during the Republic, not least with the widespread assassination of priests. The trauma of the war had to be processed. Furthermore, in a period when autonomous initiatives were repressed and gatherings of more than a handful of people had to be authorized by the Civil Governor, the Church provided a sheltering institution for collective assembly and sociability. As early as 1940, church events might make limited use of the Catalan language; they could find funding from local employers, and they could draw upon symbols shared by clergy and nationalists.

Thus the 1947 Enthronement of the Virgin of Montserrat was attended by 70,000 people. The formation of the organizing commission allowed the establishment of a network across Catalonia in a period when no other organizational expression was permitted to the region. The Catalan flag and language were present. Not surprisingly, the Virolai sung to the Mother of God became from that moment a substitute for the outlawed national anthem "Els Segadors" (Marfany 1997, 45).

Festes majors—or, as they were now called, fiestas mayores—did not recover immediately. Town halls struggled to find enough able-bodied men for the various comparses, despite the usual payment of a pair of espadrilles, a good dinner, and occasionally cash; by the 1950s participation was often encouraged with prizes and plaques. Depressed, hungry, fearful of repression, suspicious of their neighbours, reluctant to celebrate the glories of the regime and increasingly finding escape in commercial mass culture, many Catalans were not eager for communal celebration. The regime, however, needed displays of collective submission and contentment. Local authorities promoted the beauty, harmony, and morality of traditional festival against degenerate exotic modernity. In the 1950s, competitions of giants were organized and a new designation of Fiesta de Interés Turístico was invented for those celebrations judged most traditional, distinctive, and aesthetically impressive, capable of amusing the hordes of foreigners now being invited to descend upon the beaches of the Costa Brava. Economically and politically, it was necessary for Catalans to perform the new official tourist slogan, “España es diferente.”

In the late 1960s, the young discovered traditional festival as a channel for their energies that offered at once a release for the body, a recovery of the indigenous, and a safely ambiguous form of political expression. They had been socialized under three dispensations: the regime schooling that separated the sexes and condemned the body; the clandestine Catalanist education that took place in scout troops, church groups, and private university-prep academies; and the proximity of Europe’s political agitations and sexual revolution, visible on the beaches of the Costa Brava and across the border in Perpignan. Singing full-voiced in choirs, dancing the burning devils, and extreme mountaineering all provided kinetic release from the regime’s frustrations, an expiation of felt historical cowardice through risk-taking, and most importantly an apprenticeship in cooperation.

The double meanings of festival symbolism were exploited and the transgressive potential of gestures pushed to its limits. Participation increased dramatically: bourgeois youth came down from the balconies, women concealed their difference inside the devils’ suits, and the square became crowded. Artists took inspiration from traditional forms. In the 1970s, rock musicians drew on festival music and theatre groups like Els Comediants constructed their happenings out of the giants, dragons, and devils of local tradition. Fireworks grew more intense, dances faster and more physical, drinking heavier. The primitive energies of festival were sought to shunt off alienation and to build collective strength. The most participatory festivals, such as the Patum of Berga, began to attract attendance from all over Catalonia, becoming spaces of rehearsal for the massive street demonstrations in Barcelona.

Most who were young at the time remember the Transition less for specific acts of political contestation than for “the public occupation of the street, cultural effervescence, sexual tolerance, the appearance of a series of leisure spaces, the everyday practice of newfound liberty” (Feixa 2003, 28). The Transition was itself a festival. After the passing of the Constitution and a Catalan Statute of Autonomy and restoration

of all elections in 1979, however, the routinization of this democratic charisma posed a challenge. A dramatic rise in drug and alcohol abuse fostered a distancing from collective expression for many. Some of the most dedicated Transition activists rued instead their own “addiction” to political agitation, now counterproductive given the real need for mundane institution-building to sustain convivència, the everyday coexistence of former enemies and present rivals.

Out in the counties, however, a critical mass of young people kept their focus on traditional festival as a key medium to fer país, to build Catalonia. They found support from municipal governments seeing a low-cost avenue to popularity, small business-owners seeking to maintain the viability of their high street, the cultural foundations of the savings banks, and the new Department of Culture of the Generalitat, eager to create public cultural forms that would appeal to immigrants and foster national identification. Voluntary associations to support local festivals were created in cities like Tarragona, Reus, and Manresa in the early 1980s. Neighborhood associations were also important creators of festival, striving to revitalize the old quarters where apartments had been abandoned or ceded to new immigrants.

Activists delved through town archives to see what kinds of festivals their community had had in the past. The “recuperation” of scantily documented dances, bestiary, and entire festivals necessitated much imaginative reconstruction and in fact outright invention. Throughout Catalonia, fire festivals were inspired by traditional models, but the centripetal festival of the plaça gave way to the correfoc, a “run-through-the-fire” that filled the streets with devils and pyrotechnical constructions, ever more spectacular and at ever closer range.

## Order and Transgression

The tension of order and energy is basic to all festival: a community requires both to prosper, but the balance between them is ever tenuous. Jaume Vicens Vives’ famous description of the Catalan character as oscillating between seny i rauxa (level-headedness and rage) finds an echo in festival’s distillation of social relations. Repetitive dances with prescribed movements in a delineated space often alternate with salts, the riotous disruptions effected by masked figures and effigies laden with pyrotechnia.

Typically a clear equation is made between style and status. Festival giants move with bourgeois decorum, while the mulassa, the mule associated with its human fellow-laborers, crazily transgresses both metrical and spatial boundaries. The fine clothes and clear identities of the giants stand above the crowd, echoing those of the “people of order” in the balconies around them. Below in the square, the comparses and the common people intermingle in a sweaty smoky mass of motion. Festivals of inclusion such as the festa major and Corpus Christi offer multiple points of entry to accommodate the variety of social actors in the community. Some align themselves with the dwarves, some with the devils, some with the eagle.



There is an inherent dynamic of dissolution in the gathering of a crowd under a rhythmic discipline. It is encapsulated in the structure of the dances, which begin in a slow waltz, turn to a faster duple metre, and end in a rapid spin that leaves the dancers dizzy. Festival's techniques of the body—crowding, drinking, sleep deprivation, constant motion, strong rhythms, loud noise, and the smoke and confusion of firecrackers at close range—gradually disable the critical faculties associated with the upper body and release the energies of the lower one. Festivals fold inwards from representation to vertigo.

The festival calendar, nonetheless, retains two ideal types, popularly represented in the polarity of Corpus Christi and Carnival (Marfany 1997, 45). From its institution in the fourteenth century, the Corpus procession strove to incarnate the fullness and the clarity of the divine order. Still in the nineteenth, it embodied this order and its exclusions, becoming a focus of an anarchist attack in 1896. At the same time, the procession also attracted the aspiring classes, who imagined order as a principle of practice that would foster social mobility. Santiago Rusiñol in his 1907 novel *L'Auca del Senyor Esteve*, a wry epic of Barcelona's petty bourgeoisie, treats the procession as the sacral matrix of a fully ritualized life in which church and shop-front, rosary and account books echo one another.

The Franco regime reasserted the principle of the procession as hierarchical control. "The revolutionary masses were and meant nothing in the city," declared the new president of the Junta Provincial de Cultura at the reopening of Barcelona's Athenaeum in 1939. "The authentic and traditional Barcelona was that...which scattered flowering broom before the Sacrament during the Corpus Christi procession" (*Catalunya sota el règim franquista*, 1973, 1, 287). But the full Corpus celebration in communities such as Berga was manipulated, in mostly unspoken negotiation, to allow the expression of all three tendencies—submission, rebellion, and aspiration. Their delicate balance in the festival acknowledged their irreconcilable tension in everyday life.

Celebrated by some scholars as a fulcrum of individual freedom and by others as one of collective revolution, Carnival as practised in Catalonia has plausible connections with each. Carnival or *Carnestoltes* was almost wholly repressed by Franco as well as in other periods of social anxiety when the presence of maskers in the streets made power fearful of disorder—even during the 1993 outbreak of the first Gulf War. The political order is overturned on the first day by the entry of King *Carnestoltes*, who declares a new regime. At the other end of the celebration the sacred is made profane. Good Friday rituals are anticipated on the morning of Ash Wednesday by the burial of the King, surrounded by noisy female mourners, although the erect penis of the papier-mâché effigy promises resurrection.

Songs, parade floats in the street and a sermon, mock-trial, or the testament of the dead King criticize the year's misdeeds, with an emphasis on the abuses of the powerful. Costuming provides a more ambiguous blend of self-loss and self-expression. The traditional cross-dressing in which men took on grotesquely implausible feminine attributes often gave way historically to displays of wealth and sexuality that hardly

challenge the social order. In other cases cross-dressing allows the assertion of an identity long silenced, as in Sitges with its large gay community.

More recently, with sensitivities high as a result of both Islamist terrorism and a growing Muslim population, traditional festival play with figures of the Other has been called into question. The image of the Moor is ambiguous, for Moors are origin figures in many Catalan legends, their supposed dark skin associated with that of the local invocations of the Madonna, and especially the national patroness, the Black Virgin of Montserrat. The blackness represented in official interpretations as alien is often popularly understood as a mark of autochthony. In any case, the Moors and the devils in Catalan entremesos are typically appreciated—and performed—by community members with little sympathy for the established order of the moment. Carnival cross-dressing, however, is more topical and more realistic, invoking the Arab sheiks who buy property in Spain, Saddam Hussein or, more recently, Osama bin Laden.

These representations and more traditional ones such as the Moro Manani, whose giant head once vomited candy for children on Christmas day in Vilanova i la Geltrú, have become the object of social anxiety and frequent self-censorship. But concern over racist representations, while demonstrating new sensitivity to the position of immigrants, also marks a continuing social distance, for teasing is a strategy of intimacy and evidence that the butt of the joke is understood to belong to the community (Erickson 2008, 116). Overwhelmingly reclaimed in the democratic period, Carnival now forces Catalans to question themselves instead of challenging the regime.

The sharing of food and drink is common to the Catholic sacrament of the Eucharist, its civic transformation into Corpus Christi, and its travesty as Carnival. Festival drinking from shared glass porrons and wineskins incorporates individuals into the community by incorporating the community into individuals. Carnival shows up the device by bursting the boundaries of inside and outside. From Christmas through Carnival, the body is indulged for the coming privations of Lent. On New Year's Eve, the Man of the Noses runs through the streets distributing his three hundred and sixty five appendages; Carnival will extend the phallic intimations with endless obscene rearrangements of sausages and eggs, and these will return at Easter as less aggressive affirmations when the season of courtship begins. Sexual and social opponents become gradually indistinguishable in combats such as the flour war in Berga between male Carlists and female Liberals. The social world of Carnival is not sleek and defined, like that of the Corpus procession, but sticky with mud and excremental symbolism or with commodities that similarly bring fertility and collective wealth, such as the Cuban sugar that features in the Guerra Dolça (Sweet War) of Vilanova i la Geltrú.

Rites of collective immersion have recently invaded other festivals also. Water is often used when there is a traditional motive. The reenactment of the bringing of miraculous water to Tarragona by Sant Magí is followed in the evening by a revetlla remullada: a "soaked wake" in which participants inundate one another. In correfocs it is the thickness of falling sparks: burn marks and "sweaters more holes than sweater" become badges of honor. You have only to place yourself in harm's way to join the

fun, but a hierarchy of commitment nonetheless emerges. By the end of the event, the most active, the most loved, are the filthiest: steeped in community.

To be sure, not everyone is into the filth, and what today is valued as inclusion was often historically feared as contamination. The forms themselves are labile; they can be pushed or restrained by performers. Festival forms configure bodies into arrangements—advancing lines, tight masses, dispersed clusters, face-to-face confrontations—that suggest but do not determine social formations. Festival genres assemble bodies in space. Bodies work out the meanings of such assembly in time. The ever-present tension of order and disorder in festival is that of communities drawn together not from choice but from necessity.

## The Cosmopolitan and the Local

Festivals oscillate between the cosmopolitan and the local.<sup>5</sup> They have always provided occasions for exchange with the outside world, as prestigious metropolitan forms descend for a day or two upon a provincial town. As Catalonia has globalized, however, its festivals have become more dedicated to reconnecting residents with their place or telling outsiders its story. As elsewhere in the Catholic world, the mountain sanctuary and the town parish incarnate the tension between local devotions and the universal Church. In the town, the priest controlled access to the sacred. In the mountains, it belonged to the humblest. Throughout the country a story is told of a child who loses one of the cows he is herding on a mountainside. He finds it kneeling in front of a statue of the Mother of God and it refuses to move from its place at the mouth of a cave or a grotto or the foot of a tree, so that the authorities are forced to build a sanctuary around it (Christian 1981).

Individuals seek out the sanctuaries of local Madonnas—Núria, Vinyet, Tura, Queralt, and innumerable others—both for private reasons, such as seeking to have a child, and in community pilgrimages, typically celebrated on September 8th, the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, which is popularly known as the day of the “found Madonnas.”<sup>6</sup> In the past there was a procession from the parish church out to the sanctuary. Today it is more usual for hikers to make the climb for fun or for families to drive up with a picnic. After mass, the community sings the *goigs*, a long repetitive hymn to the patroness, while individuals circle up behind the altar to touch the statue’s hand and gaze in her eyes with no priest intervening. In the afternoon, after a longish interval of grilled sausages and wine on the grass, the ring of sound and pilgrims in the sanctuary is echoed by a ring of dancers outside. The dance takes hundreds of local variations, but until well into the twentieth century its purpose was always the same. Slow, with

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<sup>5</sup> This insight was elaborated by Magliocco in a study of contrasting festivals in a Sardinian town ([1993] 2005).

<sup>6</sup> In popular Catalan usage these are always called *la Mare de Déu*, the Mother of God—comparable to the popular Italian usage *Madonna*, my lady. *Virgin* appears in print and in clerical usage.

long opportunities for conversation between partners and for physical display, it has been described as “a machine for making marriages.”

In a more secular key, the dances of urban and seaside *festes majors* served the same purpose. There the scene was the *envelat*, a tent built on the seaside promenade or simply a rooftop of ribbons and paper flowers raised over the square. Both mountain gatherings and *festes majors* were occasions when young men travelled to neighbouring towns in search of mates, when summer people from Barcelona met local elites, when urban workers found one another, when the place and the people settled on it came together.

In the late nineteenth century, this coming together became the subject of national allegory. City people began to go to the mountains in search not just of mates but of the national soul, and mountain communities eager for urban tourists and industrial investors began to imagine origin narratives for their dances. After cafés and recorded music reached the villages, these festival dances might have been wholly folklorized had it not been for the Franco regime. The increased repression of contact between the sexes kept the mountain dances alive as occasions for contact, and the most recalcitrant priests delivered diatribes against the “yeast of Lucifer” that profaned the feasts of the Mother of God.

Of course sex was not the only festival currency; the literal kind was also exchanged. Town festivals attracted country buyers to their concurrent markets; conversely, urban vendors came to village festivals. Today immigrants sell both cheap mass-produced toys and exotic specialties such as Andean sweaters. The *festa major* also brought in metropolitan entertainments: the traveling cinema on a truck, the dance band, the theatrical troupe.

A further connection to the metropolis is made by inviting politicians and personalities to visit the *festa major*. The celebrity provides glamor and entertainment value, often serving as *pregoner*, the speaker who opens the festivities with a comic or nationalist invocation. The politician will, it is hoped, bring the water of patronage to dry local wells in exchange for a present homage that hints at votes in future. The hunger for metropolitan recognition and the less metaphorical hunger for jobs, investment, and tourism pushes local actors to seek ever more far-flung connections via their *festa major*, ranging from sister cities in foreign countries to UNESCO.

The festival giants that date from the nineteenth century are dressed as kings and queens. Their height, weight, hard-surfaced beauty, unresponsiveness and general uselessness make them a common metaphor for the upper classes and even the state. At the same time, giants provide a vein of erotic fantasy in relation to unattainable objects of desire and in the nineteenth century they served, not coincidentally, as emissaries of metropolitan fashion: the coiffure of the giantess announced the new mode for the summer.

With the restoration of municipal autonomy in 1979 the giants took on a new aspect, their importance as local possession outweighing their traditional symbolic associations. Their numbers exploded across Catalonia, with ten times as many in 1996 as in 1980

(Grau i Martí 1996, 7). Some new giants have been modelled on remembered local personalities of every social class: a journalist, a street vendor. Most often, new giants in rural communities are dressed as generic peasants and carry the tools of the town's former local industry. The related festivals often include demonstrations of the old skill—reaping and threshing, towing barges, or animal husbandry—maintaining local knowledge but also marking its archaism. The festival becomes a living archive.

Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, the center of Catalonia's sparkling wine industry, created a completely new festival creature in 1982 just as the export boom for cava was beginning to take off. Instead of a mule or a dragon, a local artist's group constructed a giant flaming insect, *la Fil.loxera*, to commemorate the phylloxera plague that ravaged the vineyards of Europe and ultimately transformed wine production in the late nineteenth century. More than that, they created an entire drama around the figure. Unlike traditional ensembles of comparses, in which references to local social relations are abundant but covert, and in which there is no explicit narrative thread, the series of dances in the *Festa de la Fil.loxera* constitutes a local historical drama, representing the creature's invasion, the damage to the vines, the intervention of the town fathers, and the defeat of the plague. The dance of the vines is an ingenious adaptation of the *salt de plens*, the flaming devils wreathed in greenery from the *Patum of Berga*. The vineyards of Sant Sadurní are represented through a dance of brown bigheads shaped like the knotted trunks of old vines, with green leaves sprouting from them and metal rods to support firecrackers. The pyrotechnia is justified as the unhealthy redness caused by the disease.

Like the long-established festivals, the “recovered” or newly created ones remain instruments for reproducing the local community and obtaining outside resources. By traditional standards, they are unusually expository, highly produced, and aesthetically impressive. Where once they dealt intensively, in coded ways, with such structural challenges as negotiating marriages, apportioning prestige, and criticizing deviance both high and low, today organizers concentrate on the representation of collective identities, hoping both to keep local people engaged and to create a distinctive brand for the town.

## The Order of Time

The scent of wild thyme wafts over the Carrer de l'Hospital in Barcelona's old quarter, normally dank with dust and old drains. The street is closed to traffic, filled with vendors of packaged herbs, caramels, and an impressive variety of honeys. Stands are piled high with aromatic scrub from the Catalan hillsides: rosemary, scratchy lavender, even gorse in hot yellow flower. On every 11th of May, the Fair of Sant Pons brings the surprise of the Mediterranean spring into the stone streets of the old city.

Old festivals are built upon seasonal transitions. This springtime shock of freshness and color meets its antithesis at the start of November with All Saints' Day, the

festival of the dead and the death of the year. The All Saints sensorium emphasizes desiccation, maturity, the brown and golden. The traditional foods are roast chestnuts, sweet potatoes, and panellets, cookies made from almonds and pinenuts, accompanied with oxidized *vi ranci*, allowed to dehydrate and concentrate as it ferments.

The festival calendar is structured around seasonal poles that shape conceptual polarities. St. John's Eve is the summer festival when everyone is outside: rural couples once went off into the meadows, urbanites go up on the roof to throw firecrackers at their neighbours, and the domestic detritus of the year is expelled from the house and burned off in a grand public bonfire. It is countered by Christmas, the festival of ingathering, when the shepherds come down the mountainsides to the parish church and the woods are brought into the house with the *tió*, the Yule log. The log is domesticated and gradually converted from nature to culture.

Decorated with a face and limbs like a kind of animal, the *tió* is fed by the children, who stuff straw or dry locust pods and water into its hollow. On Christmas Eve, the feeding pays off: they beat it with a stick and sing, demanding that it "shit nougats and white wine." Accordingly there emerge from beneath the log the delicious almond torrons of Christmas, bottles of cava, and presents for the children. But the *tió* must also excrete something properly pungent: a salted herring, garlic, coals, or suspiciously shaped dark brown sweets.

This is not the only scatological feature of the Catalan Christmas. As elsewhere in Catholic Europe, the fabrication of elaborate manger scenes is a popular hobby and the hobbyist's attention centres on the surrounding village and landscape. But the viewer is always looking for one figurine hidden in the crowded tableau: the *caganer*. Traditionally a squatting peasant with a stereotypical red knit cap, smoking a pipe with his trousers lowered in the act of defecation, the *caganer* has taken on in the democratic period an infinite number of more topical identities, the latest versions of which can be found every December 13th at the Fair of Santa Llúcia in front of Barcelona's cathedral.

Catalan politicians and public figures as diverse as Osama Bin Laden, Pope John Paul II, Leo Messi, and Barack Obama have been portrayed in this pose. The *caganer* fertilizes the earth for the coming spring: so the *crèche* enthusiast will tell you. At the same time, Catalan folk poetry celebrates the act of excretion as the common necessity that levels king, pope, and peasant. In contrast to the ethereal body of the consecrated Host, borne in a gleaming silver sun-shaped monstrance in the Corpus Christi procession at the brilliant early break of summer, the Christ of a Catalan Christmas, when the days are dark, is tied to the humblest aspects of his humanity.

Commensality is as basic as co-presence in Catalan festival's insistence on the leveling effect of corporeality. No Catalan festival, including Lent, lacks a characteristic food, and during festivals everyone gets to eat: major festivals were long the occasions of charitable distributions from the municipality, the Church, the factory owners and the wealthy. Catalan domestic life has always been punctuated by seasonal feasts, which exist today also as communal and commercial celebrations: the *calçotada* of

spring onions in Valls, the gathering of autumn mushrooms in the Berguedà, and everywhere the great *matança del porc*, the winter pig-killing. The distributed labour of an extended family and its neighbours dismembers the pig into hams and extravagantly named sausages that once extended and enriched the daily diet of legumes, bread, and vegetables for the coming year. This provision against everyday scarcity concluded with a celebration of momentary abundance, a feast of fresh meat shared among all who had done the work.

But the rhythms of the seasons are only the bottom layer of festival temporality. Next comes the Catholic liturgical calendar, which evolved in tense intimacy with those of pagan Rome, Judaism, and Islam. In the nineteenth century and particularly after the Restoration of 1875, state politics added a further layer, imposing victory celebrations and other national holidays. By the early twentieth century the calendar was a constant focus of political tension, with republican and labor movements sponsoring competing commemorations.

Catalanist movements sought their own representation, notably with the 1901 institution of the *Diada de Catalunya*. This commemoration of the 11th of September, the surrender of Barcelona to the Bourbon pretender in 1714, was intended to show a united front and remains today an occasion to demonstrate nationalist strength and solidarity. Successive political shifts transformed the calendar along with the names of streets: the Republic abolished saints' days, while Franco restored them. Franco replaced the worker's May Day with the 18th of July, the anniversary of his own uprising, as a new paternalist Festival of the Exaltation of Labor. As the new author of national being, he likewise replaced the Catalanist 11[th] of September with the October 1st *Día del Caudillo*, celebrating his own accession to power.

The feast of Saint George has undergone several reframings to become a major patriotic holiday.<sup>7</sup> Patron of the Catalan military nobility, the saint has a chapel in the Gothic palace of the Generalitat. By the late 18th century, the archaic celebration of his day had given way to a popular fair of roses for those in love. In the late nineteenth century, Catalanists adopted this Barcelona custom in an attempt to promote Saint George as joint national patron along with the Virgin of Montserrat. Independently, in 1926, a Barcelona publisher convinced the Spanish government to institute a book festival to support the industry. In 1930 this street fair for books was translated to April 23rd, not as St. George's Day but as the date of the death of Cervantes.

Under Franco, the official book festival provided cover for Catalanists quietly to revive the unofficial *Festa de Sant Jordi*. In 1959 several stands of Catalan-language books appeared and, from that point on, the fair was increasingly focused on linguistic and cultural revival. Since then the publishing industry has organized its calendar and promotional activities around Sant Jordi, when half of annual sales are made, while the roses are sold to raise money for organisations, charities, and causes, often of a nationalist character. Today Sant Jordi and the 11th of September have become a

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<sup>7</sup> This summary draws on Palomar and Sugranyes 2003.

contrasting pair of national holidays. Sant Jordi is affirmative, familial, consumerist, rather banal; the Diada is militant and confrontational, bringing out young and old activists of all stripes to exchange exhortations and recriminations.

In the democratic period, the need to limit non-working days and bring the calendar in line with the rest of Europe compromised the abundant official holidays of the Franco era. Meanwhile, workers began to find new, consumerist uses for their days off with both commercial entertainments and tourism. The Spanish state also came to terms with the plural loyalties of its citizens, creating an official calendar jointly determined by the church, the state, the regional governments, and municipalities.

In a world of consumer choice the survival of festivals depends on the pleasures and emotional identification they can provide. Civil liberties and the private car have robbed many town festivals of participants, while making it easier for outsiders to attend the most famous ones. Locals have recognized the importance of creating festivals interesting enough to keep people at home on the holiday. In some cases, the necessary voluntarism has resulted in both unusual festival innovations and a strengthening of everyday social networks.

## Festival Futures

The traditional festival, grounded in the everyday lifeworld of a community, is hybridizing more than ever with modern forms of public event that assemble anonymous individuals: organized sport (most notably F.C. Barcelona), music and arts festivals, discos and raves, protests, amusement parks and expositions. Less important to individuals but with a complex impact on the urban fabric and regional economy are such government-driven international events as the 1992 Olympic Games and the 2004 Fòrum Universal de les Cultures.

From a different perspective, social movements and the “urban tribes” of youth culture, while drawing on a mostly international vocabulary of expression, rely on the same face-to-face immediacy and everyday energies as traditional festival (Costa, Pérez Tornero and Tropea 1996). In times of felt collective emergency, such as in the resistance to the second Iraq war in 2003 or following the Madrid train bombings of 2004, collective protest achieves the effervescence of local festival on a genuinely national scale (Catalan or Spanish, depending), just as it did during the Transition.<sup>8</sup>

The famous Catalan *associacionisme* has long been associated with a weak and oppressive state, and the habit of forming and joining voluntary associations persisted

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<sup>8</sup> The crisis years since this essay was published have seen a near-constant flow of inventive street demonstrations, often on a massive scale, from squatters’ collectives, indignados protesting corruption and austerity, and a resurgent Catalan independentism (the latter drawing 1.5 million people to the 2012 September 11th celebration). Sometimes supporting, sometimes competing with one another, such demonstrations give body to the sense of collective emergency and/or possibility: public opinion is authenticated by “going out in the streets.” On the formal and pragmatic relationships between festival and street protest, see Noyes 1995 and 2003b.



after democracy was restored, not least in the creation of organizations to “recuperate” local festivals. After the Transition, however, those who had once come out to the street to protest were now also charged with the construction of autonomous institutions. Without dropping their civic involvements, activists now entered public administration, ran for office, taught at schools and universities, and began to replace the authorities they had once challenged.

Other things changed in the 1990s. There was a generational transition in festival personnel. The memory of Franco dissipated and an inevitable dissatisfaction with autonomous government loosened the connection between Catalanism and local concerns. The economic boom and real estate development, with new residential estates of single-family homes, unravelled the workplace and neighborhood sociability on which festival had drawn. That same boom gave Catalonia the highest rate of immigration in Europe.

As a result festival organizers have become at once more localist and more broadly networked. Their concerns are with their community of residence: how to keep its economy going, how to integrate the immigrant population, how to keep the young in town and the old involved. But they draw on the resources of the Generalitat, notably the Centre de Promoció de Cultura Popular i Tradicional Catalana (CPCPTC), which supports Catalan festival practice with research, publication, exhibitions, teacher courses, and an annual summer school in the Pyrenees. More importantly, organizers rely on their own networking and fundraising skills, greatly aided by new media.

Launched in 1999 and growing from year to year, the extraordinary website Festes.org exemplifies the blend of activist, entrepreneurial and scholarly talent being dedicated to traditional festival.<sup>9</sup> It serves to document but also to facilitate the ever-intensifying pace of local festival creation, making practitioners visible to one another. The network can mobilize rapidly when a need is perceived, as happened in the spring of 2009 when a European directive regarding firework safety seemed to threaten the participatory character of devils and correfocs.

National, European, and international dynamics have transformed traditional festival: it is no longer simply reproduced, but managed. In some communities, local governments and entrepreneurs have taken the route of representing festival as heritage, entailing formal “safeguarding.” Since the mid-1990s, the Patum of Berga has been governed by a steering committee of city officials, comparsa members, and businesspeople. After a lengthy campaign, the Patum was proclaimed in 2003 by UNESCO to be a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Its dancing effigies must now be repaired by restorers with advanced degrees, not by locals. Managed commercialization is taking place. The right to participate, traditionally negotiated through personal networks, is becoming codified, with debates over entitlement becoming more acute as immigrants, women, and non-churchgoers find both challengers

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<sup>9</sup> See “Festes.org: l’espai on comença la festa” <[www.festes.org](http://www.festes.org)>.

and advocates. Meanings once left open and silent are now being spelled out in ways that make practical consensus a challenge (see chapter 8).

The CPCPTC has turned its efforts strongly toward the construction of heritage institutions and the preparation of a national inventory of festivals. As of 2006 there has been a hierarchy of festival designations, with those of longest tradition and most apparent “ritual” and “identitarian” content meriting the highest rank of *Festa Patrimonial*. The emphasis on origins and authenticity goes hand in hand with touristification: the Generalitat is creating Centers of Documentation across the region devoted to explaining various aspects of the national heritage to visitors.<sup>10</sup>

Many Catalan festivals, however, have pursued a different strategy, defining themselves as “world culture” rather than as heritage. Barcelona’s *Festes de la Mercè* have won both plaudits and condemnation for their celebration of Mediterranean cultural mixing. In 1997 the city of Manresa instituted a “traditional roots” trade fair to serve as an international commercial showcase for Catalan festival impresarios who now view their own work as “artistic creation within tradition.” Called *Fira Mediterrània*, it was charged by the Generalitat in 2009 with the integration of “roots culture” into institutions and festivals formerly focused on high culture as part of a general modernization of the Catalan culture industries.<sup>11</sup>

Whether as heritage or as art, festival is thus recognized by the Generalitat as a resource for economic development. But on the ground festival has not stopped serving the older purpose of mediating social *convivència*. Some rural communities have promoted sociability by throwing off the charged notion of culture altogether. Mieres in the Garrotxa and Avià in the Berguedà have created “festivals of exchange” based in the swapping of goods and knowledge, intended explicitly to counter the social estrangement created by immigration and the building boom that transformed many old towns into empty shells containing “second residences” (Robertson 2012).

Older festival forms can still be effective across social boundaries, now as they were during the Franco regime and the Transition. In the prosperous coastal town of Vilanova i la Geltrú, the contribution of immigrants to economic vitality has made many residents open to their social presence. The town’s important carnival, *festa major*, and band of *castellers* offer various points of access, and in each a constant accession of new participants is needed. The festivals combine stable non-verbal genres, demanding no competence in Catalan, with improvisatory dramas in which new ideas and languages can enter. Creating shared memories, the intense encounters of festival can speed up the process of building familiarity among neighbors (Erickson 2008, 2011).

Since 1968, middle-class people around the world have sought out the seeming authenticity of traditional celebrations. Catalans are no exception, and their festivals

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<sup>10</sup> After the crisis hit in 2008 this project was put on hold and it seems that today the Generalitat simply helps to coordinate among existing local museums and centers of interpretation.

<sup>11</sup> As of 2015, the *Fira* is a four-day international “performing arts marketplace” with three hundred events, pursuing long-term collaborations across Europe and North Africa. See <[www.firamediterrania.cat/](http://www.firamediterrania.cat/)>.

celebrate the bodily participation that seems to evoke deep identity. But festival organizers know what the general public, in its new prosperity and freedom of movement, is forgetting. The surge of joy felt in a correfoc or the successful downing of a castell is earned by the prior labor of preparation and the more taxing labor of pulling off a collaboration among partners of necessity, not choice. Festival effervescence grows out of mundane everyday interaction. The traditional Catalan comparses have their future institutionally guaranteed as art or as heritage; they may or may not persist as festival. Whether festival remains central to Catalan culture depends on how neighbors decide to live together.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This remains an absolutely open question. The bursting of Spain’s real estate bubble in 2008 brought on deep recession and massive social precarity, including youth unemployment that remains above 50% in 2015 as economic recovery is being heralded. There are strong implications for both everyday convivència and festival practice in the resurgence of Catalan independentism, which has put Spain into constitutional crisis, and also in the anti-austerity movement which in June 2015 brought Ada Colau, a 41-year-old housing activist, to the mayoralty of Barcelona, where she immediately launched an initiative to control touristic development for the sake of neighborhood preservation. Each of these

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two leading political tendencies in contemporary Catalonia draws heavily on street repertoires, so we can at any rate predict that festival will not be reduced to pure art or pure heritage any time soon. On the other hand, increasingly politicized repertoires may not retain their capacity for social mediation: see Vaczi 2016 on the current independentist instrumentalization of castells.

## 9. Hardscrabble Academies: Toward a Social Economy of Vernacular Invention<sup>(9)</sup>

AN IMPLICIT HISTORY of invention is inscribed in the current struggles over intellectual property regimes. In the beginning was the traditional community, the dancing throng from whose movements culture emerged spontaneously, without intention or forethought. (The remaining enclaves of this past should be preserved for science or tourism and out of humanitarian concern for their lingering indigenes.) Next came the modern individual, who in his self-authoring was careful also to create the institutions that would perpetuate him. Today we have the network of distributed innovation that has made these institutions porous and allowed knowledge to flow, recombine and renew itself.

The present project arises from discomfort with the first term in this triad, community, as it is invoked in current policy discourse. With often the best of intentions and in response to the indisputable threats posed by globalization to local peoples and cultures, current intergovernmental initiatives to protect local tradition are resurrecting essentialist conceptions of community. Operationalized as policy, these foster increased commercialization, corruption, and control at the local level. I have argued elsewhere that we will not correct the outdated paradigm of the modern individual by attaching to it the equally antiquated epicycle of the traditional community (chapter 13). Thus, of our recognized actors, we are left with the supposedly emergent agent of social creativity, the network.

It is no surprise that, attached to that frumpiest of disciplines, folklore, I should try to crash the network party. Moreover, the network is rapidly becoming naturalized as the root metaphor of social thought, as the organism was in modernity, but fifty years hence the conceptual shortcomings of the network will no doubt be as visible as those of the author are today. When I proceed to assert, therefore, that it is networks all the way down, what I will more defensibly mean is that the metaphor of the network reveals just as much about residual as it does about emergent cultures.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> And, for that matter, about the complex web of relations underlying the modern author-function, but culture created under the authorial regime has a more distinct dynamic and will not be considered here.

<sup>(9)</sup> Originally published as “Hardscrabble Academies: Toward a Social Economy of Vernacular In-

To be sure, there are meaningful differences among networks, and we should beware the euphoria that automatically modifies the noun “network” with the adjective “flexible.” All networks are not created and reconfigured at will. The mission may decide the coalition in corporate partnerships and recent American foreign policy. Historically, however, most complex cultural invention has been generated in long-term patterns of interaction among a limited number of stable and distinct positions: that is, in inflexible networks. More broadly, we may see a continuum between traditional and emerging forms of vernacular invention based on differing constraints. While traditional invention is shaped by a scarcity of everything but time, emerging invention draws on an abundance of everything but leisure.

## A Note on Terminology and Sociocultural Differentiation

Folklorists address a disciplinary object so unstable that it can only be captured in scare quotes. The internal Other of modernity, the “folk” is more slippery and even more stigmatized than modernity’s remote contrary, the “primitive” of tribal societies. Indeed, the primitive, reframed as the indigenous, has made some progress in the policy world. Current attempts to broaden the conversation over intellectual property regimes, both those stemming from the property side and those from the Creative Commons wing, along with scholarly works such as Ghosh’s *Code* (2005), have made a point of engaging indigenous communities and examining indigenous or at least developing-country creativity. In a few cases they have recognized not just common cause but commonalities. The activism of indigenous communities and of southern countries and their presence in policy forums has made this alliance both possible and necessary.

But when hands are joined or debates opened across this divide, it remains too easy both to polarize and to universalize. The historicity of the indigenous and the untidiness of the modern both tend to disappear from view. We need to recognize multiplicity within the West itself, a diversity of practice that cannot simply be mapped onto the presence of ethnic minorities in a “mainstream” modern population.

Another line of commentators is attracted to the idea of folkness in a more populist vein, recognizing the vernacular creativity that today relies on digital media but has always used the means to hand (Benkler 2006: 15; Charles Leadbeater, personal communication). Digital communication, in this view, fosters a resurrection or renaissance as well as a broadening and empowerment of non-elite culture. Analytically and politically, this recognition of ongoing vernacular creation under the modern authorial regime shows progress. But here too specificity is called for: for example, the “pro-am” culture described by Leadbeater and Miller seems largely a vernacular appropriation of modern professionalism, different from traditional creativity (2004).

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vention,” *Ethnologia Europaea* 39:2 (2009): 41–53.

So to make distinctions that seem necessary to explore even if ultimately we explode them, I will rely on problematic familiar terms, accepting the presentist and Eurocentric assumptions behind them because the global conversation is taking place within the conditions created by those assumptions: we speak from inside the special case of modernity. Vernacular will refer to all invention arising through informal interpersonal contact rather than codified procedures and institutionalized incentives. Traditional denotes the family resemblances of premodern, indigenous, and “folk” practices, all drawing on scarce resources in non-liberal regimes. Note that the catchall character of this category, typically presented as the residuum of the modern, points rather to the status of Western modernity as special case. The vast majority of human invention, including language, is traditional invention. Folk will refer to the visible persistence of traditional practice within modernity and its provinces and colonies. Emerging will serve as a placeholder for the kinds of contemporary vernacular invention arising among fully incorporated actors in contemporary capitalist societies. Of course there is no gulf fixed: traditional creativity does not come to a halt when modern regimes impose themselves, but adapts to a changing social ecology and finds new forms and niches.

This is an essay in the etymological sense, and economy will require me to make appalling generalizations while scanting on footnotes. Please read every statement as a tentative ideal-typing thickly hedged with the relevant qualifications. Note too that I try to place some nuance into what might be seen as a dangerous reinscription of the great divide between tradition and modernity:

1. The difference is of constraints, not mentality.
2. The traditional is made, not begotten, emerging not from nature and spontaneous feeling but from social tension.
3. Traditional forms not only persist but may thrive under the transition to abundance. But gradually they come to signify differently.

## From Open Source to Vernacular Invention

The apostles of open source have been eager to account for the improbable success of their model. As Steven Weber explains, by all the conventional wisdom of both economics and organizational theory, open source software should not exist. Classical economic theory argues that the incentive to innovation comes from property rights, but open source gives you only the right to distribute, not to retain. Having free access and no property rights, individuals might be expected to behave as “free riders,” waiting for others to solve problems in the code; instead, they voluntarily surrender their time. The unity of the code exists without an organized firm directing it. Open-source products ought to “fork” into multiple local versions adapted to particular needs, yet these local adaptations on the periphery are regularly returned to the center and incorporated into the source code. Moreover, the extraordinary complexity of the code

in projects such as Linux should not be possible, much less stable: according to Brooks' Law of Computing, the more programmers, the greater the possibility of mistakes. Yet open source not only depends on thousands of volunteers, it also responds quickly to technical problems (Weber 2004).

Tracing the open-source process from its beginnings at MIT, Berkeley, and Bell Labs to the current sophisticated, stable products steadily expanding their market share, such as the Apache web server and the Linux operating system, Weber sets out to explain the puzzle of this success, and describes an ideal-typical process that, I argue, is applicable to vernacular invention in general. Open source depends on parallel distributed innovation, that is, the simultaneous reworking of the central "product" by multiple actors in an open social network under conditions of publicity. Use-rights and, in various conceptions, ownership are determined by the degree and especially the quality of participation. Engagement and innovation are stimulated in some cases by immediate need, but as intensely by the desire for peer recognition and the intrinsic pleasure of playing with an interesting problem. Ritualized competition and a technical vocabulary of connoisseurship typically attest to the importance of the latter two motivations. Reciprocal observation, imitation, and criticism maintain the unity of the product; more institutional mechanisms are developed as the product grows in complexity and, more importantly, as its exchange-value in economic or political markets becomes apparent.

We must not fetishize the technology. The internet did not create social networking but facilitated it. Social networking theory itself of course antedates the internet and, interestingly, empirical studies find that while networks tend to be sparse and frail among the upwardly mobile middle classes—the classic individual(ist) actors of modern societies, who thus find networks hard to see—they are as dense and active among traditional working classes as among elites, and mobilized with just as much skill in the search for employment and other resources (Milroy 1987; Hannerz 1992). Traditional art, as I will argue, is also a product of network associations. In short, there is a strong empirical case that the "electronic vernacular" is not different in kind but directly modeled on and derived from face-to-face vernacular habits (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996). The virtues of the Net celebrated by hackers—its openness to participation, its ability to pool and recombine ideas—are features of vernacular communication generally.

Hackers themselves claim various lineages. And while the evocation of solitary pre-modern community on the part of Richard Stallman is suspect (Kelty 2008, 109) Pekka Himanen's account of the "Hacker Ethic" is worth considering as metaphor if not as history (2001). Whereas the Protestant ethic descends ultimately from the Benedictine monastery with its emphasis on discipline, says Himanen, the hacker ethic has a still more impressive lineage in Plato's Academy, a highly evolved form of play. The monastery achieved its results through closed walls, obedience to authority, work for its own sake, and the rational organization of time. The academy and its revival in Renaissance science celebrated rather the process of free inquiry in a community open



to merit. Similarly, the hacker is not motivated by profit but by passion and “a desire to create something that one’s peer community would find valuable”: he or she feels a further obligation to share information and expertise for the collective benefit (ibid., ix). Linus Torvalds, the Homer of the great tradition that is the operating system Linux, spells out the hierarchy of hacker motivations more precisely in what he calls “Linus’s Law”: survival, social life, and entertainment (ibid., prologue).<sup>2</sup> Hackers have gone well beyond the need to make a living, he argues; they are out to achieve reputation in a group of peers and to play at “something intrinsically interesting and challenging.” Hacking becomes basic to social and personal identity in a framework that counters the Weberian idea of the calling.

## The Hardscrabble Academy

All very well, you might say, for wealthy contemporary societies. Nurtured in the narratives of liberal individualism as softened by late modern consumerism, we can seek self-fulfillment in self-chosen activities—and that self was of course conceived in the enclaves of philosophers freed from need. But the current liberal framing of the hacker ethic, especially in the United States (Coleman and Golub 2008), obscures a family resemblance to a disposition formed under other conditions and described by a different rhetoric. Both the ethos of competitive collaboration and the process of distributed invention are characteristic of folklore too.

I say ethos rather than ethic, shifting us from a normative to a descriptive framework. The neoliberal moment encourages us to etherealize all practice as guided by free moral choice, but the original meaning of ethos as custom or habit reminds us that practice takes shape inside a social economy. Reiterated over time, situated practice fosters a disposition that may persist in changed circumstances.

When old men in the Catalan town where I did fieldwork in the early 1990s referred to their time at “the university,” they meant one of Franco’s prison camps. Northern Irish Catholics used the same euphemism for a stay in the Maze H-Block in the 1970s (Ray Cashman, personal communication). It is not an unmotivated metaphor: prisons are well-known as sites of political and religious education. Powerful and startling cultural invention takes place there as well, from the placatory message of Golden Venture paper folding to the horrific declaration of the Dirty Protest (Westerman 1996; Feldman 1991).

The prison has some important commonalities with the academy. It is a confined space removed from the world of purposeful activity. On the other hand, it is a space of scarcity rather than affluence and the denizens within its walls are not self-chosen

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<sup>2</sup> Torvalds is perhaps remembering Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which ascends from survival and security through social belonging and recognition to “self-actualization” (Maslow 1970). The higher needs come into consciousness as the lower ones are satisfied.

kindred spirits but, from the prisoner's perspective, a motley aggregation imposed from above.

Folk idiom in Catalonia acknowledges a second vernacular academy. In 1989, a man explained the intensity and distinctiveness of his local culture to me: "You come from the University of Pennsylvania; we come from the University of Pedret." As the name indicates, Pedret is a rocky area by a riverside with a sixth-century church in the depopulated hinterland of a provincial town in the foothills of the Pyrenees. My friend thus claimed a time depth and rootedness to which my own knowledge could not pretend, but his phrase can also be translated as the "school of hard knocks"/rocks.

The traditional community is not unlike like the prison. Folklorists have long been aware that the "folk society" in which epics and ballads are born is not a homogeneous isolate but a borderland (Paredes 1958). The creole turn in 1980s linguistics and folklore named the plantation as a prototypical site of cultural creation, occasioned by the need to construct a sustainable *modus operandi* out of "fragmented, violent, and disjunct pasts" (Mintz 1996, 302, quoted in Abrahams 2005, 223). Scholars of traditional culture know that the comfort zone and the combat zone are intimately intermingled (Herzfeld 1997; Abrahams 2005, 129–48). The prison shows us in microcosm what we can see more broadly in borderlands, settler communities, and "traditional communities" tout court—locally-based networks in precapitalist societies or on modernity's periphery. Three conditions shape traditional invention: scarcity, inflexibility, and enforced inactivity.

Material, human, and cultural resources are limited. One cannot engineer schemes *ex nihilo* and then seek out the ideal means of realization. These are places of bricolage, adapting the "finite and heterogeneous set" of what there is as new needs arise (Lévi-Strauss 1962, 17). Tradition is an endless recycling: we may remember that *invenire* means "to find." Thus traditional culture, made from the objects and vocabulary and people at hand, is moored by indexical links to the lifeworld. In addition, itself reworked as necessary, it acquires thick layers of historical resonance.

Yochai Benkler, thinking in the present, alludes to the "enhanced autonomy" of network structures (2006, 8). But autonomy is just what traditional networks lack: they are inflexible networks or, as the older network theory identifies them, dense multiplex networks with a limited, stable number of important "weak ties" to larger social worlds (Granovetter 1973). As anyone who has lived in a small community knows, social relations are experienced there less as love and homogeneity than as a tissue of inherited obligations and positions, forced juxtapositions, close mutual observation and suspicion. But actors share an economic and political predicament that makes cooperation necessary. Conflict is thus endemic rather than acute. Differences coexist over the long term and no single party is strong enough to exercise hegemony over all the others or to pull out and act alone. Actors must create shared social forms that can accommodate diverse interests and meanings. Forms are also drawn in and out of group life through "weak ties"—patrons, officials, clerics, travelling peddlers and laborers—and regular occasions of contact: labor migration, military service, pilgrimage, annual markets, fes-

tivals, commercial and marital transactions, and so on. Actors use these opportunities as fully as possible to seize new materials and ideas. Traditional communities are confined but not isolated, stable but not homogeneous, cautious but not closeminded. The privileged expressive genres, notably festival and epic but also fairy tale, ballad, and many others, not only become conduits of social relations, but typically thematize the tensions within them, coding real present difference as historical or fictional conflict.

Finally, traditional invention emerges from the forced inactivity of precapitalist and peripheral social networks. At the simplest level, labor not subject to capitalist work-time is characterized by periods of intense work in alternation with periods of inactivity, including the dark winter evenings and the festivals interspersed with work days. There is time to make culture, as well as the need to fill silence in a world without mass media. As importantly, the politics that control these societies do not favor individual goal-directed behavior: even when not actively repressed, it is not encouraged or rewarded with any expectation of mobility. Traditional networks are places of boredom and frustration, in which the full range of human appetites and aspirations is not served. Opportunities for individual distinction and recognition are limited. Instead of conceiving unrealizable life projects, therefore, many talented actors turn their passion and intelligence to the available spheres of activity. Their personal identity becomes bound to the collective genres. The often obsessive formal elaboration of traditional art reveals both the energies and the claustrophobia of its creators.

In traditional invention, therefore, Torvalds' three motives exist simultaneously rather than in succession. Scarcity breeds the survival motive; inflexible networks frame social life and the competitive search for reputation; boredom and frustration drive actors to passionate playfulness. The result is cultural invention that is both complex and stable, layered with meanings, multifunctional, and almost sacramentally resonant from its consubstantiality with everyday life.<sup>3</sup> Although the conditions of these hard-scrabble academies tend not to favor individual fulfillment, they work to the benefit of the cultural forms within them. The encyclopedic character of epics and festivals is frequently noted and justly so, for these are forms that draw on everything the network controls and the diverse talents and needs of everyone in it.

## Festival as Distributed Invention

The putative distinctiveness of local calendar customs in Catholic Europe is often a narcissism of minor differences. Their characteristic performances—contests, dances, costumes, music, fireworks, aggressive masks and giant mobile effigies of monsters and heroes—are imitated back and forth between rival communities striving to outdo one another. Not unique to their place, as defensive localism would have it, festivals also betoken no unified spirit within the community. Rather, much festival emerges as

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<sup>3</sup> On the notion of a sacramental relationship between traditional representations and everyday life, Noyes (2003) follows Zulaika (1988), who in turn follows Bateson (1972, 35–37, 183).

a “shouting match at the border,” confronting not just different ethnic and religious groups but classes, occupations, generations, political factions, and genders (Abrahams 1981). These differences are mapped out both symbolically and in participation across the range of distinct performances in a given event, often in explicit contest. The opposition of angels and devils or Moors and Christians in performance results not in the expulsion of an Other, but in the grudging accommodation of irreducible internal difference. Longstanding civic festivals have taken the imprint of so many self-assertions over time that eventually every new member of the community can find a point of entry there (Noyes 2003).

All this contestation is paradoxically recognized by townspeople as the currency of local solidarity. The fire that burns is also the fire that warms: conflict is often a valued sign of life in provincial communities. Constrained by publicity and social control, conflict is the fuel of social creativity. Many popular festivals were born in the rivalries of urban artisans (England, central Italy) or in plebeian responses to the exclusionary representations of Church and State (Catalonia). If they endure, they win the uneasy backing of local governments as means of placating the populace, attracting outsiders to local markets, and, eventually, representing the locality to the metropolis. Over time, these improvisations and isolated elements are brought by the centripetal force of public attention into an ensemble that takes on increasingly autonomous and complete shape. New accretions are incorporated as they achieve popular acceptance; the emergent pattern of balances and contrapositions in the festival comes to stand as proxy for the delicate compromises between the multiple elements of civic life. To be sure, this rhythm of creation is not uniform. Instead, innovation tends to come in bursts, often in periods of recovery from civil war or other crisis when public attention is directed to the wider world and its challenges (e.g., Paredes 1958, 245–46, and chapter 6). Later, the pressures of reproducing a complex performance over time—in both the consciousness of actors and the coordination of their bodies and resources—smooth out structure. Syncretism leads to synthesis. In their annually recurring copformance, forms and signs from different economic and political dispensations or different social fragments begin to echo, contrast, polarize, interresonate. Under favorable conditions (scarcity, constraint, and frustration!) they will gradually knit together into a structure as multivoiced and encyclopedic as the *Iliad*, if obviously of a different order of precision to Linux.

Within the multigeneric ensemble of European festival, one familiar form is the group that goes from house to house or town to town performing for money and, at the same time, claiming to represent the *vox populi*: mummers’ teams, carolers and serenaders, bands engaged in *charivari* or “rough music,” and in modern transformations, trick-or-treaters and various kinds of vigilantes (Noyes ed. 1995). If space permits, these groups often avoid direct competition with one another by claiming distinct territories, but in areas of dense population this is not possible, and their rivalry can provoke a spiral of innovation in a relatively short period, more easily traced than the long trajectories of civic festival.

Such spirals took shape in both the early and the recent history of a form of folk athleticism distinctive to southeastern Catalonia: the *castell*, a “castle” constructed out of interlocking human bodies. Colles (gangs) of castellers compete at local saint’s day festivals and sometimes in specially organized contests to see which group can erect the most complex construction of multiple “stories” of bodies with interlocked arms supporting the feet of the bodies who stand on their shoulders in the next layer. This “trunk,” varying in difficulty according to the number of bodies per story and the number of stories, is topped by a “bouquet” of children aged 5–10: a layer of two topped by a crouching “lifter” who helps to stabilize the *anxaneta*, the topmost child, as she raises herself on the shoulders of the two and waves a hand to the crowd to show the completion of the castle.

The genre evolved from the final figure of a dance that was popular at the festivals of the region in the second half of the eighteenth century. With formal elaborations that presumably emerged in the competitive displays typical of young men at events assembling potential marriage partners, the “castles” gradually split off from the dance. Soon they were a popular audience attraction, and towns contracted groups of dancers to perform them, as did some rich landowners. By the early nineteenth century, there was a summer festival circuit in the region traversed by gangs of castellers made up of young men drawn from the lowest class of landless unskilled workers. Some of these bands had a prior identity as bands of combatants from the irregular militias circulating in Spain during the War of Independence and the Carlist Wars. They earned a scanty living from festival to festival, but it was materially no worse and socially far freer than what awaited them as day laborers at home (Suárez-Baldrís 1998, 51–53).

In the history of the castellers we may see the ascending levels of motivation in our model (without excluding the presence of the “higher” layers in the earlier stages): survival, reputation, play. If the form began as sexual display and soon became a means of economic gain, differential identities and the contest for prestige took their place early. In 1805 the city of Valls, historical seat of the *castells*, already had two groups, the Gang of the Peasants and the Gang of the Artisans (*ibid.*, 50). Many groups in Valls are documented through the next two centuries, usually identified by the leader’s nickname or as the New Gang and the Old Gang of the moment (*ibid.*, 82). At the same time, teams in other towns emerged, and eventually the label “Boys of Valls” gave way to the generic term castellers. Intercommunal competition—which in the context of the Carlist Wars that divided country and city often had more serious political resonances—now played as important a role as intra-communal.

Despite the communal affiliations of the gangs, performers were drawn from the available pool of talent without regard to origins: in the nineteenth century many gang members were picked up along the road from other towns (*ibid.*, 74). Competition meant more than one gang outshowing the other. It prompted the improvisation of increasingly difficult forms: “pillars” stacking single individuals, simple castles of ever-increasing height and variable lower structure, and complex castles depending on multiple trunks joined at the top, all lovingly chronicled by the journalists and

painters of the period. Because the castles demand both a large “pinecone” of supporters to bolster the base with interlocked arms, and lightweight adolescents and small children for the top stories, they engaged most of the male population in certain towns. The technical problems were thus widely understood and each performance provided an endless topic of critical discussion in taverns, much like football matches in the twentieth century.

After the end of the Franco regime in 1975, castells experienced a powerful revival. Like other festival forms, they were energized by political liberation, Catalan cultural revival, new media, and generous subventions; they also received a special ideological boost as an alternative emblematic national performance to the sardana that had patiently danced out the Franco regime. Where the sardana went round in closed circles, the castells raised themselves upward, an apparent vernacular correlative to the national vocation for architecture celebrated in Gaudí, Sert, and Bofill and also to the entrepreneurial, competitive, open spirit claimed by Catalan business. The castells were at any rate far more interesting to the young than was the now dowdy sardana. Old gangs found eager new members among women and immigrants; new gangs were formed across a geographic area far exceeding the original range of the practice.

In the late 1990s, the four or five gangs recognized as most skilled set themselves the challenge of “recovering” certain castles reputed to have been built in the 1880s: the “clean 4 of 9,” a nine-story edifice with four persons at each level and no pinecone, and the “3 of 10 with sheath and bracelets,” a ten-story construction of three-person layers with collars of supporting bodies on the first three stories, decreasing in number with each elevation. These efforts, passionately chronicled by local journalists, confirm the pattern of competitive distributed invention.<sup>4</sup> Typically one prominent gang sets a goal at the beginning of the summer, proposing to essay a given castle at one of the major festivals in October. This intention becomes public through rumor and sometimes with an official announcement. Any gang that wants to be recognized as a rival is obliged to take up the gauntlet and “work” the same castle.

Guided by a gang leader and a “technical team” of the oldest and most experienced castellers, a gang’s effort also entails the experimentation of each individual member: the “galleys” of burly men on the bottom, who have to learn to respond to shifting loads with constant support; the lower layers, who have to angle their bodies and test their circumference so as not to overcompress the upper stories or, alternatively, allow the castle to “open” from above; the middle stories, whose task is to control their breathing and muscle tension so as to absorb motion from above and instability below; and the “bouquet” of children on top, who need to balance themselves and master their fear while climbing as fast as possible so that the accumulated weight does not overwhelm the lower stories. Each of these layers is subdivided into multiple roles. Crucial too are the grallers, the musicians whose strident rhythms regulate the collective motion. The testimonies of castellers show much discursive consensus on political matters affecting

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<sup>4</sup> I take the following account from Brotons and Beumala 2000.

the gang, but a wide variety of technical preoccupations depending on position. The trial and error of all of these participants—who in a 3 of 10 might reach seven or eight hundred performers—goes to accomplish this complex whole. One knee buckling, even one breath out of place, can send the whole thing down. But it is no one-voiced communal creation. Some actors are more central than others, each actor has different technical challenges, and the line between supporters and onlookers is indeterminate in the press of the crowd.

The castles are essayed in the most public of surroundings, the main square during a festival. This publicity has long been enhanced by journalism and more recently by television, the Web, and cell-phone cameras. A festival typically has one or more guest colleges competing with the local gang; citizens of both towns and a larger community of aficionados following closely. In 1998 and 1999 this competition culminated in the conquest of the two legendary “total castles.” The Minyons de Terrassa, founded in 1979, erected the clean 4 of 9 for the first time in the twentieth century in October 1998. In the following month another new gang, the Castellers de Vilafranca, pulled off the 3 of 10 with sheath and bracelets, and a week later the Minyons, who had announced the 3 of 10 as their own project that summer, topped the vilafranquins by not only raising but “unloading” it: bringing it down one story at a time without collapse.

These achievements spurred the historic gangs to reclaim their prestige, and in the early season of 1999 the Colla Vella Xiquets de Valls announced its intention to erect the 4 of 9. In the end, old and new competed in real time. Between noon and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 24th, the two gangs of Valls, at home at their festival of St. Ursula, faced off the Minyons de Terrassa, performing outside the traditional region at the festival of St. Narcissus in Girona. At noon the Minyons opened by raising the season’s first “supercathedral,” a two-trunk 5 of 9. The Valls competition began an hour later, with the opening Colla Joves essaying the clean 4 of 9. They got as far as the lifter, who decided the castle was unstable and came down. Simultaneously in Girona, the Minyons launched their own 4 of 9, but it came undone from the bottom just as the lifter was getting into position. A few minutes later, the Joves in Valls returned to the 4 of 9, and despite a shaky start and a substitute lifter, erected the castle. The Colla Vella, which in the end had not felt ready to attack the 4 of 9 by October, applauded its rival team the Joves fervently, “half for the admiration that this castle awakes in any casteller, half for Valls patriotism” (Brotons and Beumala 2000, 58). Performers in Girona and Valls were aware of one another, minute by minute, through live television coverage in the bars off the square. We may surely think of this as parallel distributed processing.

To be sure, this open competition meets with resistance from vested interests. The acclaim for the Minyons after their triumphant 4 of 9 in 1998 was tempered by strong criticism of their agreement to perform on the same day as the major competition in Valls, forcing castell aficionados to choose between the two events. Moreover, they showed a lack of “respect for tradition,” given the historical primacy and prestige of

the Valls festival (*ibid.*, 48). This is the idiom of ownership in Catalan festival: respect for accomplishment is countered by the “respect for tradition” claimed by those with historical capital and now assisted by such international systems of authentication as the Unesco World Heritage lists. The discourse of authenticity is often a strategy for creating scarcity and high-value rival goods (Bendix 1997; Chapter 13). Catalan festivals with any claim to antiquity have complained of being “copied” ever since they began to garner tourists and national dignity in the late nineteenth century. Of course these long-established festivals tend to persist in provincial towns which in the seventeenth century were fervently copying the festival models of the capital. Though such towns might be forgiven for forgetting their own lack of originality three centuries later, memories run very short indeed where prestige is at stake. The head of the Castellers of Vilafranca, the most fervent critic of the Minyons’ disregard for tradition, was criticized in turn a month later for premiering their 3 of 10 not at an established festival but a competition invented purely as an excuse. Other castellers, however, argued that the criticisms were “envy” and that a castle has to be brought out as soon as it’s ready: it is a dish that will not keep.<sup>5</sup> And once served, the appetite moves on to other things: at the end of the year the Minyons began to test the 4 of 10.

The competitive tendency of the most prestigious gangs, exacerbated by the media, is also tempered by both longstanding social control and the higher value of play. Many criticize the incipient professionalism of the castellers of Vilafranca and several gangs reject the model of an athletic contest by boycotting the annual competition held in Tarragona. Gangs assist one another in forming the pinecone, and their supporting musicians often play together at the end of a performance; relationships of “godparentage” exist between older and newer gangs. Local pride is explicitly invested in improving on the gang’s own record, offering hospitality, and behaving graciously. It is less the desire for profitable proprietorship than a continuing awareness of festival’s role in mediating intra- and intercommunal tensions that has kept the castells from turning into an organized sport.<sup>6</sup>

## Tradition Meets Choice

Despite tensions over ownership and professionalization, castells have thrived as conditions shift toward abundance, mobility, and autonomy. New technologies have been incorporated insofar as they support communication among rival performers and the participatory periphery (Lave and Wegner 1991). They have been questioned when they foster the codification of the practice and/or its participants. New participants have, as always, been welcome, but they now come from a wider social range. The form itself, depending on corporeal and generational diversity for its constitution and on body-to-body communication in regular rehearsals for its transmission, is not amenable

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<sup>5</sup> Brotons and Beumala, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> I summarize this paragraph from comments by Brad Erickson; see Erickson 2011.



to commodification. This, along with the self-conscious resistance to appropriation of most castellers, has kept the form rooted in local communities despite its presence on television, the internet, and the opening ceremonies of the 1992 Olympics.

Traditions formed under scarcity and constraint often flourish as conditions change, particularly when the social capital accumulated within the inflexible network has a first opportunity to invest itself under new abundance and autonomy. But traditions change with their social base. As the mutual knowledge of the inflexible network disperses, pressures grow toward diffusion on the one hand and control on the other.

Many folklore genres intensify with enhanced communication. It is now widely recognized that the golden age of European costume and folk art was not in an unlocatable past of pristine isolation, but coincided with the economic expansions, labor migrations, and political self-assertions of modernity (Hofer 1984; Bendix and Noyes eds. 1998). Today the internet has provided a comparable boost to verbal and performance arts. Festivals and traditional music have a vigorous second life online. Where a well-educated population shares a small language and high connectivity, digital interactions may thicken live ones—as with Catalan festival websites such as [www.festes.org](http://www.festes.org)—or revive dying or even dead genres by creating a virtual performance space when such a space no longer exists on the ground, as with the Icelandic verbal dueling that takes place in real time on chat boards (Kaplan 2006). Jokes, urban legends, and rumors—impersonal genres with little formal complexity depending on rapid circulation and anonymity—find their ideal medium online.

Complications arise when the tradition has perceived political or economic value in a market beyond its participatory network. Then pressures increase rapidly to transform process into detachable object, improvised practice into codified production, and social reciprocity into market exchange or regulatory control. The complex public megagenre of epic falls under state control (ancient Athens or contemporary central Asia), enters the authorial regime under state patronage (Virgil, Milton) or becomes industrial product (Hollywood). In each case parallel distributed processing gives way to a division of labor. Festival turns into top-down spectacle or com-modified leisure, though its dependence on thinking bodies not just as creators but as medium limits its susceptibility to control. The simpler domestic genre of the fairy tale evolves into the eminently liberal genre of the novel, with subsequent industrial production as film, television, celebrity culture, and self-help (Chapter 11).

Artisanal, ritual, culinary, medical, musical, and dance traditions are being rapidly incorporated into the global economy, through two primary labeling regimes. Consumer pressures turn them into “world culture” that circulates and hybridizes. State-driven pressures turn them into “heritage,” “cultural property,” or controlled-appellation products artificially withheld from replication in order to monopolize revenue.

Applied to tradition, both heritage and IP regimes transform what they attempt to preserve. Processes become things: the moving practice becomes a reproducible template; the inflexible network becomes a bounded “community.” Forms and their makers become exhibitions of themselves in a “second life of heritage” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

1998) and these are not only obsolete forms that would otherwise be discarded as rubbish. For despite its rhetoric of pricelessness, heritage is big business, and local speculators in search of personal profit or a *deus ex machina* for a struggling community are freezing living traditions into heritage at a frenetic rate, often to disappointing results. Moreover, the codification necessary to police authenticity curbs internal innovation, cutting off vernacular creativity at its source. Those populations designated as folk are reduced to a custodial or at best curatorial role. The tradition, conversely, becomes detached from present concerns and loses its wealth of indexical meaning: it may die as actors cease to pour their lifeblood into it (cf. chapter 13).

But the genie of genre is not willingly funneled into the bottle of property. Culture wants to spread. The plot of the fairy tale, the verbal formulae of epic, the powerful rhythms of festival, all of the endlessly reiterated devices refined over centuries by thousands of performers are not simply aides-mémoire but insinuate themselves into the bloodstream of listeners, crying out for reproduction.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, unlike germplasm in the laboratories of Monsanto, genre cannot be manipulated to conceal its source code.

And so the new conditions of abundance, flexible networks, and autonomous, speeded-up activity create countervailing pressures toward hybridization, free circulation, and the recycling of old devices into new activities and products. Folklore nourishes the fusions of tourist art, ethnic-inspired high art, fashion, cuisine, world beat, new age religion, alternative medicine, body culture, social movements and public celebration. It also thrives under cultivation by amateurs, “pro-ams” who take up tradition not as obligation but as avocation. Nor are these cosmopolitan voyages a new development: one need only consider the last two hundred years of social dance or the last two millennia of religious syncretisms.

The hardscrabble academy is a proving ground. If a cultural form can endure constant pulling and stretching across generations, if it can meet the multiple needs of a population that does not possess an abundance of forms, then it will have sufficient formal integrity and semantic flexibility to travel. Indeed, as the social network becomes more attenuated and the actors exposed to the form are less invested in it, mimesis can become increasingly formal, decreasingly social, and the form itself will encounter less pressure.

At the same time, the form comes to signify differently. Transmitted in social transactions between people who have enduring relationships, traditional culture is embedded in context. With knowledge is transmitted the metaknowledge of what it is for, how it is to be used; with knowledge comes responsibility. When the interaction takes place in the narrower set of relations between, say, a Brazilian émigré capoeira initiate and his respectful students in a Berlin health club (chapter 10), context must be turned into text to make the transfer across settings; metaknowledge must also

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<sup>7</sup> Memetics might be invoked here, but I suggest instead the work looking at cultural process on its own terms: Bauman and Briggs 1990; Urban and Silverstein eds. 1996.

be more efficiently and explicitly conveyed: in the process, they are codified and potentially made rigid. Alternatively, in commodity transmission where network nodes are leapfrogged and person-to-person accountability lost, context and metaknowledge are reduced to liner notes or shaven off altogether (chapter 2). Hence the anxieties of indigenous people about sharing ritual knowledge, and hence the impossibility of an open global database (Brown 2003; “Digital Dynamics”). Knowledge without context is unsafe, and knowledge without obligation confers power that is subject to abuse.

## The End of Traditional Invention?

What about new traditional forms? Will contemporary equivalents of the epic and the festival, multifunctional and enduring, continue to emerge? Not from the rich world, with its abundance of baskets across which to distribute eggs. Complex domain-specific inventions, such as software or snowboarding, arise out of voluntaristic “pro-am” networks, but that, as we have shown, is not the same thing. What then about the populations historically identified as the folk: the poor to whom the wealthy look not only for spiritual but for cultural redemption?

Conditions of scarcity, social control, and forced inactivity persist in microcosm in prisons and refugee camps, where many kinds of traditional invention are visible in the short term. But in the wider world, globalization and consumer capitalism have transformed sub-alternity. Poverty is assuredly still with us, but for the most part the poor lead no bare life in this world full of people and stuff: they live densely atop refuse dumps. Their inventions still rely on recycling and bricolage (Cerny and Seriff eds. 1996), but the available world of objects and interlocutors, however damaged or damaging, is abundant and diverse in kind and origin. There is no obvious focus of cultural attention amid such clutter.

The inflexible network has ceased to be, despite widespread attempts to recreate its objectified version, the “traditional community.” Neither initiatives to control the movements of labor while freeing those of goods and capital nor the biopolitics of discipline and surveillance impose effective constraint from above. There is imperfect coordination between regimes of control, and the poor often slip between jurisdictions (which in the absence of social protections is experienced as insecurity rather than freedom). Subalternity now creates mobility instead of restricting it. Both states and markets push much of the world’s population into increasingly chronic migration and displacement. Among this mobile proletariat, kin and other relationships are maintained by instant messaging and card-charged cell phones, time-constrained one-to-one channels not conducive to the development of large-scale collective forms.

Even where people still live in their old communities, there is scant time for dancing. Poverty is shifting from underemployment to hyperemployment, in maquiladoras or “new economic zones” where essentially forced labor consumes available energies at an unprecedented rate.

Under these circumstances, it is unclear whether new complex collective forms can still take shape.<sup>8</sup> Amid our present abundance, the cultural loss may not be great. We can less easily spare the political-economic learning that risks disappearing if we fail to recognize traditional invention for what it is: not the spontaneous outpouring of a one-hearted collective, but the hard-won formal accommodation of diverse actors in a small space. It comes neither from nature nor from freedom but from social constraint. Nature is our fantasy of the past, freedom our fantasy for the future, but constraint is our reality as we strive to inhabit a stressed ecosystem in increasingly tight quarters with others. When rightly understood, traditional culture can inform democratic practice in plural states (Noyes 2003, 262–71). It has global lessons for us as well.

## Note

To update this article would be impractical. Since I composed it, the interaction of voluntarism, institutional support, and market mechanisms in open source has evolved considerably. Catalan castells have been recruited into independentist politics (Vaczi, 2016) and, validating my connection of old and new complex invention, into advertisements for the Microsoft Cloud. Vernacular invention has found new expressive outlets in social media and material culture, particularly foodways. Still, I don't know that selfies and craft beer are the same kind of thing as castells and hip-hop, and it's worth at least asking the question. I hasten to add that this is not to valorize one kind of thing over another or to set boundaries to the discipline of folklore, but for analytical purposes, to take vernacular invention as a diagnostic of social conditions and strategies.

Two conspicuous trends in the field today are taking us in divergent directions. People tracing the continuity of forms and practices are following them online into a wide range of media, forums, and communities, and in so doing are for the most part engaging with actors much like themselves—middle class, young, often white and American. The disciplinary subject is thereby saved: we will always have jokes and legend with us. (And this is in many ways a step forward from just saving the old stuff, as the heritage turn has prompted us to do.) On the other hand, folklore's long-standing human subjects (as our Institutional Review Boards insist on calling them) are in many cases not doing so well. Their collective ingenuity must direct itself to constructing housing after earthquake or hurricane, designing new livelihoods when the old work has departed, keeping their children off of heroin or safe from the police, inventing new political formats that will give them representation, or plotting routes out of war zones, across dangerous waters, and into places of physical safety—where the next

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<sup>8</sup> Note that I say new forms, not new performances in which an existing repertoire is adapted to a new situation. I mean this statement as a provocation: I am not sure that I believe it myself, but I think we should ask the question.

set of complex practical necessities must be addressed. Public and academic folklorists alike are documenting and in some cases working to facilitate these vernacular survival strategies, which certainly have their expressive component (chapter 15). Still, I find it hard to imagine a complex epic or musical or ritual aftermath to such crises because the requisite minimal human security and stable interactional opportunities are hardly in sight even for old New Orleanians, much less for Syrian refugees. In the richest countries the cognitive energy of the poor is consumed by such short-term but urgent problems as making last-minute childcare arrangements to meet a just-in-time work schedule (cf. Mullainathan and Shafir 2013).

In short, the provocation of my original conclusion may still have some value in encouraging us to think ecologically and globally as a complement to our longstanding interest in particular genres and communities. How are established traditions being relocated and repurposed? What is demanding or attracting vernacular attention? To what predicaments and opportunities are vernacular energies responding? What situations are amenable to social encounter and what channels and genres facilitate vernacular expression? In this regard, I think the folklorists looking after craft beer, urban gardening, and home canning are onto something, as the tip of a certain iceberg: the local foods movement, which conjoins expressive, hedonistic, identitarian, ethical, environmental, labor, health, and economic concerns and not coincidentally bridges generational, ethnic, class, and political divides more effectively than anything else I can think of going on at the moment (Christensen in press). Which, I repeat, is not to say it is a peaceful community of the likeminded: it is full of conflict and competition and irritants, preciousness and suspicion, rival organizational strategies fighting it out around a common predicament that forces interdependence upon us. Equally important, it is taking shape at a moment and in places where reasonable security and stability still exist, where work can be done. In short, for rich countries, it is where the action is—and thereby an arena wherein progressive collective invention might begin to take shape. There is no time to lose as regards our democratic and environmental emergencies: I hope that our field will rise to this occasion.

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## 10. Cultural Warming? Brazil in Berlin<sup>(10)</sup>

ALEXANDER STEPHAN'S ENDURING love-hate relationship with the United States stems from climatological as well as cultural and political factors: he often complains that nowhere in Europe is hot enough for him to live in. To be sure, recent summers suggest that Europe may be getting all too hot. But the continent, and in particular his native Germany, is warming up culturally too, in ways that may suggest an alternative to the Americanization of which he has so thoroughly documented the impact.

On May 16, 2005, the caipirinha stands were doing a brisk business on Gneisenaustrasse. Here in Kreuzberg, the longstanding heart of Turkish Berlin, the tenth annual celebration of the Karneval der Kulturen was under way, with a parade representing more than seventy organizations. It was estimated that five thousand performers participated and that a million and a half spectators attended the full three-day event, which comprised the parade, children's activities, a street market of crafts and food booths covering the huge Blücherplatz, and four concert stages: "Barrio Latino," "Bazaár Oriental," "Eurasia," and the African "Farafina."

In Berlin for a conference on precisely such multicultural "summer carnivals," I was one of the spectators.<sup>1</sup> Milling happily in a notably happy crowd, I bought a powerful

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<sup>1</sup> My understanding in great part from this excellent conference, *Performing Policy—Enacting Diversity: European Summer Carnivals in Comparative Perspective*, held 13–15 May, 2005, at Humboldt-Universität Berlin and the volume resulting from the earlier research project (Knecht and Soysal eds. 2005). A draft of this paper was presented at the Lusophone Globalities Colloquium at the Ohio State University in 2006; my thanks to that audience, Nina Berman, Richard Gordon, and Helen Fehervary for useful comments and to Alexander and Halina Stephan for years of illuminating conversation. I am not a specialist in Germany or in Brazil, and the errors are all my own.

<sup>(10)</sup> Originally published in 2007 for a *Festschrift*, this article reflects a state of affairs ante-dating the global and European economic crises. In 2015 the mood in Germany is different and considerably less xenophilic, and Brazil's own political and economic exuberance is much diminished. Still, the cultural change described here is still observable, and I hope at least some of the attendant intercultural sociability perdures. Alexander Stephan was a colleague at Ohio State's Mershon Center for International Security Studies, well-known for his studies of German exile and Cold War literature. At the time I knew him, before his too-early death in 2009, he was organizing a series of comparative projects on the impact of American culture in postwar Germany, Europe, and beyond. Originally published as "Cultural Warming? Brazil in Berlin," in *Kulturpolitik und Politik der Kultur. Festschrift für Alexander Stephan*, eds. Helen Fehervary and Bernd Fischer, vol 47 of *German Life and Civilization*. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 55–76.



“caipi” to wash down a bratwurst and a spinach börek, each from a separate stand. This improvised lunch might be seen as an allegory of the city’s experiential mix: an unemphatic German-Turkish workaday world juxtaposed with high-octane Brazilian alegría. Street foods such as the döner kebab and the currywurst reflect the unremarked hybridity of everyday life in the German capital,<sup>2</sup> but the caipirinha has special status as virtually the official Berlin festival drink (Soysal 2005, 260), consumed at the Karneval der Kulturen, the Love Parade, the Christopher Street Parade, and other times and places singled out as ludic escapes from the everyday. On Gneisenaustrasse it was not only the young and hip who were drinking it: I saw caipis in the hands of old people watching, with evident enjoyment, the flow of African rhythms and tropical-hued costumes down the streets of a city they had known under grimmer occupations.

If my hybrid meal reflected this real mix of ingredients in Berlin life, the festival as a whole was not precisely as advertised. Founded in 1996 by the Mayor’s Werkstatt der Kulturen in order to “present the cultural and ethnic diversity of Berlin” and thereby ease social conflict in the period of economic stress following German reunification,<sup>3</sup> the Carnival of Cultures was modelled on earlier European “spectacles of identity” (Soysal 2005, 272), occasions of cultural display intended to proclaim the presence and dignity of minority populations in a plural society. London’s Notting Hill Carnival, the first antecedent invoked by the Berlin organizers, emerged from the transplanted Carnival celebrations of Trinidadian immigrants. Activists expanded the event, which became politicized in a context of anti-black street violence; today it is a massive, eclectic pan-Caribbean street festival, uncomfortably tolerated in practice by local authorities in its gentrified neighborhood but proclaimed in theory as an example of London’s multicultural vitality. Rotterdam’s Zomercarnaval, another avowed model, has had more local government support and intervention as an equally overwhelming celebration focused on the Carnival traditions of Caribbean immigrants.

The Karneval der Kulturen of Berlin has, in turn, inspired successful new festivals in Bielefeld and Hamburg; its own success as a popular event among Berliners is indisputable. At the same time, the avowed secondary purpose of showcasing Berlin’s cultural creativity seems to have prospered more obviously than its primary purpose of easing the social integration of the immigrant population. That population, as exemplified by the Turkish inhabitants of Kreuzberg, was hardly to be seen at the parade: a mother with a stroller or a man doing his shopping occasionally passed through the crowd, but I saw no obvious ethnic Turks among the mass of spectators. In the evening it was different. Of the four concert stages, categorized by the ethnic source of the featured music, the “Oriental Bazaar” was crowded with Turkish-German families and young people. Germans were also present in the crowd, with no apparent tension but also no apparent social involvement: it might have been a public concert in Anatolia,

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<sup>2</sup> Unremarked except by such hyperreflective intellectuals as Alex Stephan, whose passionate devotion to the currywurst owes something to the category problem it incarnates.

<sup>3</sup> As per the festival website <http://www.karneval-berlin.de/>, retrieved 14 January 2007.

with young men greeting each other with kisses on the cheeks and dancing together. This was a single Turkish focal point in a multicultural event.

Of the seventy or more groups performing in the parade, only two represented the Anatolian communities of Berlin, and these stood out for the comparative formality of their performances. A Kurdish dance group showed more interest in political assertion than in artistic effect. Later came a float with the trained folk dancers of the Berlin Konservatorium für türkische Musik. In contrast, I counted six south or southeast Asian groups, six east Asian percussion or martial arts groups, thirteen African groups, five Caribbean, fourteen Spanish-speaking Latin American, and fourteen Brazilian. One of the Brazilian groups, Os Capitães de Areia, an affiliate of an organization in Minas Gerais, sponsored a concurrent three-day International Capoeira Festival.

The parade exhibited a clear hierarchy of rhythm, accentuated by the conditions of outdoor performance. A small troupe of Bangladeshi male dancers passed almost unnoticed, their subtle rhythms entirely drowned out by the samba band in front and the salsa band behind. European “folk” performance was still more disadvantaged: groups representing the Croat and Polish populations of Berlin had to depend on recorded music and a frankly elderly population of dancers. With some competition from Korean drummers, the clear crowd favorites were African diaspora performers, particularly those of Brazil: percussion blocos, samba schools in Carnaval costume, Candomblé initiates in white, capoeira groups.

In addition, the “spectacle of identity” was not quite what it seemed. The parade reflected the travels and tastes of native Germans as much as the presence of immigrants in Berlin. A number of the groups were homegrown and incorporated eclectic influences, broadcasting no clear controlled-appellation “culture.” Others such as DreamTime Tribal Art and Music, with its Australian aboriginal didgeridoos, hardly represented significant immigrant constituencies in Berlin: the performers were in fact white Germans.

Indeed, the vast majority of the groups were not constituted entirely or even primarily of immigrants from the countries whose cultures were being performed. Rather, under the tutelage of native performers, ethnic Germans were practicing music, martial arts, and ritual traditions from elsewhere with passion and notable competence. Typical was the first Brazilian bloco to perform. When I was able to tear my eyes from its leader—a beautifully proportioned man of color naked from the waist up, with a whistle in his mouth and big hands moving over his drum, slipping with great agility among his drummers as he guided their performance—I saw that the group was constituted almost entirely of European women, most looking to be in their thirties. Clearly, the music was not their day job: their hairstyles and clothing indicated office work and participation in mainstream Western middle class norms. Equally clearly, these women spent every spare hour rehearsing, and whatever mixture of motives my own reaction as a heterosexual white woman from the frozen North may suggest, they also took the music seriously. With eyes closed, I could not have guessed that the bloco was not constituted of Brazilians: these women were good.

Another recent event, the latest FIFA World Cup in 2006, highlighted not just German interest in Brazil but the importance of Brazilian performance in a changing German identity. The German media, echoed internationally, had feared outbursts of racist hostility and a resurgence of militarist patriotism in the context of a high-stakes sporting event with an onslaught of foreign visitors. Instead, all declared the old stereotypes overturned: Germans were, thankfully, still well-organized, but now they were warm and friendly too. No longer were they pessimistic and fearful of their own Germanness: they had relaxed into a “partyotism” of face-painting and silly hats in the national colors as they cheered for their national team. Even intellectuals slowly surrendered their misgivings for cautious euphoria. A headline in *Der Spiegel* summed it up as “How Germans Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Flag” (Somtheimer 2006).

It is less recognized that this untroubled *wir-Identität* was mediated through the identities of others. Once again, Brazil seems to have provided the point of reference. Brazil was highly visible during the World Cup at the institutional level. Although some of the high-profile cultural events were careful exhibitions of German history,<sup>4</sup> another major focus was the *Copa da Cultura*, a year-long festival of Brazilian culture staged in multiple German cities. This cooperation between the Brazilian Embassy and Berlin’s *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* featured prominently the musician and Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil along with legendary footballer Pelé. The “*Copa da Cultura*” coinage implied Brazilian superiority in culture as well as football and the centrality of both to national identity: “Culture and football—this liaison is a matter of course for a country in which a special feeling for the body, its movements, and its rhythms are basic to cultural identity.”<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, during the World Cup Germans invoked the supposedly embodied, ludic character of Brazilianness as the model of a “normal” national identity. “If the Brazilians, the Italians and everybody else fly their flags and show their colors, then why shouldn’t we Germans be allowed to do the same thing?” said a teenager to *Der Spiegel* (Somtheimer 2006). A middle-aged man covered in black, red, and gold denied that he was “proud” of being German but said that “craziness” shouldn’t be an exclusive privilege of the Argentines and the Brazilians (“Trying to be German,” 2006).

The German embrace of the visiting teams, especially those from southern countries, was widely remarked. *Der Spiegel* described the quartering of the team from Togo on the Allgäu region, where locals plastered the buildings with Togolese flags, dressed in Togolese colors, and cheered fervently for the Togolese team until it was

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<sup>4</sup> Here too the German enthusiasm for foreign identities was tactfully highlighted. Visitors to “Was ist deutsch?” at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg had their stereotypes of that city undermined by a closing tableau of the goddess Germania in close juxtaposition to Karl May’s rebellious Native American chief Winnetou, object of much German hobbyist masquerading. “Trying to Be German” 2006).

<sup>5</sup> From the *Copa da Cultura* website, [http://www.hkw.de/en/programm2006/copa\\_da\\_cultura/\\_copa\\_da\\_cultura/projekt-detail\\_3.php](http://www.hkw.de/en/programm2006/copa_da_cultura/_copa_da_cultura/projekt-detail_3.php), retrieved on 14 January 2007.

eliminated (*ibid.*). The Mexican team received a similar reception in Göttingen. Banks of flowers in the Mexican colors were planted along the viaduct on the road to the team's hotel; "Viva México!" appeared on banners through the historic center; a fiesta with Mexican food was offered to team and townspeople; and one day the Göttinger Tageblatt was published in Spanish (Regina Bendix, personal communication). For once the northerner did not plant himself on the southerner as a colonist or tourist; rather, the southerner was received as an honored guest. At the same time, the German hosts lost themselves in communing with another identity. Where a particular team was not locally housed, this identification was often with Brazil. Flags and jerseys in the universally recognized yellow, green, and blue were everywhere during the Cup: in stores, on façades, on bodies. Foreign observers remarked that many of the team's fans seemed not to be Brazilians but "fans who have simply adopted Brazil as their team" ("View From Germany" 2006).

This initial enthusiasm for other teams may be understood in great part as self-conscious world citizenship and also as an emotional investment where it seemed likely to pay off, given high expectations for Brazil's team and low expectations for Germany's. Later it became possible to root for Germany, especially as Germany's surprisingly strong performance in a ludic domain began to merit this enthusiasm. But one can speculate that many Germans had to experience joy and enthusiasm for another before they could indulge in it for themselves. Awash in a generous identification with the Other, they could emerge cleansed as Germans. It is hardly surprising that this was more easily effected in tropical waters than in the cold shower of confrontation with the Jewish past or the Turkish present at home (though innumerable Germans have of course honorably subjected themselves to these hygienic treatments as well<sup>6</sup>). The encounter with Brazil has been sought, not forced, and is not heavy with history. The Brazilian can be met with safety in the realm of play.<sup>7</sup>

## Cultural Xenophilia

Carnival, to be sure, is the paradigmatic realm of playful encounter with the other, and the Brazilians, as the acknowledged masters of world carnival, might be seen as the appropriate overseers for German identity repair: a reversal of power relations typical of carnivalesque inversion. But this inversion is also a displacement. The intimate others of traditional festival are replaced by those at a distance, and native symbolic resources

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<sup>6</sup> Obviously this is a far more complex process than I can address here, especially as there are also a Turkish past and a Jewish present to be reckoned with.

<sup>7</sup> This may not be true for all of Germany: Sarah Brooks suggests that Brazil has different resonances for the steelworkers of the Ruhr, for whom Brazilian industry provides the chief competition (personal communication, 2006). The important nineteenth-century German settlements in Brazil should also be mentioned, but thus far I have seen no evidence that they inform the current vogue for things Brazilian.

and processes are abandoned for foreign ones.<sup>8</sup> Germans have always longed for the South “where the lemon trees bloom,”<sup>9</sup> and their aesthetic-erotic escapes did not, of course, prevent the Holocaust at home. Like the “colonial fantasies” of early modern German fiction and the “ethnic drag” of twentieth century German Indian hobbyism, today’s Brazilian play might be understood as an evasion of historical responsibility, a wish-fulfillment, even a “technology of forgetting” more local anxieties (Zantop 1997; Sieg 2002, 84).

And in fact neither the *Karneval der Kulturen* nor the World Cup partook of the danger characteristic of traditional Carnival. Traditional carnival has a tense and powerful relationship to everyday life: it is what Victor Turner calls “liminal,” a threshold state in which everyday hierarchies and contradictions are laid open to manipulation and transformation. Carnival confronts community members with one another, and though each may play the other, with men becoming women and the classes switching places, difference rather than sameness is highlighted and violence often results.

The significant differences that foster conflict were not performed at the *Karneval der Kulturen*, and in any case contemporary plural consumer societies no longer partake in shared rituals of liminality, which have been displaced and fragmented into what Turner coined the “liminoid” (1974, cf. Borneman 2005). Contemporary festivals, even those of long tradition, have become another form of leisure, along with tourism, theatre, sport, television, and so on, and in the modern period they became increasingly spectacles designed from above, with attendees consuming rather than co-creating symbols. Despite all its ethnic imagery, the atmosphere of the *Karneval der Kulturen* among the spectators was much like that of Berlin’s Love Parade: what Borneman and Senders, following Adorno, call “sensuous mimesis,” the communion of bodies without the communication of messages. The true genre of the event is not Carnival but—in the popular anglicism that itself displaces local practices and their attendant historical weight—“Party.” (Borneman and Senders 2000). Absent the hard work of ritual, the “magical incorporation” of the *Karneval* was unlikely, John Borneman argued at the Humboldt conference, to endure as a social effect.

The multicultural enthusiasm of such celebrations might be thus dismissed as the Caipei Effect: a brief intoxication perhaps subject to a following hangover and in any case unlikely to translate into voting patterns or increased friendliness to immigrant neighbors.<sup>10</sup> But, says Turner, the liminoid has own uses. The fragmented realm of modern leisure is less focused and less normative than ritual but by the same token freer, allowing experimentation and creativity to unfold. Furthermore, in contemporary

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<sup>8</sup> Germany’s own carnival tradition falls most importantly in the Rhineland and the south rather than in Berlin, so one cannot speak of a direct substitution.

<sup>9</sup> “Wo die Zitronen blühen,” a line from Mignon’s song “Kennst du das Land” in Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–96). From settings by Schubert and many others, this statement of yearning for Italy has long been one of the most famous poems in German.

<sup>10</sup> In any case, the crowd that attends such festivals is presumably not the xenophobic fragment of the population.

postindustrial society the realm of leisure has become the locus in which personal identity is shaped. The full resources of an affluent consumer culture are brought to this all-important task. This rather than social integration is the primary sphere of contemporary festival efficacy, an important transformation of the genre.

Hence the return to participation after the massifications of the twentieth century: even new mass spectacles are designed to create the illusion of audience participation. In the framework of leisure, sociologists talk of the “pro-am [professional-amateur] revolution” (Leadbeater and Miller 2004), a new culture of vernacular expertise in which avocation becomes real vocation and people give their time not to watching television but to passionate activity in a chosen field. In a more alternative key, European ethnologists speak of the “urban tribes,” self-identified subcultures which develop their own complex forms of being and belonging through intensive focused interactions, and which are becoming the normal mode of youth culture (Costa, Tornero and Tropea 1996). In this regard we should consider not only the million and a half spectators of the *Karneval der Kulturen*, but the five thousand parade participants.

The participants in the parade do not transform themselves for a weekend only, nor do they take off their social learning when they take off their costume. On the contrary, the performance forms featured in the parade require long apprenticeship and rehearsal. Moreover, costumes must be made; money must be raised for instruments and floats and costumes and warehouse and rehearsal space. All of these activities take place year-round, sometimes in immigrant-run businesses such as the East Asian martial arts academies but more often in voluntary associations. Some of these are neighborhood-based; some are ludic associations of friends; some espouse social causes; and many join immigrants and ethnic Germans in sociability. The samba band *Furiosa* emerged from the casual jamming over caipis of habitués in a Brazilian-themed Berlin bar; its leader is a Brazilian who came to Berlin after an affair with a German vacationer grew serious. Members of the group speak of their amateur status, and doing it for fun while at the same time taking on the challenge of public performance and working “to become genuinely good” (Kreutzer 2005, 137). Similarly, the capoeira society *Capitães de Areia* is directed by an Afro-Brazilian immigrant and his German life partner.<sup>11</sup> German group members speak of discovering capoeira as a fashionable sport in gyms, then of turning from Western-style engagement with its purely physical aspects to a holistic deepening of learning and context, including research through books and films to prepare the annual theme of the performance. Following their leader’s desire to promote the culture and “*Lebensphilosophie*” of capoeira, they assume responsibility as mediators of a foreign culture to the Berlin public, speaking of both the strong social network within the group and their sense of community with that larger public. “Whether Brazilians, Africans, Germans, Turks, or whomever. We want to talk to all of them” (Haffner 2005, 212–222).

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<sup>11</sup> Knecht explains the practical advantage of transnational couples in these situations, one partner bringing exotic cultural competence, the other providing necessary forms of social and economic capital

This emergence of “pro-am” German sambistas and capoeiristas, expert ambassadors of foreign cultures, might still give us pause. Katrin Sieg remarks on the transformation of German Indian hobbyism from “‘low’ entertainment to quasi-scientific endeavor”: how individual participants are transformed “from enthusiast to expert” and “‘serious’ mimesis” emerges from “inauthentic masquerade” (Sieg 2002, 124). This transformation, she argues, gives Germans even more the upper hand in relation to actual Native Americans, presumed to have lost much of their traditional knowledge over time. Interactions are thus potentially paternalist and patronizing. Moreover, she observes, hobbyism does not work in reverse: persons of color cannot engage successfully in serious mimesis of the unmarked Western actor (*ibid.*, 148).<sup>12</sup>

But our situation here is different. These German enthusiasts are not playing in “ethnic drag”—they are not masquerading as Brazilian either in mockery or in identification. Rather, they are learning and practicing Brazilian skills. Unlike the Native American Plains culture beloved of Indian hobbyists, the Brazilian culture being performed is not of the past but of the present. And crucially, this cultural knowledge is not acquired at a distance through the mediation of books, but in direct apprenticeship from members of the culture who may also be friends, lovers, or neighbors. The parade had an estimated 4500 performers in 2005, 5000 in 2006. Based on the proportions I saw, we can guess conservatively that 3000 of the current 5000 are of European ancestry. Of those at least 2500 are practicing some kind of art from the Global South, usually under the tutelage of immigrants. Enthusiastic and committed, they are taking their new knowledge back into their own social networks of families, friends, and co-workers. There is no reason to believe that significant social learning is not being seeded by these pattern of interaction.<sup>13</sup>

Such interactions are becoming a broader feature of German life. German tourism is increasingly a matter of long-term engagements with the south and southern peoples: consider the longterm impact of summer homes in Spain, with Spanish now the foreign language most widely studied in German universities after English. Travel to destinations further south is well-established and widespread among middle-class Germans, characterized by repeat visits and extensive interaction with local people (e.g., for Kenya, Berman 2004, 175–212). A survey of German tourists conducted in 2002 by the Brazilian tourist authority Embratur shows a committed network of visitors: 73.53% named “information from friends” as their primary influence in deciding to come to Brazil; 89.35% had not come with a tour but made their own arrangements; 64.50% were repeat visitors and 96.43% expressed their intention of returning, with

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within Germany (2005, 24).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 148. One must provide some historical nuance here, for plural societies tend to enlarge access to the category of whiteness or citizenship as changing demographics make it necessary: this is true of the U.S and seems likely to become true of northern Europe soon—though some population seems always necessary as the sociocultural Other to the unmarked norm.

<sup>13</sup> Compare the intergenerational learning that takes place in long-term goal-directed leisure activities as described by Heath (1998).

83.43% declaring their expectations fully met or exceeded. It is worth noting that the most popular destination after Rio de Janeiro was Salvador de Bahía, capital of the state with the largest population of African origin in the country and a celebrated Carnival.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the everyday North is becoming more southern in feel: there is the intense influence of Italian, Turkish, and other southern cuisines on everyday German foodways; there is the growth of street sociability that receives institutional strength from an economic strategy of “festivalizing” or “Mediterraneanizing” city centers (Welz 1996; Binder 2005). Repeat visitors to Germany comment on how much more pleasant and attractive the country is becoming year by year; native commentators, supporting the stereotype of German anxiety, ask whether the country is going soft and losing its work ethic.

The hedonic recovery of Germany post-1968 drew on one side from a serious reckoning with the guilt of the national past (Lebow 2006, 33). While Germany was redefined as a space of negativity, its culture too contaminated to build upon, positive resources were drawn from abroad—most visibly, from American popular culture but also from Italy and the global south (Stephan 2006). The old European dualism of the intellect and the sensual body, long projected onto global geography, began to be transvalued just as immigration and tourism begin to undo the north-south boundary in individual experience. If intellect gone arrogant had been responsible for Germany’s horrors, then the body might become the source of humility and solidarity. Thus the northern body was no longer consciously subjected to disciplines that would govern its dangers, but indulged in its needs and desires.<sup>15</sup> The south, as the imagined domain of this indulgence, rose in cultural status accordingly, and German cultural fantasy moved still more massively southward than it had done in the days of the Romantics. But fantasy and reality in a consumer culture live in intimacy, not radical separation: Germany itself loosened its limbs.

Though its history accentuates the change, Germany is of course not alone in this hunger to create carefree, sensual community: it affects all wealthy northern countries. The cultural slot formerly occupied by the “folkloric”—self-conscious performances of local traditions evoking the presumed *Gemeinschaft* of earlier times—now belongs to “world cultures.” Where the folkloric is thought of by most middle-class Europeans as dead, set off in staged performance and ethnographic museums, world culture is conceived as vital, offering immediate sensual, spiritual, and social gratifications. Its formats offer not just bodily participation but initiation and possession. In Carnival, capoeira and Candomblé, Brazil offers a notable ensemble of practices that have become available to northern Europeans, to say nothing of the low-level low-effort in-

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<sup>14</sup> The survey results are summarized at <http://www.v-brazil.com/tourism/embratur/germany.html>, retrieved 14 January 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Less speculatively, we can speak of a reaction to wartime deprivation and the new consumer possibilities of the “economic miracle.”



corporations of drinking and dancing.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to these new ludic disciplines and the everyday hybridities that parallel them, Europeans are inhabiting a transformed body. This is not temporary inversion but cultural change. And in its gradual and unforeseen character we might draw an analogy and christen it “cultural warming.”

German commentators, as I say, have already found reason for alarm, imagining that the changing cultural ecology will also transform the economy, eroding the work ethic and consequently German prosperity. (To be sure, given larger transformations of the global industrial economy, German cultural change is surely a red herring.) Some conservative critics see a threat to national identity, a loss of indigenous traditions, while a more sophisticated anxiety sees German culture not as dying but as festivalizing itself and reducing itself to tourist attraction, as southern cultures have already been obliged to do. A more positive side has also been addressed: German public culture really is more pacifist, tolerant, and foreigner-friendly than it used to be. But there is a larger question of the global cultural ecology—and economy. What happens to Brazil when Germany heats up?

## Global Cultural Climate Change

The metaphor of cultural warming suggests an alarming scenario: the North warms up and the South gets scorched. Ecological desertification has been the longterm consequence of the systematic extraction of natural resources from the South and the turn to large-scale monocultures. The extraction of inexpensive labor (and indeed bodies, given global patterns of organ sale, adoption, and so on) has exacted a similarly high toll on southern “human resources” over the years. Today cultural resources are subject to the same transfer and might be seen as comparably vulnerable. To be sure, culture is renewable and nonrival: that is, unlike a given quantity of minerals or man-hours, a song may be used by one person without exhausting it or preventing its simultaneous use by another. Nonetheless, the popularity of Brazilian culture in the North might, under present conditions, be seen as posing certain long-term risks to the culture and the country.

First there is that question of monoculture. Not all of the South interests the North. The south of street sociability and sensual intoxication is not a complete projection of northern fantasy: Germans are imitating real practices. But it is at least “metonymic misrepresentation,” a mistaking of selected phenomena associated with the South for the South in its entirety (Fernandez 1987). All of Brazilian life is not Carnival, as Roberto da Matta explains with particular clarity: other aspects of Brazilian society are emblemized in the military parades and religious processions (1991, 26–60). Brazil too has hierarchy, repression, racism, labor, business, and boredom. When northern

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<sup>16</sup> Brazil’s popular arts are conspicuous but hardly alone in this tendency; they do seem to inflect the longstanding appropriation of eastern and southern performance forms with a more ludic, less therapeutic tinge in comparison to yoga, Sufi dancing, southern Italian tarantismo, and others.

Europeans turn from their own practices of celebration and inversion to borrow those from further south, they project the logic of Carnival onto world geography, equating below the Equator with below the waist.

In Brazil, the international interest resulting from this projection has helped to confer prestige on lower-class, African-inflected culture. Since the 1930s, when the state looked to its tri-racial past as the basis for a distinctive national identity, through the international projection of the *Tropicália* artistic counterculture in the 1970s and the subsequent boom of international tourism (van de Port 2005, 10), Afro-Brazilian culture has steadily risen in domestic status, culminating in the 2003 appointment of the singer-songwriter Gilberto Gil as Minister of Culture. Such a cultural levelling might certainly have beneficial social consequences, though as with the patrimonialization of traditional culture elsewhere it also allows elites to appropriate the culture of the poor as the common property of the nation (Haffner 2005, 214–215, following van de Port). At the same time, the strong external market may encourage flattening as well as levelling, robbing the larger Brazilian culture of resources to renew itself. And the market is unlikely to be eternal: Europeans may come to find their home-grown fusions more interesting, or another southern country such as Cuba may soon provide a comparable good with more novelty value. When Carnival is over you are left with Ash Wednesday—as New Orleans, for example, has learned.<sup>17</sup>

It is not easy for individuals at the grassroots to make money off of traditional culture. Dada, the Brazilian leader of *Furiosa*, complains that the band's Berlin clients object to their fees for performing: people see the fun but not the expenses. This "ethnic economy" of leisure activities, Erich Kreutzer observes, being almost wholly informal, offers ease of entry but little security (2005, 140). Moreover, the norms of festival behavior repudiate its commoditization: the meaning of festival takes shape through a gift economy, and even such thoroughly commercialized Western holidays as Christmas must invoke the gift economy as an enabling fiction. For members of societies where popular tradition is only beginning to be commodified it may be socially and emotionally impossible to observe market rationalities when sharing ritual traditions with Western consumers. In any case it would be self-defeating: the most "authentic" and thus most valuable practices are precisely those most vulnerable to transformation in kind when touched by the market.

Thus there has typically been a division of labor in the commodification of world culture. The source retains its authenticity by providing an unfinished product, which is processed, packaged, and marketed in the West. All this, of course, is the added value: the South finds itself once again in the position of supplying raw material for which the profits will be made elsewhere. Some former colonial capitals have seen their opportunity and launched a second "empire" of culture: the Spanish *Sociedad General*

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<sup>17</sup> Written in 2007, two years after Katrina; today we might say that even more than in the past, Carnival constitutes the front stage and Ash Wednesday the back stage for many New Orleanians. See chapter 15.

de Autores y Editores, for example, declared in the late 1990s its intention of monopolizing Spanish-language cultural production, of which the most salable commodities come from Latin America (Noyes 2006, 327–328). Thus the northern thirst to soothe historical guilt through a redemptive encounter with the south threatens only to repeat the damage, sucking still more vitality out of the victim (Noyes 2004; cf. chapter 7).

One proffered solution has been gaining traction. According to Simon Anholt, ubiquitous consultant on national identity management and coiner of the phrase “nation branding,” emerging economies should work their competitive advantages of exoticism, authentic difference, and ethical appeal by developing and owning the intangible “story” that sells the consumer product; they cannot afford the sentimentality of repudiating commoditization, since their traditions are already being commodified by others. Brazil is his cardinal example of a neglected opportunity: “Brazil itself is surely one of the most powerful brands in the world.” Brazilian companies should be creating brands for export that highlight their origin in the country associated by millions with “ecstatic samba dancing at carnival time; the rainforests as endangered as they are exotic; sex, magic, beaches, sport, adventure, music, style, grace, *joie de vivre*...” (Anholt 2005, 112). Instead, this “quintessential youth brand” brings profit to northern-owned firms: the Body Shop as it celebrates the rainforest, Nike as it sponsors Brazil’s football team, and, more directly, the US-based swim-wear company Reef Brazil (*ibid.*, 112–114).

Perhaps there is more than just a market niche. It was clear in the parade that strong rhythms drive out weak, that when many music and dance forms are on offer the crowd’s attention and the participants’ labor will turn to those rhythms that most efficiently excite a bodily response. But this is not simply the triumph of the lowest common denominator, physiological instinct. Rather, Brazilian music, especially in its most African-influenced genres, builds on that erotic appeal with a high level of complex organization: it maintains interest by a sophisticated elaboration of its libidinal base. If the West has spread its technology around the world while the East is similarly extending its religions, Brazil might reasonably aspire to rhythmic hegemony.

Instead of a homogenization of the world into American culture, we might expect the world to end up more like the old joke about heaven being the place where the French are the cooks, the Italians are the lovers, and so on. With decreasing transaction costs and freer international competition, the wealthy layer of the world’s population is exposed to the best the globe has to offer: what is at once technically most accomplished and drawing on the broadest appeals to our common cognitive, corporeal, and historical endowments. We can wear Italian fashion, read Indian novels, follow Tibetan lamas, watch Hong Kong action films and Japanese animation, and eat Thai cuisine. The Brazilians will give our parties—and in all this concern about cultural property we will continue not to ask too many questions about who owns the technology. In this new organic solidarity, the specialization of functions will be global.

In a context of general cultural warming, the consequences are still more complex. In a consumer culture the sphere of leisure has special importance: as we have said, it is bound up with personal identity, and insofar as leisure retains its ritual

roots—in sport, festival, etc.—it is also bound up with national identity. The World Cup, the Olympic Games, and the rapidly expanding heritage protection initiatives in intergovernmental organizations (chapter 13) contribute to a logic both intra- and international in which cultural representation is bound up with political representation. We see this in the constitutive assumption of the *Karneval der Kulturen* that cultural performance normalizes social presence. But this assumption creates problems in the market competition of cultural goods, when Brazil has rhythmic hegemony and Muslim performances are drowned out.<sup>18</sup> More importantly, the burgeoning of intercultural performance collides with the emergence of a very different Islamist public culture and a broader ethos of interiority, sobriety, and control in many Muslim communities.<sup>19</sup> European cultural warming and its attendant fusions might tend to foster a clash of civilizations.

Steven Feld observes that responses to globalization's impact on culture, as to globalization in general, fall into two polarized camps: the celebratory and the alarmist (2000). In his example, world music, the two camps occupy different positions in relation to the phenomenon. The performers (both Western and developing-world) are enthusiastic, at least in the context of the performance itself, while the critics look at the question from a distance, with a particular eye to its economic consequences. Granting the critics' point that the economic consequences of cultural warming for the south are opaque at best, we might nonetheless consider the enthusiasm of the performers as opening up a small window for political optimism.

Like the professional musicians in northern countries who have worked seriously with musicians of the south, the Germans and other northerners who learn samba, capoeira, and so on from southern immigrants experience personal gratification from the experience with a new art form, respect for the skills of their southern teachers, and social pleasure from learning to cooperate across cultural and socioeconomic boundaries. The legitimacy of this pleasure may be a matter for debate but it is real enough. It matters too that these encounters take place in largely nonprofessionalized settings where the power differential is minimal compared to that between, say, Paul Simon

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<sup>18</sup> To be sure, when not juxtaposed with other performances in a noisy parade setting, many Sufi performance genres have achieved notable international currency.

<sup>19</sup> The scarcity of Muslim participants in the *Karneval der Kulturen* suggests some of the discomfort, cultural or social, that is found also in other Western cities. In London, for example, the relentless creation of street festivals to revitalize urban neighborhoods met with a brick wall in Brick Lane: the local imam suggested that public sermons might be an appropriate activity through which to represent the community (Eade 2005). The website of the 2006 Brick Lane Festival features Caribbean musicians and scantily clad women from the neighborhood's gentrified fashion industry; the Bangladeshi curry houses provide the only obvious Muslim participation. This difference within "diversity" must be elided in the rhetoric of the event: in an "Ode to Brick Lane" we learn "All the world's cultures have come to the carnival/Remixing culture by association/That's why we're proud to call Brick Lane our home/We're sowing the seeds for the new British nation" (<http://www.bricklanefestival.com/>, retrieved 14 January 2007). Even the poem, however, notes the muezzin's call and the Bengali pensioners frowning at the dancing as disruptive elements of the streetscape.

and Ladysmith Black Mambazo. The same gift economy that makes it difficult for Brazilian teachers to make money sharing their skills also places the German apprentices under social obligations to their teachers. Traditional knowledge circulates with attendant obligations as to the rules of its use and the nature of its meaning. The social relationship in which this cultural learning is embedded makes it more difficult to violate those obligations without high emotional and social costs.

Alex Stephan argues that the influence of American commercial mass culture—comics, movies, rock music, jeans—fostered a cultural democratization in postwar Germany and Europe generally, allowing native high and low culture to mix more easily, and opening to a broader internationalization of culture, an unbuttoning (Stephan 2006, 86–87). This was an important step toward today's cultural warming. The Brazilian culture now in vogue opens further opportunity for a democratization that is not purely cultural. To a greater extent than the American postwar culture, the Brazilian influence is not of mass-mediated but of street culture. To be sure, the American culture also had African roots and lower-class associations, but the Brazilian influence is more exclusively that of the Afro-Brazilian lower class, and it is arriving less through mass advertising than through social networks born of interpersonal encounters. Moreover, it arrives in a moment when mass media themselves are giving way to a more various and more-user controlled participatory leisure culture.

It is also not insignificant that this participatory culture takes shape inside voluntary associations joining Europeans and southerners. Working together on defined goals—such as presenting a prize-winning band in the *Karneval der Kulturen*—necessarily entails negotiation over authority, deliberative processes, the division of labor, and so on; this is still more complex for the growing number of transnational associations on the European festival circuit. Voluntary associations have long been recognized by political theorists as a key domain of civil society that provides an apprenticeship in democratic practice. It matters that in these associations the crucial capital—the cultural mastery—is held not by the Europeans but by the southerners.

For it is worth remembering that the Brazilians have some global prominence at the moment as innovators in the field of participatory democracy. The municipal deliberative procedures created in Belem and Porto Alegre in the 1990s have been influential at both the national level, with the election of Lula da Silva's *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, and at the international, with Brazil's leadership of the World Social Forum as a focus for development of alternatives to neoliberalism. While the *Karneval der Kulturen* performers may not be political activists for the most part, their complex cultural activities create a space in which participatory political practice can be naturalized, become habitual—and who knows? The effects of cultural warming, like those of global warming, cannot be predicted with any certainty. Unlike those of global warming, however, it is possible to hope they may benefit some dwellers on this planet.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Rereading this in 2015, I am embarrassed to have expressed even such qualified optimism on intercultural learning and pushback to government by the financial markets. Compare, however, Borland

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and Adams ed. (2013) on the potential of global solidarity movements if very carefully managed and

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with leadership taken by the non-Euro-American partners. We must find encouragement somewhere.

# 11. Fairy-Tale Economics: Scarcity, Risk, Choice<sup>(11)</sup>

ECONOMISTS TELL STORIES about how people behave. The setup is always the same: an actor is confronted with a choice and must make a decision. Should he (it's usually a he) take a quick, assured return or wait for a less certain but larger payoff? Should he place his trust in another actor and collaborate for a larger joint profit, or act alone to make sure he is not cheated, so that at any rate he comes away with something? When he's played the same game for a long time, will he keep paying attention as the next decision comes?

The game experiments used by economists to predict human behavior generate a certain range of stories as different players try out different strategies in successive iterations of the game. The stories also change insofar as economists with different commitments observe the outcomes. In one common story, it pays to seek short-term gain in a context of extreme uncertainty; in alternative versions, staying the course for the long term leads to far greater profit. In a second much-told story, the maximization of self-interest can only be pursued alone. But a different telling discovers that cooperation brings not only greater stability but also bigger long-term benefit for all parties. The limited matrix of elements becomes an arena in which fundamental human tendencies play themselves out: rationality, habit, and impulse; self-interest, cooperation, and the sense of fairness; conformity and self-assertion.<sup>1</sup> In any encounter of strategies there are winners and losers, better and worse outcomes among the players.

How much is changed when we change the idiom? Here is an example of what the comparative tradition of folklore studies calls the *Märchen*, what we know in English as the fairy tale. A hero saves a snake princess from a fire and is offered any reward by her father, the King of Snakes: maybe he'd like a nice bag of gold? The hero says no, he wants to know the language of animals. The snake tries to dissuade him: knowledge is dangerous and can get you into trouble, he says. But the hero is both obstinate and attentive. Later he is walking down the road past a gibbet where two thieves have been hanged; he overhears the crows on the gibbet discussing where the loot has been hidden. The cache proves much larger than the bag of gold he was originally offered

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<sup>1</sup> See Axelrod 1984 for an accessible account of the range of strategies and outcomes that occur in cooperation games; McCloskey 1984 (and in later work) considers economics as a mode of storytelling.

<sup>(11)</sup> Reprinted by permission of Wayne State University Press. Originally published as "Fairy-Tale Economics: Scarcity, Risk, Choice," *Narrative Culture*, 2.1 (2015): 1–26.



(Agonito 1967, 54–55). This story was told in the early 1960s by Italian immigrants in Syracuse, New York; we may note that immigrant families in that era had to decide whether to keep their children in school or take them out early to go into assured factory jobs.<sup>2</sup>

Or consider the familiar contrast of kind and unkind behavior in fairy tales. The story of the good girl who is rewarded for helping other creatures in need with riches falling from her hair and mouth, while the selfish stepsister receives toads and vipers (ATU 480),<sup>3</sup> is perhaps too schematic to be altogether compelling to the listener. But other tales contrast more realistically the difference of outcomes between the self-absorbed, self-interested actor and the one who listens, shares food, and offers labor along the road to his or her ordeal, receiving timely instruction and assistance in return. This is an object lesson in social reciprocity among the vulnerable, and also in paying attention to your surroundings (cf. Chapter 5). A calculus is usually present, to be sure; many tales from oral tradition point out the riskiness of unthinking adherence to the highest moral standard. Sometimes when you rescue a snake it turns and kills you (ATU 155). Pure kindness toward an actor too weak to reciprocate is a luxury when the situation is desperate, while continued generosity toward someone who proves to play selfishly would be sheer folly (Mathias and Raspa 1985, “The Gourd of Blood”). Being smart can be more important than being good, and being lucky often trumps either.

The traditional fairy tale also explores decision making over the long term. “Godfather Death” (ATU 332) is a story about success and hubris. The hero has an attentive father, who chooses a powerful godfather who can assist his child. The father is also concerned with fairness. Death, unlike God, plays no favorites, and unlike the Devil, plays no tricks. Death makes the son a great doctor, who can predict the survival of the patient based on Death’s position at the head or foot of the sickbed. Succeeding as long as he obeys Death’s decision—the law of nature or justice or perhaps simple authority—the son grows rich and prosperous. But success goes to his head and he starts to presume on the relationship, defying Death to save the life of the king. Warned not to disobey again, he falls to temptation and takes a still bigger risk for the supreme reward: if he saves the king’s daughter he can marry her and become heir to the throne. Death then takes him in place of the daughter. Here we might compare an iterative game, where the player trusts to prior success and takes risks that are no longer based in a sound assessment of circumstance and probabilities. This “irrational exuberance” is not limited to game experiments, alas, but continues to plague global financial markets—with the difference that in real life the price for the godson’s hubris is paid by others.

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<sup>2</sup> This tale shares the opening incident of ATU 670, “The Man Who Understands Animal Languages,” but is structurally and ideologically more akin to ATU 671, “The Three Languages,” in which the hero is driven out by his father for wasting time learning the “useless” language of animals—knowledge that eventually makes him a rich pope.

<sup>3</sup> ATU numbers refer to the updated index *The Types of International Folktales* (Uther 2004).

Microeconomics is much more than its representative anecdote, and the grand sweep of the fairy tale across time, cultures, and media cannot be reduced to plot summaries. Still, both the social science and the vernacular genre are exercises in modeling the behavior of individuals. In particular, both are concerned with how individuals in competition with other individuals decide among their options. Both consider how these decisions contribute to the happiness of the individuals concerned and, by ambiguous extension, to general utility. One narrative model strips down everyday life almost to pure mathematics: the moves of a game in a laboratory. The other inflates its manifold linkages to the everyday world of the audience into portentous extremes and polarities; it dresses up the everyday with magic and shiny things, beauty and violence (Luthi [1975] 1984). One kind works through abstraction, the other through typification. Each kind of model provides a space for negotiation at two levels. As the actors are torn between principles, desires, and the rational pursuit of interests under constraint, their narrators also vacillate, sometimes trying to set norms, sometimes indulging in wish fulfillment, and occasionally paying enough attention to attain insight into the world as it is.

Both models rose along with modernity and attained general social influence during the Industrial Revolution, a period of rapid capitalist expansion that created new choices and trade-offs for individuals. Since then each has remained central to what economist John Kenneth Galbraith named the “conventional wisdom,” persisting beyond the circumstances of its formulation through a process of tweaking and revision. For as Galbraith noted, while we may be spendthrift with things, we tend to be economical with mental effort.

In this essay, writing as an interested observer rather than as an expert in Märchen scholarship, much less microeconomics, I trace some apparent correlations between innovations in the fairy-tale plot and shifts in the structure of opportunities available to working people in the modern West. Drawing on Vladimir Propp’s formulation of fairy-tale structure as a yardstick of change, I pick a few diagnostic moments from the rise of mass European emigration in the late nineteenth century to the days of the consumer bubble economy in the United States at the turn of the millennium. To be sure, part of what changes is the means of production and reception of the tales themselves. The oral tales collected in the nineteenth century constitute, through their variation in performance, a space of analysis and debate among poor people evaluating their life options. Later mass-produced fairy tales, though highly diverse in surface decor and variably appropriated, often urge their audience to choose what has been chosen for it (Bourdieu [1979] 1984).

## The Generic Inheritance

Studying Afanasyev’s classic collection of Russian fairy tales in the 1920s, Vladimir Propp made explicit the implicit knowledge of any oral raconteur or indeed listener.

Stripped of their decor, all fairy tales are the same story. As is well known, Propp identified thirty-one steps of the fairy-tale plot, which he called functions insofar as each contributes to the logic of the whole ([1928] 1968). Every story would not contain every function and conversely some functions might be redoubled and repeated, but the functions are essentially constant, appearing always in the same order. Propp's schema for the Russian tale fits well enough to neighboring European traditions to have been readily adapted to the study of Western narrative in general. It has even been used by video game designers and other creators of mass culture as a template for the generation of new material.<sup>4</sup>

The story of the young person who leaves a problematic home, encounters tests and obstacles, accomplishes a task, and is recognized, rewarded, and installed in a new home, remains a prominent cultural script. It is instilled by endless iteration, for the most part no longer oral but including children's adaptations of the Brothers Grimm, Disney movies, family stories, and the myriad genres of mass, alternative, and high culture. The fairy tale is our touchstone for articulating the normative life course of the individual. As many scholars have concluded, its magical elements are mostly window dressing; the world of the fairy tale shares our own mundane preoccupations with family life, work, sex, property, power, and identity. The continual reworking of its wholly formulaic plot and personae provides scope for an uneasy interplay between didacticism, wish fulfillment, and subversion both conscious and unconscious.

Scholars observing the performance contexts of oral Märchen collected in western Europe have generally recognized that the psychological tensions of the fairy tale center not only on the nuclear family and gender relations, as literary scholars have stressed, but also on social class and economic possibility, critical constraints on the ability to marry and form a new family. Anticipating Ruth Bottigheimer's argument that the European fairytale as we know it emerges with the merchant capitalism of the early modern period (Bottigheimer 2002),<sup>5</sup> Roger D. Abrahams observed that early twentieth-century Italian fairy tales are narratives of the entry into capitalism, as the hero leaves a world of scarce resources for one of broader opportunities (1985). Historians and ethnographers have sought to link structural and surface elements of the tales to the specificities of peasant predicaments (e.g., E. Weber 1981; Darnton 1985; Schenda 1986; Holbek 1987; Schneider 1989).<sup>6</sup> The oral Märchen of European peasant communities on the cusp of modernization presents its protagonist, I repeat, as an

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<sup>4</sup> The first among several "Propp fairy-tale generators" appears to have been developed by programmers at the Complutense University of Madrid in 2005: <<http://www.fdi.ucm.es/profesor/fpeinado/projects/kiids/apps/protoprop/>>. Retrieved January 6, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> But not her curious insistence that if the fairy tale responds to historical circumstance it must therefore be the literary invention of a single author or her argument that a single version, the "rise tale" in which the hero ascends by magic, correlates with the capitalist moment.

<sup>6</sup> This essay was completed before I was pointed to Tangherlini's illuminating study of market trades in Danish fairy tales, which draws in turn on Lindow and other studies of economic models in buried treasure legends (2012).

individual confronted with choices, a person who has desires and principles but who also makes calculations, takes risks, and invests in future outcomes that cannot be known with certainty. Goodness, beauty, bravery, and trickery—or, we might say, a social ethos, inherited capital, risk tolerance, and opportunism—compete for preeminence as paths to advancement. Oral tales tend to exhibit strong tension between normative and realistic strategies, often calling on magical elements to load the dice so that the happy ending is spared moral ambiguity.

So what happens to the story as economic conditions alter? Certainly the decor changes when commercial authors take up the genre. In fairy tales so labeled it becomes more elaborate, more aggressively archaic or fantastic, as the genre itself is specialized into children's literature and other genres of limited reach. In the modern novel, which for the middle class replaces the oral tale as the privileged genre for the modeling of subjectivity formation and the individual life course, the decor alters to reflect the realia of the present, and fantastic elements may disappear entirely, while Propp's plot is stretched, broken and remolded, or cast aside altogether.

Still, from the emergence of cheap print to the present, the fairytale plot has continued to generate a great range of commercial fictions produced for mass audiences. The necessity of inducing those audiences to repeat consumption has made for a balancing act between efficiency, variation, and identification. As Propp himself demonstrated, the formulaic structure of the tale provides an ideal mediation between efficiency of production and variety in the product. But for the consumer to become emotionally engaged with the fiction, more is necessary. Janice Radway's pathbreaking study of readers of the romance novel demonstrated that readers identify vicariously with protagonists through an active reading of specific novels against an ideal-typical plot reflecting their preferences, on the one hand, and the realities of their own lives, on the other, all under the influence of prevailing ideology (1984). With a broader sweep and an admittedly crude but serviceable vulgar-Marxist framework, I point out that the fairy-tale plot undergoes characteristic transformations across the longer history of modernity as it moves from European peasant communities into increasingly capitalistic and liberal societies. Formed in a world of scarcity and zero-sum thinking, the Western fairy tale has been adapted, through countless iterations, to a world of material abundance and expanding possibilities. It responds to a shift in the default expectations of individuals from constraint and frustration to choice and fulfillment.

Let us remind ourselves briefly of the *dramatis personae* Propp described. We have a hero or a heroine, the protagonist whose fate is played out in the course of the story.<sup>7</sup> According to Propp, the story details the struggle of the hero to obtain a Princess in marriage, but we can define the Princess in more abstract terms as the Object: it might be a marriage partner, it might simply be wealth, or it might be something else.

Aligned with the hero are three subordinate roles that assist in moving the action forward. The dispatcher is the usually elderly figure who sends the hero away from

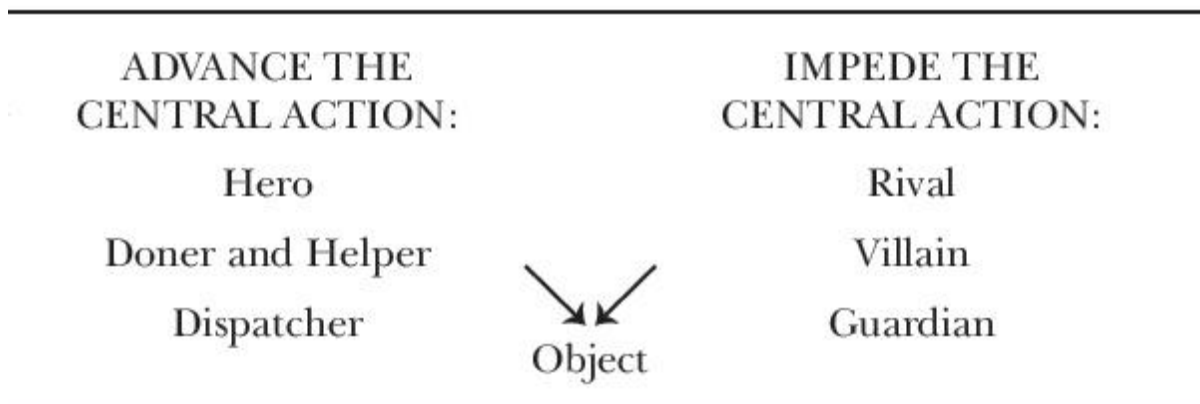
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<sup>7</sup> I follow Propp's pronouns, but unless otherwise specified, both heroes and heroines are implied.

home, for example by setting him a mission to accomplish. The donor is another senior or powerful figure met along the way who tests the hero and provides him with useful resources for his mission. The helper is also encountered by chance, but is the social equal of the hero and often helps him with labor rather than a gift.

On the other side, we have the complementary figures who resist the hero and retard the central action. The False Hero is in more general terms the rival, someone in the same position as the hero who is competing for the same object: he or she puts herself forward as the dragon slayer or the promised bride in the place of the true protagonist. The villain actively interferes with the hero, thus standing in opposition to donors and helpers. Finally, there is what Propp called the Princess's father and I will more generally term the guardian: this is the legitimate keeper of the object sought by the hero.

The Narrative Roles of the European Märchen (adapted from Propp)



## Scarcity

How are these roles, and the familiar narrative functions Propp associates with them, played out over time as Europe modernizes? Let me take as an example the body of tales collected in eastern Sicily in the 1860s by Laura Gonzenbach, the daughter of a Swiss textile merchant, among women peasants, weavers, and servants. Published in Germany in 1870, this collection was the subject of an extensive study by Luisa Rubini (1998), and more recently has been translated into English by Jack Zipes (2004a, 2004b).<sup>8</sup>

Like the peasant Märchen of nineteenth-century Europe in general, these tales describe a world of scarce resources and fierce social competition. Sicilian tales of this period are unusually explicit about familial and social violence, sexuality, and poverty;

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<sup>8</sup> See Noyes 2005 for an extended discussion.

they also incorporate such contemporary characters as the notary, the pharmacist, and the professor. The harshness of old gender and status hierarchies is intensified by the rapacity of post-Unification Sicily, which had been forcibly opened to capitalist investment and was undergoing all the instabilities of rapid economic modernization.

Most of Gonzenbach's tales have a peasant heroine, who flees abusive relatives or, more usually, must leave home from want. She is forced into servitude, homelessness, and even prostitution; her powers of endurance are tested beyond easily imaginable limits. Villainy in the home is followed by villainy out in the world, and as in many peasant stories, the Villain is often the same character as the Guardian. In a world of scarce resources, no one is eager to admit an outsider to enjoy their own good things, or to give up their marriageable heir to a partner who brings nothing tangible to the exchange. Still more frequently in these stories, the Villain and the Object are joined in one character. In "The Snake Who Bore Witness for a Maiden," a young woman is raped and must trick her rapist into marrying her: hardly an ideal resolution to her predicament, it is nonetheless the only resolution available (Zipes 2004a, 18–20). In many other cases, the story defies Proppian expectation by continuing beyond the wedding. As it turns out, the prince may be no prince. In "The Pig King," a poor girl is married off to a grotesque son of the upper classes for the sake of economic security (ibid. 243–51). The husband's sexual attentions reconcile his wife, and she gradually civilizes his public behavior. More often, the husband must learn to treat his wife decently. In "Federico and Epomata," a forgotten bride gives her husband a hard slap in the recognition scene, both to jog his memory and to pay him back for all she has suffered (ibid. 68–80). In "The Green Bird," the heroine is asked to save her prince from an enchantment by standing out in the sun and rain for seven years (ibid. 9–17). When she turns black and ugly, the freed prince treats her with contempt for having debased herself out of love, "like a dog," and the narrator comments that "all men are like this." With magical assistance, the heroine turns the tables, becoming a seductive woman who reduces him to equivalent acts of self-abasement. When she ridicules him and spits in his face, as he did to her, he recognizes her, and she forgives him: "now we're even." In general, tales about taming the husband point to a significant social scarcity; an opportunity to get married cannot be scorned, and an existing investment in a husband must somehow be made good.

Although peasant women told all the tales, not all of the tales feature peasant heroines. They show characteristic patterns of need and desire along class lines, most obviously in the initial situations of the stories. The tales of peasant protagonists are set in motion by material lack. You leave home because you are hungry. But stories with a middle-class protagonist, typically a merchant's daughter, begin not with departure from the home but with its invasion by a covetous outsider. The protection of household property and its enhancement through marriage is a key theme. Thoroughly socialized into the habits of her class is "The Merchant's Clever Youngest Daughter" (Zipes 2004b, 58–62). Here the heroine's prudence is compromised by her father's aspirations for mobility and then by her upper-class lover's thoughtlessness. A merchant father is

obliged to leave his daughters alone when he goes off on business; he warns them not to open the door to anyone, “for the times are unsafe.” But later he is “blinded by the wealth and the high rank” of a seemingly aristocratic suitor, while his clearer-headed daughter points out that they know nothing of his family. Nagged into marrying the man, she discovers him to be a brigand (a familiar figure in nineteenth-century Sicily), escapes him, and makes her way in the world through her work ethic and sense of responsibility. Eventually she becomes a king’s mistress, and this second comfortable home receives a second assault. The brigand sees her in its window and disguises himself as a vendor with a silver eagle to sell: in fact a Trojan horse through which he will smuggle himself into the palace. The king is charmed and wants to buy it. The heroine responds with an argument that means nothing to him, asking why he needs to buy another expensive thing when he has so many nice things already. A second time, villainy is enabled by inattention to the integrity of the home, and the heroine has to make a further effort to recover her position. These peasant stories show the rising middle class torn between social ambition and the jealousies of precarious possession.

The only material lack faced by upper-class protagonists is childlessness. All other stories of wealthy heroes open not with need but with restless desire: a king’s son is bored and leaves home to see the world. The stories encapsulate the ruin of the Sicilian *galantuomini* after the end of the feudal regime, fleeing their country estates for city pleasures, spending with no thought for the future, and ultimately reduced to quasi-servitude. Their various comebacks, in turn, show the strategies that saved a few members of that class in reality: they become professionals, bureaucrats, or entrepreneurs, or they profit from these activities in others. In “Giuseppinu” a king’s son becomes destitute after leaving home (Zipes, *Beautiful Angiola* 210–15). Like certain other children of the wealthy, he is saved by good looks and family connections, in this case with his patron saint, Joseph. An amorous princess ensures that he rises from stable boy to an upper servant in her father’s service. Told he needs riches to marry her, he is sent off with a leaky ship by the malicious courtiers. The young man fails to rise to this occasion—he indulges in weepy self-pity and he loses one of the two battles he is ordered to engage in. But he is saved by the entrepreneurial and military skills of the saint, who supplies such essential goods as salt and rat-hunting cats to islands that lack them and does some clever dealing with soldiers’ uniforms to win a battle. Thanks to the saint’s efforts and the princess’s effective spinning of them to her father, Giuseppinu survives to become the heir to the king. (In the United States we might have elected him to high office.)

But the tactics of the poor in these stories are numerous and flexible, as they had to be in reality, and here Propp’s role of the Helper becomes salient. Vengefulness against the selfish rich is often explicitly contrasted with positive reciprocity, as when a neglected dog and cat fail to notify a witch that she is eating her own daughter: “You didn’t give us anything to eat. So we won’t help you when you weep” (Zipes, 2004a, 27). In another story, the heroine takes bloody revenge on the seducer of an unhappy ghost and inherits her house in return. Reciprocity is omnipresent in the mundane

exchanges between heroine and helpers: in one story a woman regularly lends a pan to a neighbor and receives in return a portion of the food cooked in it. In “The Virgin Mary’s Child,” a group of neighbors collaborates to put pressure on a selfish priest who refuses to give work to any of them (*ibid.*, 282–85). They leave an orphaned baby at his doorstep, forcing him to take the child in and to hire one of them to look after it. But they have not, as they thought, taught him a lesson. He gets rid of the nurse as soon as the little girl is weaned, and when she reaches puberty he treats her not as a daughter but as his property for sexual use. So she is forced to flee—and with the extreme inequities of Sicilian society reinforced rather than weakened by the new nation-state, flight rather than fight was indeed the most viable strategy for the poor. The corpus of stories constitutes, in short, a peasant diagnostic of social conditions, anticipating by several years the famous sociological study of Sicily by Leopoldo Franchetti and Sidney Sonnino ([1876] 1925). The emphasis on neighborly reciprocity, collective action, and labor migration in the tales foreshadows the initiatives that Sonnino identifies as incipient in the population in the 1870s, and that were to take full form in the 1890s: peasant cooperatives, unionization, and mass emigration. Thus it can be argued that the strategies thought out in the constant retelling and varying of oral tales provided models for action in the world.

## Expansion

What happened to the tales after peasant emigration? There are tantalizing indicators in some collections, as for example the story of the man who learned animal language, described above, but it would take a quantitative study of a disparate corpus to confirm that the tales privileging risk taking among strangers were indeed the ones immigrants preferred and remembered. In any case, the artisanal fairy tale was transformed and diminished along with artisanal labor; the critical capacities of immigrants were channeled into other forms of expression.

But at the same time, the commercial culture was producing industrial fairy tales for the new industrial working class: far more naive and didactic than the oral tales, but nonetheless successful insofar as they responded to popular yearnings and anxieties.<sup>9</sup> Most celebrated among the US producers of such narratives was the New England clergyman Horatio Alger, who wrote one hundred best-selling novels for boys between 1868 and 1900 with such titles as *Struggling Upward*, *Ragged Dick*, *Mark the Match Boy*, *Abraham Lincoln: The Backwoods Boy*; or, *How a Young Rail-Splitter Became President*, *Bound to Rise*; or, *Up the Ladder*, *The Errand Boy*; or, *How Phil Brent Won Success, Fame and Fortune*, and the famously titled *From Rags to Riches*. Alger set out deliberately to revise the European fairy tale, as is evident from many intertextual

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<sup>9</sup> Jack Zipes chronicled the industrialization of fairy tale production and the tale’s conscription into disciplinary projects in a series of important studies (1979 and later).



references and contrastive observations within his texts.<sup>10</sup> In his novels as in their European models, a very poor boy (in Alger's case it is only a boy) with no capital but his good looks, his quick wits, and his sense of decency passes tests, defeats opponents, accomplishes a task set for him, and wins social recognition and financial security.

But Alger's hero lives in a world far more thickly populated with people and opportunities than that of the peasant hero. He has a choice of occupations in an expanding economy. Ragged Dick, an energetic New York street urchin, earns a tolerable income shining shoes as a bootblack, but this condemns him to dirty hands and low company. In the course of the book he educates himself to work as a shop clerk, a job that initially leaves him poorer but confers on him social respectability in the present and the prospect of advancement in the future.

In the peasant fairy tale, the guardian figure protects what he has and tries to keep the hero from getting hold of it. In an Alger story, the rich man needs you to marry his daughter. After Ragged Dick displays his honesty by returning change to a rich man whose shoes he has shined, the man invites him to join his Sunday school—a leap into respectability—and then invites him home to lunch. There he is promptly seated next to the man's daughter; she is charmed. A different rich man, whose visiting nephew Dick has agreed to guide around New York, pays him the sum that will allow him to open a savings account. Yet another rich man, whose little boy Dick rescues after he falls off a ferry, provides him with a new suit of clothes. These guardian figures—often self-made men themselves—serve simultaneously as the dispatchers who incite the hero to advance and the donors who provide the means of advancement. And their motives are clear: their businesses are expanding and they need to cultivate new talent. As an Alger novel progresses, the rich man often dispatches the hero westward from his New York or New England home on a special mission, forecasting the literal and metaphorical direction in which the American economy was headed.

The Alger hero is surrounded by other poor boys on the make. Some become helpers, others villains and rivals. Like the helpers of traditional Märchen, Alger's helpers engage in acts of mutual assistance with the hero: one teaches Ragged Dick to read in exchange for a place in his rented room. There is also a special category of helper that highlights the mundane skills Alger's young readers would need in their own careers as office boys. In innumerable Alger novels, lost money is recovered through the assistance of a careful bookkeeper or hotel clerk who keeps accurate records of transactions or detects a forged signature. It is not dragon slaying but attention to the paperwork that the new hero requires to triumph.

One frequent Alger villain shows what the hero would become without strong social and religious restraints: he is that classic American character, the con man, with all the hero's enterprise and charm and none of his scruples. The other villains and

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<sup>10</sup> Rodgers (1978, 140–143) demonstrates the fairy-tale foundations of Alger's plot and its covert nostalgias. In the early work *Ragged Dick* (1865), the hero is compared explicitly to both Cinderella and Dick Whittington; he attends European melodramas populated by nefarious barons at theaters on the Lower East Side, and New York civic buildings are compared favorably, in their size, magnificence,

rivals are distinguished by what Alger characterizes as Old European thinking. The English-surnamed Ragged Dick struggles with Mickey Maguire, an Irish immigrant, who ridicules Dick's attempts at respectability and tries to steal his money. Mickey is trapped in a stereotypically peasant zero-sum conception of the world. At higher social levels, there are rich men and boys who claim the right of inherited status over that of hard work. They behave like the feudal villains of traditional Märchen invoked by Alger as comparison: they are predatory and jealous instead of making wise investments in recruiting new members of their class, as the good rich people do.

A further distinction between the Alger story and its European source is that the Object has become a moving target. Having obtained a good dinner, his first desire, Ragged Dick next focuses his efforts on finding a room to rent instead of sleeping in the street. He then sets his sights on "growing up 'spectable.'" As his early goals are fulfilled and his possibilities are enlarged, his horizon advances to more exalted objects. By the same token, the novel does not end in a state of stasis, but leaves its hero "on the road to fame and fortune." Some Alger novels have sequels. In others, a previous hero returns to play the donor-dispatcher of the new protagonist: Ragged Dick becomes Mr. Dick Hunter, the patron of Mark the Match Boy. Alger depicts an expanding universe in which new boys must endlessly be recruited into the capitalist class—and he publishes in a world that works to keep hopeful shop clerks buying book after book. Following the American self-help tradition inaugurated by Benjamin Franklin, secularizing the spiritual ascent described in the contemporary tales of Hans Christian Andersen, Alger models a productive restlessness in which virtue is not allowed to rest on its laurels but must keep striving: the Protestant Ethic in narrative form (M. Weber [1905] 1930).

Two of Propp's functions acquire a new importance in Alger's model, and will continue to dominate fairy tales of abundance. Number 12 (the hero is tested) undergoes a transformation and expansion. In the traditional Märchen, as Claude Brémont's revision of Propp emphasizes, choices are binary: one helps or does not help the person in need, one opens or does not open the door. Alger's tale, as noted above, offers a choice of arenas for engagement, particularly as regards the world of work, and there are no real prohibitions—so that functions 2 and 3, interdiction and interdiction violated, virtually disappear from the American story. The hero moves between arenas and seizes not one big opportunity but many small ones. This is shown to be an adaptive habit in the complex environment of capitalist expansion. The weighing of options is the crucial skill he develops in the course of the novel.

Function 27 (the Hero is recognized) is a means to an end in the traditional Märchen. The importance of recognition is to ensure that the hero attains the object. In the American tale, the place of recognition is greatly expanded and diffused throughout the tale. Alger's heroes are preoccupied with the visible signs of status, connecting function 27 to function 29 (the Hero is given a new appearance). The acquisition of

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and good state of repair, with European palaces. Mark the Match Boy (1869) ends up conspicuously better off than Andersen's Little Match Girl.

a neat suit and a pocket watch, although its explicit purpose is only to provide the means of entering into the world of respectable labor, is emotionally more important to the hero than anything that follows. As Thorstein Veblen explained, in an urban world of multiple encounters and rapid decisions, social signs must be clearly communicated ([1899] 2009). To be visibly incorporated into the elect of striving modernity is a prerequisite to any further advancement.

## Abundance

When we leap from the expanding commercial culture of the late nineteenth century to the consolidated consumer capitalism of the late twentieth, the fairy tale has further proliferated in popular culture, and the functions of choice and recognition are still more obsessively thematized than in *Alger*. One dimension of the transition may easily be seen in the productions of Walt Disney. The 1936 film *Snow White* depicts the heroine as a kind of upper-class social worker assisting the plebeian dwarves in the acquisition of industrial work-discipline and proper hygiene. The 1989 *Little Mermaid* transforms Andersen's tale of spiritual transcendence into a saga of identity formation through consumerism. In the 1930s, at a time of grave labor unrest among its own artists, Disney instructs its young audience in the arts of self-repression (Zipes, 1979); in the 1980s, it instructs its audience in the arts of self-fulfillment (Bendix 1993).

Other popular fictions grow more directly out of *Alger*, offering more anxiety, less hopefulness; they are exaggerated fantasies of the kind that everyone dismisses as cultural trash—while still managing to consume them in quantity. Why indeed should the fairy tale persist in a wealthy society, where the material needs that so viciously drove the traditional *Märchen* have (for many) been satisfied? The economist John Kenneth Galbraith anticipated the answer in his 1958 book *The Affluent Society*.

The ideas by which the people of this favored part of the world interpret their existence, and in measure guide their behavior, were not forged in a world of wealth.... Poverty was the all-pervasive fact of that world. Obviously it is not of ours. One would not expect that the preoccupations of a poverty-ridden world would be relevant in one where the ordinary individual has access to amenities—foods, entertainment, personal transportation, and plumbing—in which not even the rich rejoiced a century ago. So great has been the change that many of the desires of the individual are no longer even evident to him. They become so only as they are synthesized, elaborated and nurtured by advertising and salesmanship, and these, in turn, have become among our most important and talented professions. Few people at the beginning of the nineteenth century needed an adman to tell them what they wanted.

Galbraith was speaking of a lag in economic theory, what seemed to him an irrational continuing obsession with increasing production and productivity. By the same token we may see the fairy tale as a lag in discursive habit, a narrative template that is not jettisoned but slowly revised as its incongruities become apparent. Powerful models do not always keep up with reality. While Edward Tylor, the great evolutionary anthropologist, saw “survivals” as isolated habits that had lost their context and motivation ([1871] 1970), the persistence of the fairy tale and, perhaps, of *Homo economicus* point to core tensions as culture reproduces itself in a rapidly changing environment.

As psychoanalytic scholars of the difficult Lacanian kind tell us, desire burgeons when mere need is fulfilled, and desire, requiring to be invented, is less stable and less easily satisfied than need. The fairy tale proliferated along with consumer desires; it saturated contemporary culture at the turn of the millennium. In a fairy tale course I taught at that time, I gave undergraduates an assignment to locate Propp’s narrative functions and *dramatis personae* in a contemporary mass-culture text. Reading their papers across several years, I noticed three primary versions of the fairy-tale plot—all of which were to some extent anticipated in the traditional Sicilian tales that had wealthy protagonists:

- A failed fairy-tale plot, through the failure to choose;
- A happy ending, through learning to choose wisely;
- A happy ending, through being chosen.

## Failure to Choose

In the first case, the fairy-tale plot is only the first half of the story. This is typical of the enormously popular genre of celebrity biography. We have a circular structure, a wheel of fortune, with a rise and a fall. We begin with a poor hero who is like us in coming from nowhere in particular and being poor and hopeful and honest, but unlike us in having a magical or God-given gift. In the first half hour of any show on cable TV’s Biography Channel, according to my students, talent is recognized, hard work is rewarded, and rags rise to riches. In the second half hour, riches lead to moral coarsening, bad taste, conspicuous consumption, conspicuous waste, artistic sellout or megalomania, obesity, drug addiction, and premature death. The paradigm is of course Elvis.

These celebrity tales constitute an early, demotic version of a growing critique of choice in America. Along with freedom, choice is the core value of neoliberal culture, used to justify the infinite proliferation of consumer goods, the resistance to labor organization, and the privatization of such functions as health care, pension funds, education, mass transportation, infrastructure, and utilities. Choice is, moreover, the only word strong enough for supporters of legal abortion or euthanasia to counter the powerful word “life.”

But in that effervescence of the “end of history” that seemed to have arrived in the golden age between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 9/11 attacks, a backlash was already beginning, urging the danger of infinite choice in a world of abundance. Following other East European critics of the new world order, the Lacanian theorist Renata Salecl argued that without prohibitions there is no identity (2010). Her “tyranny of choice” reappears as the “paradox of choice” for the American sociologist Barry Schwartz, who calls on a cognitive psychological framework to argue that we have more complexity than we can handle. Information overload and the multiplicity of possibilities in relation to the time available makes it impossible for individuals to make good use of the freedom of choice—and its corollary burden of responsibility (2004). The scarcity is not of opportunity or information but of time and human attention (Franck 1998). The body pays the price along with the mind: this same period marks the emergence of a global “obesity epidemic” attributed by medical researchers in part to an evolutionary lag. We are genetically adapted to a life as hunter-gatherers: we eat all the food available and we store it as fat for future times of scarcity. In the presence of limitless cheap calories, enhanced by omnipresent advertising to urge consumption, we inevitably get fatter. The Elvis story dramatizes the decline from action to immobility once the opportunities are too many.

## Choosing Wisely

The second story of abundance is found primarily in women’s romance movies, or “chick flicks”—anything that from the late 1980s to the mid-2000s starred Meg Ryan, Julia Roberts, Sandra Bullock, Drew Barrymore, Jennifer Lopez, Reese Witherspoon, or Renée Zellweger; *Sex in the City* offered a serial version. As in the traditional Märchen, a marriage partner is the object, for popular culture directed to young women is still today far more conservative than even the stories of Horatio Alger. In Propp’s model, we recall, there is only one prince in town and every woman must compete for him, hence the stock figure of the false heroine or rival claimant. But in the contemporary revision, the heroine has her choice of prince. While there may also be a false heroine, therefore, the focus is on one or even many false objects.<sup>11</sup> The heroine’s difficult task is not to earn her man but to choose the right one; the liquidation of lack comes prematurely, and function 12, the test, is delayed and made salient in this act of choice. Initially she is attracted to a glamorous Wall Street type with feathered hair and a beautiful suit: he is a stockbroker or otherwise engaged in phantasmagorical capitalism. He is in due course revealed to be a slimeball. True worth, making itself modestly available in the background, wears a plaid flannel shirt, has unkempt hair, and works at an

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<sup>11</sup> While the rival-object plot becomes prominent at this moment, it was of course established long before by Jane Austen, who presented the tricky choices for young women on the edge of affluence as an occasion for ethical introspection. The Austen boom in late millennium Anglo-American popular culture is thus hardly coincidental.

artisanal trade (*While You Were Sleeping*, 1995); or perhaps is Jewish and has a sense of humor (*When Harry Met Sally*, 1989). In addition to choosing the right man—it may also be a baby, or the man may have a child (*Sleepless in Seattle*, 1993)—the heroine may recognize her own career ambitions as excessive and learn to choose domestic life in the provinces as the more virtuous course (*Baby Boom*, 1987).<sup>12</sup> To be sure, this genre undermines its own conditions of being—an economy of indulgence and repeat consumption—and alleviates the very guilt it generates through its explicitly anticapitalist, anticonsumerist moral.

## Being Chosen

The simultaneous indulgence in and critique of abundance is also a feature of the third prevailing plot of the turn of the millennium, the eternally replayed Cinderella story, which confronts virtuous poverty with virtue-challenged wealth. We are allowed to enjoy prime time soap operas because there is inevitably one character in their superrich milieu who has been launched into it from below; for example, a street kid fortuitously adopted by a rich lawyer (*The O.C.*, 2003–2007). This character provides the moral center and the point of identification for the viewer, while villainy takes the form of social snobbery and intellectual elitism as well as personal greed (*Working Girl*, 1988; *Maid in Manhattan*, 2002). An infusion of authenticity from below is required to revitalize and justify an otherwise predatory elite. *Forrest Gump* assists the rich and powerful with the moral clarity that is apparently the privilege of mental disability and a regional accent (1994). The prostitute of *Pretty Woman* (1990) teaches her corporate lover that generosity can be more profitable than selfishness. He gives her clothes; she gives him sensitivity. Each party liquidates the other's lack so that they can meet happily in the great American aurea mediocritas. Reality TV provides still more Utopian, last-shall-be-first reversals, notably in *The Biggest Loser* (2004–present). In this drama the obese compete to lose weight; the biggest loser is the biggest winner; “big” loses all meaning as deprivation and abundance change places. This fusing of opposites denies, of course, the growing gulf in Western societies between rich and poor, between thin and obese—a gulf fostered in part by the triumph of freedom and choice over security and equality. Still, the very polarization, the highlighting of such stories as fairy tale, points up their work as wish fulfillment and makes visible the

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<sup>12</sup> This genre varies in the extent to which the heroine is encouraged to make her career an object, and both romance and Disney princess movies have recently made more space for the heroine's professional self-assertion. On the contrary, as straightforward prospects for less educated white men have eroded, the tale of voluntary downsizing is tentatively migrating to male protagonists. The summer 2014 success of Jon Favreau's *Chef* would offer an example, were it not that the healing descent from a pretentious French restaurant into the ethnic authenticity and hipster informality of the food truck is rewarded at the end with a new and better Los Angeles restaurant. In male-protagonist stories it seems easier to have it both ways: as long as the hero chooses the values of the people, wealth and fame can be attained also.

material inequality at the heart of the tension between need and desire. We do not live in a world without limits, either economically or corporeally.

A second focus of attention in the Cinderella story, highlighted here as in Alger, finds further elaboration in reality TV: it is the dressing up of the heroine by her fairy godmother. In makeover shows ranging from the practical—*What Not to Wear* (UK 2001–2007, US 2003–2013)—to the grotesquely fantastic—*The Swan* (2004–2005), in which deformed women are given plastic surgery—a heroine's inner worth is externalized into a desirable appearance through the agency of donors and magical objects. Gay men, acceptable in the helper role, reorganize the man cave and improve the grooming of regular dudes (*Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, 2003–2007). In family-based follow-ons, professionals remodel your house or tidy up your children. There are, said my students, no external forces or nefarious individuals keeping the heroine from her object in these programs. The villain is low self-esteem—the heroine stands in her own way. The drama is thus narcissistic: an exclusively inner conflict mediated by expert consultants as helpers and corporations as donors.

In the self-help industry, a less obviously fictional realm also dedicated to self-transformation, there is less emphasis on magical assistance and more on the protagonist's labor. No pain, no gain. Expensive helpers and magical objects are still, however, required: personal trainers, self-help books, diet plans, gym memberships, and so on. But the Protestant ethic is still in sway. The guilt of abundance is alleviated by ascetic bodily discipline and self-denial, the refusal of pleasure. The thinness of the rich is emblematic here. Thinness is now, indeed, a privilege of the rich, demanding leisure, wealth, and knowledge, but also labor. The rich justify themselves, as one might say, by being thin. The mode of social distinction today is not conspicuous consumption, as among the *nouveaux riches* in Thorstein Veblen's time in the 1890s, but, in true Weberian fashion, conspicuous asceticism.

A final aspect of the Cinderella story is the recognition scene: the fitting of the shoe (function 27). The task in the Cinderella plot is not to choose but to be chosen—in Calvinist terms, to be saved and join the elect. But for some to be chosen, others must be damned. Secularized, this becomes status anxiety: for some to be high, others must be low, and we are always measuring ourselves against our neighbors. As with the Calvinist notion of predestination, however, social mobility is not attained by works. In these narratives, mobility is justified by preexistent worth: beauty, virtue, God-given talent. Mobility is achieved through recognition of that inherent worth. Recall that anxiety is at the heart of the Protestant ethic. The individual cannot know whether she is saved. It is in the eyes of God that she is justified, and the eyes of the community must stand as proxy to reassure her of her election.

In the society of abundance, husbands and houses may be had with relative ease. The real lacks, as critics of the information society remind us, are time and attention. At the turn of the millennium we no longer fantasized, as did Hansel and Gretel, about houses paned with sugar and roofed with cake, but rather about houses scented with homemade potpourri, lovingly adorned with personalized knickknacks, and inhabited

by a family who eat dinner together, presided over by a wise mother. Should we have been surprised when popular media reconfigured Martha Stewart as a witch? The lacks, I repeat, are time and attention, on both the giving and the receiving ends. When all are striving to achieve a transfigured self, and when this self has no reality except in the eyes of others, recognition itself becomes the rival good—that which cannot be had by all, for which we must compete. In the ever-multiplying reality shows spinning off from *Big Brother*, *Survivor*, *American Idol*, *Britain's Got Talent*, and so on, popularity—recognition of differential worth—is the avowed goal. The drama stops when recognition is conferred; other rewards are only implied as corollary. In a world that imagines power to reside in magical objects and where fetishized commodities drive human action, the heroine's ultimate object is to become the object.

It may be noted that in this section the pronouns have largely turned female, and this reflects to some extent the regendering of the masses from industrial to consumer society. In popular film with male protagonists—action rather than romance—a deeper form of genre lag is arguably evident. The male fairy tale at the turn of the millennium is liable to epic inflation: Mel Gibson and Kevin Costner, Bruce Willis and Will Smith do not save simply themselves, but their people or their nation or civilization on earth, and they do it across a much larger panorama than is typical of the female-headed films, frequently with a considerable budget for special effects. The voyeuristic martyrdom of the hero in films such as *Braveheart* (1995) provides an update of the recognition and transfiguration scene (once again, functions 27 and 29) that allows male identity to remain attached to personal achievement and collective benefit rather than to consumption. This we might see as increasingly a nostalgic, compensatory fantasy, indexed often by a historical or futuristic setting. The darker subgenre of the superhero (for example, the *Batman* and *Spiderman* series), set in a world more closely parallel to our own, explores the psychological and to some extent the social costs of this vision of male success in a period when it cannot readily be realized.

## What Next?

It's not hard to find critical fairy tales of overconsumption in societies where the imaginary has had to adapt rapidly to new affluence and scarcity lives in near memory. The Czech Republic and Japan offer notable examples in *Little Otik* (Jan Švankmajer and Eva Švankmajerová, 2000) and *Spirited Away* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001) respectively. US mass culture, with expansion its gospel for a century and a half, seems to find it hard to tell such tales; even such a stunning critique of waste and self-destruction as *Wall-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008) is determined to give civilization as a whole a second chance to redeem itself, and the second chance remains the happy ending of such dystopian follow-ons as *Elysium* (Neill Blomkamp, 2013). But the fairy-tale plot must at some point catch up with the changing horizon of the low-resourced liberal individual: the disappearance of life-long employment and social safety nets, the rise



of debt and difficulty of a living wage, an environment pushed beyond its carrying capacity, and a body politic collapsing under its own weight. As our desires are forced to contract or redirect themselves and our needs become once more acute, what is popular narrative likely to offer us?

No doubt in the didactic tales of mass culture we will continue to have conversion of the obligatory into the optative, as Victor Turner used to say (1974). Powerful protagonists will downsize voluntarily, renouncing the devil and all his works; they will leave their old objects behind for the things of the spirit. Weak protagonists will learn, as Dorothy did in the 1930s, that they should not look for happiness beyond their own backyard. The con man will return to indulge and displace our revenge fantasies. The lone lucky Cinderella will still be snatched up into love and wealth—the intrinsic perversity of this outcome finding its objective correlative in the *Fifty Shades of Grey* series, as a few years earlier in the vampire boom. But as I review these possibilities I feel tired already. Can these recyclings continue to grab our imagination or are they the last defenses set up by a culture in denial, clinging to individualist fantasies of exceptionalism, escape, or incorporation? Systemic transformation or systemic collapse might at last break the spine of this resilient narrative skeleton. If the next phase of capitalism leaves the masses behind, can the fairy tale survive? Is Propp played out?

I am offering my fairy-tale course again for the first time in ten years and look forward to my students' instruction. On the face of it, the shift in popular-cultural attention from vampire fantasies to the zombie apocalypse suggests that visions of social mobility are falling off as more immediate anxieties have taken hold in the period since the 2008 financial crisis (chapter 13). Questions of rivalry and solidarity at the bottom of society may be regaining the centrality they had in the nineteenth century, but the narrative struggles seem to be taking place in the ruined aftermath of Propp's plot rather than on the way to a clear and successful conclusion. Nonetheless, the popular appeal of at least one extended narrative suggests that the full fairy-tale plot can still be mobilized for critical purposes for and by a mass audience. The *Hunger Games*, a trilogy of "young adult" novels by Suzanne Collins (2008–2010) and an ensuing series of films, offers an intricate hybrid of the feminine rival-object plot, the masculine epic inflation, and the current near-future dystopias. Choosing the right prince is the least of the heroine's problems. In continual iterations of both the staged game to the death into which she is forced and the longer, metaphorical games of personal survival and collective struggle, she faces constant choices. Solidarity is pitted against self-interest, cooperation against solitary action, direct agency against delegation and representation. Not least must she contend with the rival tellers of her tale and the rival plots into which she is interpellated. No choice is optimal; few are even attractive. The heroine contrives ultimately to destroy the game itself rather than the opponents pitted against her, but the cost is savage. Although the ending provides her with house and husband, it returns her and her people to the fairy tale's beginning: extreme scarcity in the aftermath of villainy, to be faced humbly with ingenuity and mutual aid. More educable by experience than the social-scientific hero *Homo economicus*, Katniss Everdeen bears all

the baggage of the genre, from subaltern self-sufficiency to chick flick second-guessing to reality TV makeovers. Her return to the fairy tale's starting point can stand as an icon of the resilience of vernacular theoretical models.

## Acknowledgments

Early versions of this paper were presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society and the Meertens Institute, Amsterdam, in 2010, and the Department of English of the University of Western Michigan in 2011; I thank all present for their comments and especially thank the students of my fairy-tale courses for their evidence gathering.

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## **Part III: Slogan-Concepts and Cultural Regimes**

## 12. On Sociocultural Categories<sup>(12)</sup>

When people fuss about definitions, the word in the ‘X’-place is almost always an abstract noun whose primary importance is as a label for a problematic area of discourse, not as the name of an elusive essence.

—A. W. Sparkes (1994, 5)

### The Problem of the F-word

Much has been written about the outdated, ambiguous, embarrassing, stigmatized word that gives the name to our field.<sup>1</sup> Folklore is a word we can neither live with nor, apparently, live without. The term is a moving target, impossible to pin down. The folk, to some, denotes a submissive lower class deluded by paternalism and not yet awakened to self-consciousness. To others, folklore is a rich repository of resistance and alternative histories. Folklore can evoke both the pseudoculture imposed by authoritarian governments and the presumably authentic culture that resists this. The word is tinged alternately with condescension, nostalgia, and defensiveness.

If folklore is a spoiled concept, “bad to think with” even in Europe where it was created, it is still more problematic when applied to non-Western societies. Arriving with colonialism or other forms of modernity, it is imposed without understanding of local cultural distinctions or simply applied as a blanket framework to all non-western expressions. How do we, the folklorists who persist in believing there is a there there, save ourselves? Is it reasonable to talk of folklore and the folk in non-Western societies? Or even in the West itself?

The dominant recent North American response to the problem of the “F-word” has been to attempt to define it more precisely or, more recently, to find a satisfactory substitute—in fact, a euphemism. But these are not solutions. As we know from the

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996; Harlow ed. 1998; Noyes 2004.

<sup>(12)</sup> I have left this piece unaltered except for minor corrections. I might have added references to a growing body of scholarship on the implantation of folkloristics in colonial settings (e.g., Webber 1991, Prasad 2003, Naithani 2010). For a range of perspectives on national folkloristic traditions from their inheritors, see also the essays in Bendix and Hasan-Rokem, eds. (2012). The kind of historical ethnography of culture concepts that I envisioned in this essay has been beautifully realized by Michael Dylan Foster in his study of Japanese weirdness (2009). Originally published as “On Sociocultural Categories” *Indian Folklife* 4:2 (2005):3–7.

work of Bakhtin and his collaborators, the imposition of a definition from above does not erase the history of a term nor prevent it from circulating among new users whose agendas will continue to reshape it. And euphemisms, as the history of social discrimination tells us, progressively acquire the stigma of the phenomenon they label. While social inequality persists, cultural goodwill will ultimately be ineffective—a point that is especially important in the current global climate.

Tied to subaltern status, folklore has recently benefited from a broader euphemistic move in global discourse: the emergence of culture and identity as positive veils of such concepts as race and inequality. Less contemporary and global in resonance than its neighbor concepts, folklore has not been fully rehabilitated, but both multiculturalism within Western nation-states and international initiatives such as UNESCO's Intangible Heritage Convention or the World Intellectual Property Organization's Intergovernmental Committee on Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge, and Folklore are expanding the institutional space in which folklorists operate. Today culture is widely credited with explanatory power, as in the "clash of civilizations" account of conflict. In the economic realm as well as the political, "Let them eat culture" has become the most charismatic solution to the problem of inequality. Culture and identity, treated as synonymous and associated with readily distinguishable, preferably ethnically defined communities, are more visible than society, economy, or politics. Although these other abstractions have their limitations also, there are dangers to making a god term of culture.<sup>2</sup>

## Sociocultural Differentiation Through Categories

In this special issue, we propose an alternative strategy to that of the rhetorical cleansing that would strive to free our field of stigma. At the same time, we hope to open up the larger question of how cultural strategies are used for social, economic, and political ends. We suggest that a major theoretical mission of folklore studies is the study of sociocultural differentiation: how and why and under what circumstances societies begin to distinguish social actors through their cultural markers. (This formulation relies on assumptions we may eventually wish to reject, but it provides a starting point.)

As part of this larger mission, we propose to examine the explicit sociocultural categories used to make such distinctions as they move in and out of more general classificatory systems. The Western and particularly American examples are innumerable:

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<sup>2</sup> A large emerging literature, much of it inspired in opposition to Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" argument, considers the hazards of "culturalism," that is, the use of culture to account for and legitimate difference. A good sampling of culturalism in U.S. policy circles may be found in Harrison and Huntington ed. 2000. For large-scale accounts and critiques of the cultural turn from a variety of perspectives, see Handler 1988, Kuper 1999, Al-Azmeh 1993, Eagleton 2000, Yúdice 2003. For culturalism as it affects folklorists most directly, Kaschuba and Bendix 1999.

folk, superstition, subculture, cult (as in cult movies), world (as in world literature), classical, traditional, popular, longhair, chickflick, canonical, primitive, multicultural, archaic, kitsch, survival, ethnic (not all cultural forms are understood as ethnic), countercultural, Philistine, mass, radical, fundamentalist, alternative, outlaw, trash. Some of these are of long standing and have been accepted by society or scholars as legitimate conceptual categories, inherent to the nature of things rather than tied to a particular historical moment. Some may be more ephemeral. What do they have in common?

- They identify certain cultural practices with a certain social milieu or set of actors, distinguished by class/status, generation, gender, ethnic origin, ideology, education, lifestyle, or mode of consumption/production.
- They are abstract, capable of encompassing multiple cases. In this we distinguish a category (e.g., popular) from stylistic and genre labels (e.g., hiphop). It is worth exploring, however, the movement back and forth between these two levels.
- They carry a heavy evaluative charge, positive or negative depending on the user's position. They are contested across social locations. Thus—
- Over time they accumulate powerful mixed resonances and multiple meanings. All of these terms, even the most localized, are moving targets. Although they are often used as if they were “natural” categories, in fact their meaning cannot be separated from their history.
- They tend to emerge as descriptive categories, seeking to recognize and name a newly visible cultural phenomenon. Over time, however, they become prescriptive, used as guidelines for the generation of new work. This is true not only of controlled hierarchical societies in which creators are pressured to conform to a certain aesthetic, but also of capitalist cultural economies in which a sociocultural category is also a potential market niche.
- Their significance is contrastive, by definition. Each category has one or more implicit Others. Thus sociocultural categories tend to accumulate and come to constitute a more or less open classificatory system. Some scholars may develop rigid schemata intended to be all-encompassing (e.g., High Culture/Mass Culture/Folk Art in MacDonald 1953), and some societies may draw sharp boundaries intended to maintain threatened distinctions (e.g., *la cour* and *la ville* in seventeenth-century France, as per Auerbach [1946] 1953). Or systems may be fluid, the extreme case being that of global market capitalism in which categories compete for adherents and boundaries are not considered desirable.



# The Scholarship and the Challenge of Comparison

A great deal of work has been done on the history of sociocultural categories in the West in the past seventy years. Landmark works include Norbert Elias' *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (1939); Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* (1956) and *Keywords* (1983); Peter Burke's *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978); Pierre Bourdieu's *La Distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (1979); Lawrence W. Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1988) and, in our own field, Richard Bauman's and Charles Briggs' *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (2003). Within anthropology and literary studies, there has been intensive recent discussion of the culture concept.<sup>3</sup> Folklorists and historians have addressed specific sociocultural categories such as folklore and tradition along with related terms such as authenticity.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, much has been said within postcolonial thought about the imposition of Western categories on non-Western phenomena and in general the problem of putting "singularities" into categories at all (Chakrabarty 2000, 82–83). Undoubtedly much work has also been done on cultural differentiation in non-Western societies. But this work has not reached me, a specialist in Europe, and it is certainly not familiar to North American folklorists or cultural studies scholars in general.

Both Western scholars needing to deprovincialize themselves and non-Western scholars struggling with the overweening presence of Western theory can benefit from a comparative discussion of sociocultural labelling in a wide variety of societies. Where do we find socially marked style choices or a high degree of explicit cultural categorization? Where is cultural difference a means of claiming social distinction or stigmatizing social difference? The obvious starting point for a search is among the highly stratified societies stretching from South to East Asia. Here we might expect to find lexicons similar to those that emerged in Europe, with analogous social uses. But we also need to look at less stratified societies to examine the existence and nature of sociocultural differentiation, as well as the effects of colonialism and other processes of cultural contact.

To be sure, comparison in this vein immediately raises the specter of evolutionism. Indeed, the comparative venture has since the 1970s become suspect to right-thinking ethnographers, and a cordon sanitaire has been set about such projects as the comparative sociology of Jack Goody (which addressed cultural stratification directly, e.g., 1982) because of their various reductionisms. Now that the categories of social theory stand revealed as cultural, not universal, and the historical context of comparison is recognized to be imperialism, we do not know how to move forward. But we know that to linger eternally in particularisms is severely to curtail our theoretical and our political power. In practice, when we need to make claims regarding an ethnographic

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<sup>3</sup> A sampling is cited in the previous footnote.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Ben-Amos 1984, Bendix 1997.

case to a larger audience, we are obliged to fall back on those discredited Western categories and speak of folklore, heritage, authenticity, and so on: this has been a worrying, if not a surprising, feature of folklorists' recent interactions with national and international institutions (chapter 13). Better than the shambling justification of "strategic essentialism" would be to deprovincialize our theory.

Indian scholarship has much to teach North Americans in this regard. In addition to the well-known Subaltern Studies school, I have in working on this essay discovered the comparative sociology of André Béteille and his students,<sup>5</sup> which traces the social and institutional trajectories of Indian social categories and compares these to equally well-contextualized Western conceptions of status, equality, and so on: a model for what needs to be done in the cultural field. Recent Western revivals of the comparative project offer other helpful frameworks. Gingrich and Fox (2002) propose the recovery of "subaltern comparativisms," plural methodologies that emerged in various local anthropological projects but were overshadowed by grand-theory projects assuming the objectivity of cultural units and the universality of the categories of comparison. Along with Urban (1999), Gingrich and Fox point to the cognitive basis of comparison: to think at all is to compare new information to previous instances and form provisional, constantly revised schemata. They also point to the comparativism implicit in constituting a slice of social life as an object of study, shaped by scholarly labels and methods. Explicit comparativism, mindful of its foundations in vernacular and scholarly practices of comparison, may become useful again, provisional and exploratory. Most germane to our purposes here, Urban as well as Gingrich and Fox propose that a reconceived comparativism, unburdened by the old culture concept's assumption of bounded units of comparison, can focus instead on flows and the transmission of cultural objects through time and space. And Kuper suggests that the task of the social anthropologist is precisely to mediate between vernacular and scholarly models, such that "conceptualizing society" is recognized as an activity shared across social locations (1992).

The notion of vernacular models takes us to other literatures. Cognitive science has had much to say about the categories of "folk psychology" as difference is constructed from the self outward (e.g., Hirschfeld 1996). Sociology and anthropology have done more to link categories and social process. The Durkheimian tradition, particularly as developed by Mary Douglas, examines classification systems as symbolic forms crystallizing social structures. Sociolinguists have traced empirically the differentiation of speech styles as "acts of identity" (Labov 1972, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985). Pierre Bourdieu's work reveals the power struggles that operate through classificatory practices, while insisting that their efficacy depends precisely on their inaccessibility to consciousness; the American tradition of the ethnography of communication, on the other hand, emphasizes culture's capacity for reflexivity. Already in the 1970s this group was engaged in identifying native or "emic" categories of experience and expres-

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., Béteille 2002 and the section on "morphological categories" in Das ed. 2003.

sion (e.g. Ben-Amos 1976). More recently, Urban (2001) and others have produced a body of sophisticated theoretical work on culture's self-consciousness as it is shaped in discourse and creates new metadiscursive objects, such as the sociocultural categories which are our subject here.<sup>6</sup> This work offers a viable model for cross-cultural research that begins by not taking the categories of comparison for granted. But it makes heavy demands on both readers and practitioners, and if folklore research is to recover a critical mass of scholars engaged in comparative conversation internationally, it might usefully begin with the cruder "keyword" approach, tracing the social life of culture concepts in their broad outlines and, in particular, their interactions with one another.

Ethnographers tend to take face-to-face interaction as the ground of social life on which all institutions are constructed, crediting ordinary people with shaping power (and perhaps helping to explain their frequent investment in institutions they neither control nor profit by). Cultural studies scholars begin at the opposite extreme, privileging elite discourses and allowing subaltern actors to resist or appropriate these. It behoves us not to prejudge the theoretical dispute, but to trace the movement of concepts across milieux and demonstrate the interactions between them. Face-to-face interaction is already complex, encompassing both the "backstages" of different social groups and their public encounters (cf. Scott 1990). Then there are the various institutional discourses in which categories are rationalized, hardened, and perpetuated:

- scholastic traditions in poetics, theology, philosophy, and eventually social science (Bourdieu 1990).
- administrative structures: for example, the much-studied interaction in Colonial India of administrative and scholarly discourses of caste and tribe, with the opportunistic reifications that followed in social life (Xaxa 2003).
- political movements, whether hegemonic or resistant, in which categories become slogans, as in the history of the Volk in nineteenth-century Europe.
- marketing labels, as in the much-studied cooption of youth subcultures. But market categories also influence everyday, political, and academic formations, as in the following case.

## An Example: "World"

Here is a sketchy outline of one sociocultural category. In the U.S. and more broadly in the West the word world is increasingly fashionable as an adjective, globalization's replacement for the nation-state's folk. According to Feld, it appeared in the phrase "world music" in the early 1980s, promulgated by ethnomusicologists as a relativizing

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<sup>6</sup> E.g., Silverstein and Urban 1996, Urban 2001, Bauman and Briggs 2003.

framework that could foster the inclusion of non-Western local musics in both syllabi and record shops. In the same period, an Austin, Texas radio host, Dan Del Santo, began using “world beat” to refer to urban musical hybrids such as salsa, reggae, and conjunto, a usage picked up by the music industry (1994, 265–67). Today the two have fused as world music, which has its own (smallish) place in Western record-store racks as the residual category for international music once existing market niches are exhausted.<sup>7</sup>

Following on world music (and a boom in university ethnomusicology programs), world history, world literature, and “world arts and cultures” have recently emerged as specializations within North American academe. To be sure, world history and world literature have been seen in the curriculum before: both were important general-education courses in the period after the Second World War, and both fell into discredit and desuetude during the 1970s for their Eurocentric universalizing (Geyer and Bright 1995, Jusdanis 2003,110). The category world continues to raise anxieties about imperial ambitions: see, for example, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett on world heritage (2004).

The ground for the current institutionalization of world was laid, I suspect, not only by ethnomusicology’s example but by the music-driven global solidarity movements of the 1980s: recall the Band Aid and Live Aid concerts, with their refrain of “We are the world.” This new category is in a sense euphemistic: it reproduces the old West-and-the-Rest opposition, while positively valorizing the Rest. It is a friendlier, more “inclusive” way of dealing with the far side of the Western/non-western binary; another repressed Cold War antecedent is Third World. Thus world music designates all music that is not Western (eliding any distinctions that may be drawn in non-western musics between, for example, court and village traditions).

More insidiously, world literature tends in practice to refer to nonwestern literature written in Western languages, particularly English. In the first instance, this means postcolonial literature (Jusdanis 2003, 123). But the horizon is moving: the category world identifies a new and expanding zone of cultural production by non-western artists for largely Western audiences. This zone is, obviously, far more limited than the totality of world cultural production. World music and world literature are distributed through Western-owned channels; there are other channels. World music hybridizes local and Western genres and technologies. World literature adapts Western genres, primarily the novel. It has often been noted that what is marketed as world literature, energized by the influence of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, tends to rely on the magic-realist formula, with its lush sensorium. Some have argued that this mode simply internalizes Western primitivism, forcing non-Western authors to exoticize themselves in order to reach a global market (Gabilondo 1999, Jusdanis 2003,119).

The most recent development is that the West itself is becoming world. Former folk musics are redefining themselves as world—Ireland, Brittany, Spain, and southern Italy

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<sup>7</sup> To be sure, the “authentic” or “traditional” end of the spectrum is acquiring its own category as roots music, an earthier equivalent of heritage that similarly revives the problematic genetic analogy.

provide good examples. The musics are becoming both more refined in their production values and more exotic in their form and performance, drawing on heavier, often more “African” rhythms, and invoking erotic and religious experience more explicitly. Minority-language and regional literatures within Europe are also imitating the world model, as is “multicultural” literature within the United States.

Multicultural is of course the intranational equivalent to the international world. Both labels indicate a kind of difference that can be incorporated within a larger system—first, because its distinctive signs are decorative rather than structural, and second, because its content belongs to certain zones of experience—the personal, the embodied, the erotic, the exotic, the past, the leisurely—that in Western modernity are less valued, less “serious.” Culture, identified with the West’s outer and inner Others, becomes a kind of tourism even for those others themselves: it does not participate in or challenge the ordinary working life of its consumer.

To be sure, ordinary working life is not what it was in Western thought. Increasingly, the precious modern construct of the individual self and the collective identities that magnify it are bound up not with working life but with consumption and leisure, the chosen and desired. Desire leads souls astray, beyond the anticipations of those industries that would excite, direct, and domesticate it. The emergence of a new category thus creates room for maneuver, a contact zone with open possibilities. Much “world literature” does open up new experience and new politics to its Western and indeed its world readers. And for every multinational that sells “world culture” in the same commodity forms used to push the conventional product, there is also the world of Porto Alegre and the alternative globalization movement, in which the rich countries are not taking the lead. The point is that a sociocultural category such as world is a moving target. It identifies not a fixed object but a zone of attention—and tension. As such, it incorporates conflicting resonances. World can be the human face corporations put on globalization to entice consumers or a banner of solidarity in the face of Western exploitation.

## Modular Forms of Modernity and Local Revisions

In this special issue we begin to sort out the diffusion and revisions of the F-word. The essays that follow deal with the category of folk as one of the modular forms of the modern nation-state (Anderson 1991), showing how it has been translated and adapted in four national settings. Roma Chatterji describes the career of the categories *desha* and *marga*, proposed by Ananda Coomaraswamy as an indigenous Indian redrawing of the distinction between folk and high. Jing Li shows the framing of the folk as a source of national revitalization in late imperial China. Ipek Celik traces the recurrent Turkish reconfigurations of the people in political struggles over democracy and ethnic diversity. Mbugua wa-Mungai examines the popular refusal in Kenya of the school-promoted category, oral literature.

We hope that this issue, a collaboration between scholars from five countries, will foster further transnational discussion in a field where this has often been constrained by the nationalist framings of both theory and institutions. We invite the readers of *Indian Folklife* to help us fill in the larger history of sociocultural differentiation, particularly looking for settings in which the debate is not framed by terms of Western origin. A genuinely global history of folklore and the folk has yet to be constructed.

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# 13. The Judgment of Solomon: Global Protections for Tradition and the Problem of Community Ownership<sup>(13)</sup>

Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it.

—1 Kings 4, 26

Ihr aber, ihr Zuhörer der Geschichte vom Kreidekreis

Nehmt zur Kenntnis die Meinung der Alten:

Daß da gehören soll, was da ist, denen, die für es gut sind, also

Die Kinder den Mütterlichen, damit sie gedeihen

Die Wagen den guten Fahrern, damit gut gefahren wird

Und das Tal den Bewässerern, damit es Frucht bringt.

But you, you listeners to the story of the Chalk Circle,

Learn the opinion of the elders:

That what there is should belong to the ones who are good for it, thus

Children to the motherly, so that they may thrive

Wagons to the good drivers, so that they are well driven

And the valley to the waterers, so that it bears fruit.

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<sup>(13)</sup> I have not updated this paper at all from its original publication in 2006. The WIPO and UNESCO processes as well as the developments in Berga continue along the lines described and/or predicted here, in detail far too baroque and (for me at least) unappealing to address. Moreover, a voluminous international bibliography now documents comparable case studies across the globe and traces the further career of protection and propertization initiatives: for one of many points of entry, see the volumes published by the Göttingen Interdisciplinary Working Group in Cultural Property at <http://cultural-property.uni-goettingen.de/>. Originally published as “The Judgment of Solomon: Global

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IN THE ABSENCE of local knowledge, global judges depend on wisdom. King Solomon, ignorant of the history of the two rival claimants to a baby, was confident of the principle that mothers are naturally loving. Bertolt Brecht, revising the story, argued that the birth mother might not be the best mother, particularly when vested privilege made her overconfident of her entitlements. As a good communist, he mistrusted the Lockean tradition of possessive individualism that equates origins with ownership (Hafstein 2004a, 306). But as a good modernizer, he had global assumptions of his own. In the frame story to his *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, a Party representative helps two village councils to resolve a dispute over the possession of a valley. The goatherders who have made cheese in the valley since time immemorial agree to surrender it to an agricultural cooperative that has a plan to irrigate it for orchards, a more productive use of the land.<sup>1</sup>

Stalinist agricultural reality, in turn, tragically undermined Brecht's assumption that modernizing planners always know best (Scott 1998). In fact, judges' wise assumptions are often undone by historical outcomes. In this article I address a more recent debate over possession: who owns tradition? (Brown 2003, Hafstein 2004a, Rikoon 2004). I suggest that some of the assumptions of global advocates for local communities in current intellectual property struggles may be equally ephemeral.

I speak primarily from the experience of my own discipline, folklore. Since the history of commercially recorded music and more with the post-1960s growth of a market for traditional arts, folklorists have repeatedly become involved on an ad hoc basis in disputes over the rights to a particular tradition. Many of these disputes impinge on copyright and other forms of intellectual property law (Cohen 1974, Jabbour 1983, Evans-Pritchard 1987). Others take place in the context of heritage preservation efforts. Folklorists were involved in UNESCO's efforts to establish model provisions for the protection of tradition in 1980 and again in 1989 (Jabbour 1983; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). With UNESCO's Intangible Heritage initiatives since 1972 and with the creation in 2000 of the World Intellectual Property Organization's Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) on Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge, and Folklore, folklorists have

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that in this play the traditionalists are persuaded to surrender their land by means of a staged performance of a traditional narrative sponsored by the modernizers. "Heritage" at work.

Protections for Tradition and the Problem of Community Ownership," *Cultural Analysis* 5 (2006), [http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/volume5/vol5\\_article2.html](http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/volume5/vol5_article2.html).

been participating more intensively as what John Kingdon calls “policy entrepreneurs” in global initiatives to protect local tradition (1995, 122–124). While we are, as Kingdon says, motivated by a sense that our expertise can contribute importantly to a debate that concerns us closely, some of us may admit that we also fit another of his categories, “policy groupies,” eager to be where the action is. And in fact we are gaining a place at the table. Some of our colleagues sit on UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage commission, two representatives from the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress serve on the U.S. delegation to WIPO, and the American Folklore Society and the Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et Folklore are accredited NGOs at the IGC sessions. Representatives of both of these societies along with individual folklorists (myself included) have had the opportunity of informal exchange with members of the WIPO Secretariat, who have exercised an admirable determination to consider the perspectives of both scholars and local actors.

To date, a major emphasis of North American folklorists’ advocacy has been the insistence that protection regimes should give control of tradition not to the paradigmatic political agent, the nation-state, nor to the paradigmatic economic agent, the individual. Rather, it is argued, folklore is created and therefore owned by communities. In consequence, initiatives should be designed to give communities control over the use of their traditions at the most grassroots level possible (Jabbour 1983, American Folklore Society Recommendations 2004, Rikoon 2004). In this article I suggest some of the risks to be borne in mind as this generally praiseworthy insistence on local control moves toward implementation in policy.<sup>2</sup> My primary concern is with the emotional and political force of the idea of “community.” Community is so powerful symbolically that we can hardly assess it empirically. I discuss the modern assumptions that foster global enthusiasm for community but impede understanding of its real dynamics. I ask how judges will recognize the authentic guardians whose right and duty it is to watch over tradition, and who, in turn, will watch the watchers. Finally, I suggest that the reification of tradition as community-managed heritage tends to undermine one of the most important uses of local tradition, the collective negotiation of intracommunity conflict—such that our global Solomons are likely to be called upon to judge more and more local disputes.

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<sup>2</sup> Compare Shuman (1993) on the essentializing of the local. My specific concerns as to “who will judge” and the dangers of assuming that the only tensions are local-global were anticipated by Jabbour (1983, 13–14).

## Tradition and the Culturalist Moment

The care and feeding of tradition is a matter of pressing current concern to intergovernmental organizations, caught as they are between northern and southern nation-states and between multinational corporations and the wretched of the earth. I will refer in this article to UNESCO and WIPO, which may be taken as proxies for two cardinal approaches.<sup>3</sup> For UNESCO, with its language of “safeguarding” and “preserving” living cultural heritage, tradition is the baby of the Bible story, to be guarded and nurtured. For WIPO, with its language of “protection” from unauthorized third-party uses, tradition is Brecht’s valley, to be developed for the collective good.<sup>4</sup> At the time of this writing, both organizations are strongly engaged in protective efforts. UNESCO’s 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has been ratified by thirty member-states and gone into effect as of April 2006. The WIPO Inter-Governmental Committee’s Seventh Assembly in November 2004 discussed a draft of core principles and objectives for the protection of folklore, and the General Assembly has directed the Committee to accelerate the development of an international instrument towards this end.

Tradition, folklore, or intangible heritage, as one prefers,<sup>5</sup> is assumed to stem from and therefore to belong to “communities.” The label of community is accorded by both WIPO and UNESCO to indigenous groups in the first instance and by extension to other minorities within and between nation-states (UNESCO 2003, 1; WIPO/2004, 12–13). Descent is assumed by default to be the unifying basis of community, although religious and other principles of affiliation are secondarily acknowledged.<sup>6</sup> As a rule, groups represented as “communities” are comparatively isolated, subaltern, and not considered to be viable autonomous collective subjects. Indeed, “community” is in part

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<sup>3</sup> For broader imbrications of traditional culture in policy spheres, see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) on trade policy and Rikoon (2004) on human rights.

<sup>4</sup> For the distinction between “safeguarding/preservation” and “protection,” see WIPO (2004, 12).

<sup>5</sup> Each of these terms is notoriously problematic, the last one so much so that I am unwilling to use it. UNESCO and WIPO both recognize the difficulties of terminology; for convenience they have resorted, respectively, to “intangible cultural heritage” and “TCEs/EoF”, that is “Traditional Cultural Expressions/Expressions of Folklore.” For my own convenience I will refer to tradition or folklore without bothering to clarify the definition: it is precisely its lack of clarity that sends policymakers back to default assumptions (see, however, Noyes 2004 and chapter 4, and for the UNESCO-WIPO definition see UNESCO/WIPO 1985). As with the U.S. government’s definition of pornography, it’s enough for the present purpose that we all know folklore when we see it.

<sup>6</sup> In WIPO’s case the citations justifying this inclusion come from the American Folklore Society and other such sources. Since the 1960s, American folkloristics has sought to undo the traditional/modern divide through the famous definition of a folk group as “any group of people whatsoever who share a common factor” (Dundes 1965, 2). But this runs directly counter to the efforts of indigenous groups to transvalue their ascribed exceptionalism and make it the basis of rights claims. Indeed, the broadest definition of folk sits uneasily with identity politics, for when all are communities and all have tradition, then claims of uniqueness calling for special protections become at best devalued, at worst inadjudicable. We need to begin to discuss seriously whether or not some communities are more equal than others.

a euphemism conferring dignity and value on groups in a negative position: it is a verbal gift from the rich to the poor. At the same time, insofar as the label implies a refusal of individualism, it distances its referent from modernity (cf. Bauman and Briggs 2003).

Folklore is assumed to be what communities have got amid all they have not got. It is both identity and resource, both baby and valley. Just as the nation-states of the nineteenth century built national cultures out of their folklore, so both new states and subaltern groups within them must make cultural capital out of their own. In the culturalist new world order, folklore also provides the face by which communities represent themselves and claim rights in the political arena.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in a global economy full of consumers hungry for exotic experience, folklore is a cultural resource comparable to the natural raw materials on which poor countries have so often depended for export income (Yúdice 2003).

Both UNESCO and, within the context of folklore protections, WIPO have supported the insistence of developing countries that communities be allowed the free exercise of their tradition in an autonomous space, the boundaries of which should be breached neither by the unwanted invasion of foreign culture nor by the expropriations of foreign culture industries.<sup>8</sup> The first of the guiding principles proposed at the IGC's Seventh Session in November 2004 is "responsiveness to aspirations and expectations of relevant communities" (WIPO 2004 Annex I p.2). Elsewhere the document states that protection of tradition is not an end in itself, but intended to benefit communities (Annex II, p.1). Throughout the WIPO Secretariat's documents discussing objectives, principles, and policy options for the protection of tradition it is emphasized that, while protections are likely to be instituted by nation-states, they should be designed to reflect community practice and wishes, avoid interference with community-generated initiatives, and accrue advantage to the community above all other stakeholders. The UNESCO Convention, which privileges the cultural expressions themselves, nonetheless identifies communities as the makers and custodians of heritage (UNESCO 2003, 1) and prescribes that communities participate as fully as possible in safeguarding measures, again understood by default as the province of state actors (Article 11b; Article 15).

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<sup>7</sup> Culturalism, that is, the use of culture as an explanation for and legitimation of political and economic difference, has been much discussed of late, particularly in relation to Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis. A good sampling of culturalism in U.S. policy circles may be found in Harrison and Huntington ed. 2000. For large-scale accounts and critiques of the culturalist turn from a variety of perspectives, see Handler 1988, Kuper 1999, Al-Azmeh 1993, Benhabib 2002, Yúdice 2003. For culturalism as it affects folklorists most directly, Kaschuba and Bendix 1999.

<sup>8</sup> To be sure, such violations are envisioned as coming from outside state boundaries. The relationship of the state to its communities is less often problematized, cf. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; indeed the African countries in the most recent IGC meeting insisted strongly on the role and rights of the state in administering local tradition (Hafstein 2004b). In WIPO and UNESCO documents as a whole, states are generally understood to be aligned in interest with communities rather than in potential opposition to them.

The developed countries are unlikely to put up much fuss. Letting communities earn money on their folklore is a relatively minor concession. It may smooth the way for the more controversial and economically more consequential debates<sup>9</sup> over “traditional cultural knowledge” (most urgently ethnobotany and medical practice) and “genetic resources” (both human and territorial).<sup>10</sup> In addition, giving the southern countries a stake in existing intellectual property legislation may conceivably soften resistance to a system that overwhelmingly benefits the developed countries. This is of particular importance in light of the “Development Agenda” recently proposed by Brazil, Argentina, and other southern countries to the WIPO General Assembly, demanding a global rethinking of the intellectual property regime as an instrument for general economic development rather than the protection of existing interests (Proposal 2004). The North’s culture industries, furthermore, depend upon diverse and renewable global cultural resources to provide the constant novelty that stimulates ongoing consumer demand. It is thus in their interest to give the makers of “authentic” and “indigenous” culture some incentive to continue to create; and this provision of incentive is of course the core justification of the existing intellectual property regime.<sup>11</sup>

The solution to global inequality, political and economic, has become “Let them eat culture.” Culture is increasingly proffered as the bridge across socioeconomic divides and the oil to the wheels of globalization. If globalization painfully widens the gaps between us, world music gives us one beat to dance to—and it is, notably, the gift of the poor to the rich. For it is famously the poor who have rhythm: indeed, the ideology of modernity posits an inverse relationship between material and cultural wealth.<sup>12</sup> The individualist and rational-instrumental behaviors that foster capitalist development are imagined, in the newly revitalized Herderian tradition, to be inimical to the leisured communal environment in which authentic art emerges (Bauman and Briggs 2003).<sup>13</sup> Once the rich have all modernity can offer, however, they begin to hunger for authenticity too (cf. Cantwell 1993, Bendix 1997). This gives them an affective as well as economic interest in the poor and creates one domain in which

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<sup>9</sup> My colleague David Huron suggests that this is a mistaken assumption: the music industry in the US is as big as the pharmaceutical industry and entertainment is of course a leading US export.

<sup>10</sup> The presuppositions inherent in the IGC’s grouping of genetics and tradition speak for themselves. The distinction drawn between folklore and traditional knowledge (which, needless to say, is theoretically unacceptable to folklorists, as well as to certain state delegations) is between aesthetic and practical activity. Religion is included with the former.

<sup>11</sup> Playing off Sigmund Freud’s reading of the Solomon story (Freud 1966–1974, v.18, p.121), Elliott Oring suggests that a deep envy drives the growing western willingness to incorporate traditional culture into IP regimes. Our baby is already dead; why should not the south also have theirs sliced up into partible commodities? (pers. comm.)

<sup>12</sup> Note that I am referring to culture not in the Arnoldian but in the anthropological sense, which dominates the culturalist discourse.

<sup>13</sup> To be sure, the scales can tip back again and modernity itself be recuperated as culture: in what seems an inevitable pattern of ecological succession, heritage is replacing industry in a variety of Western regions.

the playing field is apparently more level, a compensation for the southern countries' manifestly inferior bargaining power in all other respects. With culture, for once, the poor have what the rich need and cannot produce it under conditions of forced labor.<sup>14</sup>

The projection of culture and community onto poverty has economic consequences that will in turn shape policy. Local culture has become sought-after raw material, extracted by multinational corporations for refinement into cultural commodity. As with the environment, the extent to which local culture is a renewable resource is unclear and much-disputed. The ideological opposition between modernity and authenticity suggests that the best culture is proper to a disappearing premodern world. The criterion of authenticity turns culture into a scarce resource and a rival good, creating competition to define one's own lodes as purer and deeper than those of other communities. Cultural hybrids such as world beat music and tourist art, which are renewable, typically command lower unit prices but are open to mass production and distribution, complicating the economic tradeoffs to be considered in "developing" a tradition.

Local communities recognize culture as their capital and seek to develop it themselves, arguing that they, not the multinationals, ought to reap the profits of their tradition. This position is endorsed in the WIPO draft policy objective (2004 Annex I, 2) of promoting "community development and legitimate trading activities." Local actors will thus compete with global ones to "develop" traditional culture, but also with one another.<sup>15</sup>

## Community Imagined and Lived

"Community" is the magic word around which consensus can take shape in international tensions over the uses of tradition. "Community" speaks to the moral concerns of the larger publics to whom policy-makers must answer (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1987, 293, 295 n.8), indexing both the metropolitan romance with authenticity and subaltern demands for justice and agency. As advocates of local or subaltern interests present their case to global judges, they tend to idealize community in characteristic ways:

- Contrasting it to the competitive individualism of global capitalism, they typify community as solidary and economically disinterested.
- The representative anecdote of threat to traditional culture depicts a multinational corporation appropriating the creation of an isolated indigenous group.

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<sup>14</sup> But this poses a real problem of sustainability. Although the North continues to imagine Southern poverty as underemployment that leaves plenty of time for dancing under the palm trees, the reality is increasingly of long hours in brickworks, maquiladoras, and sweatshops, which leave minimal space for sustaining personal existence, much less complex cultural creation. For further thoughts on the matter, see chapter 10.

<sup>15</sup> The current WIPO draft foresees difficulty with rival claimant communities but not rivalries or competition within communities (2004, Annex II, 18).

Community/noncommunity thus appears to be a clear binary. Consider, for example, the current WIPO draft's distinction between "exploitation" from without and "use" or "development" from within.

- Communities are spoken of as bounded individuals—a root metaphor that naturalizes the biologically-defined community—such that their traditions are distinctive and indeed unique (Handler 1988, Magliocco 2003).

Folklorists are hardly immune to these rhetorical temptations, especially in the heat of activist struggles. But our accumulated disciplinary learning inclines toward a very different set of generalizations:

- Power relations exist within communities as well as between them. Small dense communities, especially poor ones, are usually places of fierce competition for scarce resources, including prestige within the group. Folklore is a key resource for intra-community politics. Folk performance is a means of cultivating prestige and other kinds of social power: performers (and their patrons) vie against rivals for the approbation of an audience.<sup>16</sup>
- Most cultural borrowing takes place not across great divides but between near neighbors, sometimes arriving by this process to a cross-continental reach (e.g. the Märchen). Such borrowing takes place even between supposedly isolated indigenous communities in regions like the Amazon or the pre-colonial Northwest Coast (Boas 1927; Seeger 1987, 19–20, 133–34). In fact, most folklore is highly mobile (consider "Cinderella," urban legends, and hiphop style) and, one might say, designed to be so.<sup>17</sup>
- By extension, cultural creation does not take place within closed communities or under conditions of consensus, but through competitive social exchange. Indeed, Steven Weber's description of collective creativity in open-source software development (2004) applies perfectly well to ballads, festival, and other "folk" forms, viz: simultaneous reworkings by multiple actors (a.k.a. "parallel distributed processing") in an open social network under conditions of publicity. Community membership and the status of individuals within the network are defined by participation. Competition regulated by community norms stimulates engagement and innovation (chapter 9).

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<sup>16</sup> The performance approach strongly emphasizes the achievement of honor and reputation through oral performance, e.g., Bauman 1986. To be sure, much folkloristic research has argued that such competitive performance is typical of high-ranking men, and that strong patterns of reciprocity and cooperation may be found in the traditions of women, working classes, and other subalterns. But one generalization is at least as defensible as the other, and the traditions likely to be visible and of interest to an external audience are often the most performative and competitive: the most politicized.

<sup>17</sup> On the current neglect of the diffusionist tradition, cf. Magliocco 2004, 234. On how texts are



- Communities are not always defined by descent. Residential proximity and trade or political interactions provide other bases for culturally productive affiliation, and still more important for the production of self-conscious identities are voluntary or consent-based communities.
- Community is not a clearly bounded, objectively identifiable group of individuals. Community is a convenient label for the work of collective representation and action that emerges from the heart of a dense, multiplex social network (chapter 2).<sup>18</sup> Networks perform themselves as bounded groups to serve collective goals, including the stabilization of their own fluid life; and this autotelic work is increasingly the work of community in modernity. Individuals, to be sure, push others towards collective action for a wide range of private purposes, and the internal play of power shapes any performance of community. Some social actors have far more investment in community than others; consensus on its importance and its definition tends to increase with an external threat.<sup>19</sup>
- Even folklore explicitly framed as a display of differential identity (e.g., costume, festival) is very similar from place to place within a given cultural area. Indeed, the folklore of difference is particularly inclined to uniformity (Bauman and Abrahams ed. 1981; Lau 2000). The narcissism of minor differences plays an important role here: that is, boundary-keeping shibboleths are more salient than internal structural distinctiveness. Within European modernity, a code for signifying the local emerges such that all locals look rather alike.<sup>20</sup> The initial purpose of performing locality is to compete for attention from the state, although typically the performances assert simultaneous emotional resistance to dependency. The local may be understood as a modular form comparable to the nation, multiplying more intensely of late as the limitations of the nation have become more acutely felt. To assume that folklore's primary purpose is the assertion of local or group identity (as folklorists sometimes do without thinking and as is implicit in both UNESCO and WIPO documents) is arguably ethnocentric and presentist.

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constructed for mobility, see Bauman and Briggs 1990 and Silverstein and Urban eds. 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Multiplex refers in network theory to multi-stranded social relationships, for example a friendship that develops between coworkers who also share the same religion.

<sup>19</sup> This is the understanding that underlies my use of the word community in the rest of this article, where for want of a better term I will follow everyday usage in applying the word to dense multiplex networks, usually place-based, in contexts where they are acting as or recognized as communities. Although this fuzziness is analytically regrettable, network and group image cannot conveniently be separated. Communities are not sustained in imagination without lived interaction to give them emotional and cognitive support, nor do networks stabilize and reproduce themselves without common imagery to focus them. As with folklore, the concept of community derives its social power from being both ambiguous and unavoidable.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bendix and Noyes eds. 1998; Hofer 1984; chapter 6.

## The Needs of Policy

If the historical moment of neoliberal globalization tends to promote an understanding of community as the nation-state in miniature, the needs of legal regimes will treat it as the individual writ large.<sup>21</sup> Convenient homologies lie to hand, straight from the Romantic version of modernity that shaped them both. Authenticity is to community as authorship is to the individual.<sup>22</sup> And, over time, heritage is to community as inheritance to the individual. The community may therefore, by analogy, be treated legally as the owner of tradition.

Although the WIPO documents recognize that authenticity is a theoretically problematic concept (WIPO 2004, 16), it is nonetheless invoked in the core principles (ibid 16–17), and participating folklorists have not to date made loud noises in protest of this or about the comparable use of heritage by UNESCO. This should surprise us, given that both authenticity and heritage have been subjected to nearly forty years of energetic historicizing and critique within our field.<sup>23</sup> It can be surmised that tolerance of these concepts, as of the reification of community, is strategic essentialism on the part of folklorists forced to recognize where their bread is buttered ideologically and hoping that the gains in local agency to be achieved through these concessions will allow the term to be deconstructed later. Arguably, accommodation to “folk” culture concepts (in this case those of an elite folk) is necessary to succeed as a culture broker.<sup>24</sup>

To understand these concepts and recognize their appeal is certainly vital; that is not the same as adopting them. I would rather suggest that it is dangerous to resurrect as policy what we have already buried as theory. Once our strategic essentialism has created legal realities we will be stuck with them—and it.

The problem lies in how community may be represented under modern legal and administrative regimes. Legal rights such as ownership can be held only by legal persons, whether “natural” (human beings) or “juristic” (corporations, states, and other constructed entities) (Martin ed. 2002, entries “legal person,” “juristic person”). In order to hold rights in tradition, a community will have to be represented as a legal person. As the metaphor implies, this legal person will speak in one voice and act as one entity.

For this purpose, an established representative body (such as a municipality or a tribal council) may be designated, or a new one created. In the case of already bureaucratized indigenous groups in developed countries, the assignation of ownership

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<sup>21</sup> There is of course no contradiction, only a differentiation of levels. Beneath both the nation-state and the individual-proprietary regime of modernity lies the ideology of individualism described in Dumont 1986.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Feld 1994, 273, on the covert linkages of copyright regimes and authenticity discourses: economic and curatorial control are aligned in world music.

<sup>23</sup> Bausinger 1966, Hofer 1984, Handler and Linnekin 1984, Evans-Pritchard 1987, Bendix 1997, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998.

<sup>24</sup> Bendix, however, protests the tendency (1999, 215).

becomes legally straightforward. Individuals will derive rights from verifiable group membership. Whether an individual is entitled to practice and sell a protected genre of artisanal work, for example, may be determined by her presence in a tribal registry. In some cases this will entail the exclusion of persons of mixed ancestry or external ethnic origin, regardless of their mastery or acceptance by other practitioners of the tradition (cf. Evans-Pritchard 1987, 291). Legal solutions require clarity and simplicity. Genetic ancestry being a seemingly objective determinant of group membership, it is likely to be favored, and racist conceptions of culture are bound to be reinforced.

To be sure, representation could also take shape through self-governed bodies such as artists' cooperatives, although this kind of solution has been little-mentioned in the WIPO documents. Insofar as tradition is understood as the property of "communities" rather than practitioners—and certainly patrons and users are as vital to the meaning of a tradition as the makers—this sort of solution is precluded. In any case, the most probable lobbyists for protection of a tradition, in the case of UNESCO the default lobbyists, are nation-states, generally in cooperation with lower-level political units: it is therefore they who will control the protected resource.<sup>25</sup>

Once ownership of the tradition is established, responsibility for its management devolves upon the owner. In a further abstraction of "community," the representative body will typically delegate administration of the tradition to a designated bureaucracy in the form of an "instrumental legal personification" such as a foundation or commission (Martínez-Alonso Camps and Ysa Figueras 2001). Both WIPO and UNESCO's Intangible Heritage process anticipate this move.<sup>26</sup> Thus the tradition that circulates within a fuzzy-edged network of variably positioned persons may in practice end up under the control of a twice-removed and very small subgroup, whose representative status is unclear.

## Local Cultural Bureaucracy in Practice

The quickest mother will get the baby. Once procedures are set in place for according ownership of tradition and designating representative bodies, those actors out to capitalize on local tradition will be ready to make their claims, as they already are with UNESCO and lower-level bodies according heritage designations. These are, of course, the actors most savvy in global matters and therefore, according to the ideology that justifies protection in the first place, the least "authentic."

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<sup>25</sup> In some cases in opposition to traditional artists within their own nation. Ghana recently updated its copyright law to nationalize all folkloric expression, claiming to follow WIPO's recommendation in so doing. One clause imposes "a fine, jail or both on any Ghanaians who commercially use, sell, or distribute Ghanaian folklore or translations without Government's permit." ("Expert Criticises Copyright Bill," 2005). This regulatory process is, to put it mildly, unlikely to encourage local entrepreneurship or further national economic growth.

<sup>26</sup> UNESCO/WIPO 1985; WIPO 2004, 8 and Annex II, 20.

For global judges have little knowledge of local realities, and will not themselves be initiating protective measures. There is no globally maintained and updated survey of world folklore that would allow international organizations to target those local traditions most at risk. Nor can they go out and seek culture-appropriate solutions on a case by case basis. The economic and human resources for ongoing global-local collaborations do not exist. Rather, as currently with UNESCO heritage designations, local actors will petition for recognition and put forward a plan for protection. Supervision from above, whether from global bodies such as UNESCO or from the national governments WIPO expects to implement its provisions, will not be close, informed, or ongoing. Those actors who purport to represent the community are likely to be accepted as doing so, and their actions are unlikely to be scrutinized thereafter.

Thus the best-placed local actors will claim the tradition. They will furnish and run the administrative body with a relatively free hand. The predictable results, in the aggregate, will be the further commercialization, corruption, and control of local traditions. All these will stem from the bureaucratic predilection towards intervention.

- Intervention. UNESCO will give the valley to the irrigators. That is, a tradition is not “protected” if its practitioners simply continue to do what they do. Rather, a plan for “managing” the tradition is a requirement for winning an Intangible Heritage designation. Moreover, even when UNESCO’s eyes have turned elsewhere, the administrative body must justify its ongoing existence to the local public. This it does by the construction of threats, needs, and lacks requiring its intervention, and more generally by the show of activity (Edelman 1977). Once created, bureaucracies notoriously expand (Beetham 1987, 58).
- Commercialization. A bureaucracy seeks rents with which to maintain itself. With the dominant neoliberal preference for markets in lieu of public funding, commercializing the tradition offers a surer and larger return than a state subsidy. The more the bureaucracy expands (as per above), the more funding it requires. While commercialization is likely to increase overall, then, the portion going to artists and performers will be reduced by bureaucratic skimming of the cream.
- Corruption. The “instrumental personification,” existing in theory only to implement the community’s will, is in practice constituted of natural persons who are (and, naturally, should be) stakeholders and participants in the tradition. The stronger the institutional authority conferred on them, the more opportunities to advance their individual interests.<sup>27</sup>
- Control. The actors granted bureaucratic authority are likely already to possess some other kind. Depending on the situation, they will be some combination

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<sup>27</sup> While WIPO will not be dispensing money and UNESCO does so in a limited way, both will be

of senior men with traditional authority, elites with political authority, or entrepreneurs with economic power and the prestige of modernity—which in the present climate is charismatic authority of a kind. The resulting concentration of power is likely to foster the reshaping of tradition in furtherance of ideological goals.<sup>28</sup>

Is this summary unduly alarmist? The past few years have made me take alarm, so I offer an example, one that is of no particular transcendence and does not present the most difficult scenario, but is close to my heart and important to those involved.<sup>29</sup> I present it with pain and hesitation: I am criticizing the actions of people who have been kind to me, and in writing this I will make local enemies. But local divisions will be a consequence of this (literal) valorization of community when local tradition, the medium of accommodation, is translated into economic resource, a basis of competition. Because this change is in process, I speculate about the future based on my knowledge of the past. I write with scanty details, as the facts are not easy to establish, and my purpose is to suggest the kind of thing that happens rather than to assess Berga *per se*.<sup>30</sup>

## A Case: the Patum of Berga, Catalonia

Some communities are better organized than others for claiming national or global notice, and may try to take advantage of this primacy to repress rival claimants to a valued tradition. In the small Pyrenean city of Berga, many locals have long insisted that the fire festivals in other Catalan towns are “copies” of their festival, the Patum. This discourse of authenticity and plagiarism acquires new potential now that the city has successfully pushed to put the Patum forward as Spain’s next candidate for a UNESCO Intangible Masterpiece designation and to trademark, at the city’s expense, “the most distinctive elements” of the festival—a process now moving through the courts. The movers behind these developments will certainly be watching any WIPO initiatives closely. Though it is now certainly too late to suppress a rival of more than twenty years’ standing, they would have been thrilled to have the legal grounds for

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providing means for the reconstruction of local traditions as resources for development. The extensive literature on corruption and development might therefore suggest ways in which not to repeat the mistakes of the past. In addition, much may be learned from the first large-scale bureaucratization of local tradition for commercial purposes, the ever-expanding system of controlled-appellation designations in European wine and food.

<sup>28</sup> Jabbour 1983 and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004 note this problem particularly in the relationship of indigenous groups to national governments: there is a strong potential for “power grabs” (Jabbour 14).

<sup>29</sup> For a similar case of longer standing, see Scher 2002. This article came to my notice after I had drafted this one: it anticipates me in raising the problem of local representation and appropriation from within. See also Silverman 2005, 7–8; Brown 2003, 18–21.

<sup>30</sup> The ethnographic present here is the early to mid-2000s.

attacking the fire festival of a larger neighboring city, Manresa. (Some would also still like to suppress certain “copies” of the Patum within Berga, small-scale neighborhood versions that have become very important to the social integration of new immigrants and other marginal actors.)

Young Manresans did indeed attend the Patum in large numbers in the 1960s and 70s when it was one of the few large street festivals tolerated by the Franco regime and had become a focus of political resistance. The restoration of municipal democracy in 1979 led to an explosion of new and “recuperated” festivals in the early 1980s, created by young activists who could now turn from the serious to the ludic and from resistance to the reconstruction of community. The Patum was a salient model for them in both its formal features and its social effects. As happened in many other cities, the creators of Manresa’s Correfoc copied the Patum, but they also did extensive historical research on the lost festivals of Manresa. Above all, they invented new performances, based on the old common vocabulary of devils and dragons and fireworks but wittily incorporating both new technical possibilities and more recent local symbols. The current Correfoc is visibly related to the Patum and visibly not the Patum. Moreover, for centuries the lines of influence ran in the other direction, from the center to the periphery. Manresa had an elaborate Corpus Christi festival in the seventeenth century, and in that period there is every reason to suppose that Berga imitated Manresa’s festival, as it demonstrably did those of Barcelona and other important cities. That is how traditional cultural creativity works. Communities do not create their culture *sui generis* from their unique soil: they select and combine forms in general circulation according to their possibilities and with a competitive eye on the creations of their neighbors.

Economic and political rivalry between local communities has been an important spur to collective creativity. In addition, social tensions within Berga have shaped the Patum (Noyes 2003). The festival centers on a series of danced combats in which, despite nominal victors and vanquished, everyone lives to fight again. Its Turks and Christians, angels and devils, dwarves and giants, hieratic eagle and violent mule-dragon sum up four centuries of social conflict in Berga and continue to index in the present the principal coordinates of social difference: male and female, old and young, boss and worker, native and immigrant, submissive and rebellious. The festival’s unity is one of dynamic tension and precarious accommodation. Historically, certain elements were imposed from above; others were forced in from below and won sufficient popular acceptance that they had to be tolerated by the authorities. Everyone has a point of entry into the festival, and everyday irritations are both expressed and surmounted within it. As the dances are endlessly repeated in the course of five days in which no one sleeps or stops dancing, fired by drink and drumbeats and the thick falling sparks of slow-burning firecrackers, pain becomes pleasure and divisions dissolve. Because of the festival’s capacity for both representation and transcendence, every faction in the town is engaged in it; everyone’s energies have been given to it. A Catalan proverb declares “we won’t die united, but we’ll die assembled,” and the passionately

participatory Patum is the festival expression of this principle.<sup>31</sup> The Patum is, in short, the collective performance by which Berga struggles to achieve community; and community is all the more valued for being hard-won.

As in most small towns with a history of scarce resources, tension and mistrust within Berga are considerable. The multivocality and indirection of folk performance foster a delicate equilibrium, temporary but memorable enough to keep things going until the following year. The difficulty of this achievement increases and the sources of competition intensify when outsiders begin to pay attention to this local folklore. Now folklore presents political and economic opportunities. It creates opportunities for the community as a whole to improve its fortunes, but simultaneously offers opportunities for individual advancement. The intellectual who can interpret local culture to the metropolis in ideologically attractive terms, the artist who is singled out as a master, the patron who can claim to have preserved an age-old tradition for posterity, can all be taken up and celebrated by enthusiastic metropolitans with little local knowledge, and their self-presentations are unlikely ever to be questioned.

In Berga in the early 1990s, a certain group of festival participants well-connected in City Hall created a foundation, a Patronat for the protection of the Patum: a festival with thousands of passionate adherents that is in no conceivable danger of dying or of losing its formal integrity. The governing junta of the Patronat and its “technical” personnel are not directly elected either by the citizens of Berga or by the performers in the Patum. Some are ex officio city council members and others are nominated. Some heads of the comparses—the individual performing groups within the festival, in which participation has long been internally regulated by custom—have been nominated; others, with different views about the festival, have not been. The structure of rotation in office is not explicit. No outsider, however, has any reason to doubt that the Patronat represents the community: UNESCO is dealing with them, as are the Catalan Department of Culture and the Spanish Office of Patents and Trademarks.

The Patronat has been working intensely to promote the Patum as a tourist event, an agenda that has long been controversial in Berga. From the 1960s through the end of the 1980s public opinion ran strongly against it. Today the community is deeply divided, particularly among comparsa members. Thanks to intensive lobbying, the Patum is Spain’s current candidate for the UNESCO designation of Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Patrimony of Humanity. In general, the population of Berga and the surrounding region are enthusiastic about this possibility. In some cases, their motives are economic.<sup>32</sup> The Patum is a major expense in the municipal budget, and both the city administration and many comparsa members expect better access to Catalan government subventions (which have indeed been forthcoming as far as the

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<sup>31</sup> Literally and more wittily, “no morirem units però morirem reunits.”

<sup>32</sup> For example, over ninety percent of bar owners are in favor (Espelt 2004, 25).

campaign itself is concerned) and even direct subventions from UNESCO.<sup>33</sup> Intertwined with the economic motive is one of local pride. There is a widespread sense that the festival deserves this prestigious international recognition; there is excitement at the possibility that local perceptions and priorities might, just once, find not just national but international validation.

An important minority of the community, however, is not enthusiastic. They are some of the central Patum performers and some of the people most active in the transition to democracy in Catalonia. In the 1980s they were out to revive local culture after the dictatorship and to recover a sense of local control and autonomy. In that context, they participated in an earlier campaign to protect the Patum from external commercial influences. Now many of them feel the battle is lost, and that globalization will defeat them as Franco did not: the Patronat is rushing to turn them into what they swore they would never be, “an Indian reservation” (Noyes 2003, 194, 276)

Their pessimism may not be justified, but the important point is that they are withdrawing their labor: they’ve stopped arguing and have on the whole retreated from participation in Berguedan public life. In a small, economically fragile community where the effort of all is needed to maintain local cultural and social vitality, some of the most talented actors have surrendered control to the bureaucrats. Moreover, these bureaucrats are, frankly, provincial, and their expensively produced cultural enhancements do not meet metropolitan standards of design, scholarship, museology, and so on. So the Patum may suffer locally without profiting globally.

The Patronat, on its side, has begun to use its arrogated powers for commercialization, corruption, and control. This is of course too violent a phrasing. Nevertheless, the trademark registrations have to be paid for and the salary of the “technician,” a historian whose job description is rumored to include “determining the true origins of the Patum,” has to be paid. In addition to seeking subventions from the regional government, the Patronat has begun licensing commercial products such as t-shirts and champagne with its seal of approval. As the trademarks come into effect, they plan to take action against unauthorized commercial users of Patum imagery.<sup>34</sup>

The Patronat maintains physical control of the elements of the Patum. While one local ensemble’s recording of the festival music is advertised on the municipal government’s Patum website, another group of musicians—who have played for the Patum for thirty years, whose former conductor was a major figure in the musical history of the festival, and who, moreover, have good connections in Barcelona and the possibility of reaching a wide audience—were recently denied the use of the Patum’s great bass

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<sup>33</sup> In contrast, the tour guide at a UNESCO World Heritage site in southern Catalonia shook her head over the effects of the designation and told me, “Molta norma i poca pela.” (Lots of rules and little money).

<sup>34</sup> A first action has already been taken against a winner of the poster prize who then put the design on a t-shirt. In this case the norms of the contest explicitly stated that the designs would remain property of the municipality, but several Berguedans nonetheless took delight in wearing the “contraband” t-shirt during the 2004 Patum, in protest of the trademarking ventures.



drum for a recording. Permission to take out certain effigies and costumes for use in photographs has similarly been denied to more than one rival of the photographer allied to the Patronat. To be sure, the Patronat's photographer owns the best-equipped and longest-standing studio in town, which by virtue of its archive alone takes the inevitable lead in Patum documentation. But as Lessig observes in another context, the status quo is being reinforced by giving the existing commercial leaders the authority to decide the terms on which their competition will be admitted (2001, 212–13). The exclusion of the established musicians is more egregious. In this case a longstanding rivalry of the kind that has always energized the festival has had its stakes raised. As the Patronat supports one side and the other develops alliances in Barcelona's folk music community, the rivalry becomes more institutionalized, less interactive, more a question of separate spheres, and this also will tend to diminish the face-to-face creative tension that has kept the festival vital for four centuries. In general, there is at least a strong appearance of contradiction between the Patronat's actions and its explicit agenda of promoting the festival through quality local cultural products.

Social control is a further question. The Patum has served as a vehicle of intense political and class contestation from its emergence in the seventeenth century. It has also served, since the first period of large-scale immigration in the 1950s, as a means of incorporating new Berguedans into full community membership. The members of the Patronat stem from the "respectable" wing of Patum opinion, and in many incidents over the years this wing has attempted to control participation with a view to controlling the Patum's potential for shaping social change. There are indications that this control, while far more discreet than the commercialization, is part of the Patronat's agenda. For example, recently a system of "points" was created for designating the festival administrators, an honorific office accorded every year to four newly married couples. Among other things, points are given for having been born in Berga and having been married in church. In a city with a large immigrant population and in which the working class is historically anti-clerical, these are highly divisive criteria.<sup>35</sup> People murmur—there is as yet no evidence to substantiate the murmurings—about intentions to interfere with the comparses' control of their membership; they speculate about the development of a lottery system comparable to the one instituted in the 1990s to allot places in the Children's Patum, a far more domesticated event that, for many, foreshadows the shape of things to come. Furthermore, the Patronat's explicit interpretations of the festival and insistence on its character as a survival from time immemorial deny its contestatory elements, a strategy that was necessary during the Franco regime but resonates differently today. Although they overstate the case, many locals believe that the Patronat intends to take a living festival and freeze it into heritage. Such fears become self-fulfilling prophecies, fostering the disengagement

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<sup>35</sup> They also break with recent tradition. Since the mass immigration from Southern Spain in the 1950s and 60s, the Patum has served as a crucial vehicle of integration and been celebrated as such by local authorities (Armengou 1994 [1968], 124).

of those actors who feel excluded. In fact, my observations of the most recent years suggest that the festival is becoming at once more liturgical in execution and more “lite” in feeling.<sup>36</sup>

Many aspects of this situation are not new, merely enhanced by the higher stakes of UNESCO and trademark law. In Europe the provincial intellectual who articulates local tradition for and with the state has been an important figure since at least the early seventeenth century, and tradition marked and marketed as local has long been an important economic resource for even the humblest social actors (Jeggle and Korff 1986). But under globalization the phenomenon has burgeoned; cosmopolitan artists and intellectuals who can claim to represent an exotic local culture may do extremely well for themselves (Franco 1988, Gabilondo 1999).

The rivalries between local communities for metropolitan attention are of equally long standing, and in Iberia the center has conferred commendations on the periphery for its preservation of traditions since the late nineteenth century. Under the Franco regime, declarations of “Fiesta de Interés Turístico” multiplied as the tourist economy boomed; after 1979 the Catalan government assumed control of this designation within the region, now purified or perhaps euphemized as “Festa d’Interès Nacional.” One ethnologist who has served on the Generalitat’s committee noted the problem of the designation’s politically-driven proliferation and consequent devaluation; the UNESCO Intangible Heritage process, she observed, will reproduce the problem on a global scale (Josefina Roma, personal communication, June 2004, and cf. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004).<sup>37</sup> The Patronat’s historian has ignored compelling arguments for the nineteenth century fabrication of a supposed medieval document, speaking without qualification of the Patum in the fourteenth century, and also argues strongly for the persistence of pre-Christian elements in the festival, on what is necessarily shaky evidence. This insistence on continuity since time immemorial is part of the need to construct the Patum as unique among Catalan festivals, and as such it is a legitimation device common to localities throughout Europe and dating from—time immemorial.

For the conservative discourse of authenticity, used in this case by both the Patronat and its critics (myself included), is not exclusive to the modern nation-state and elite actors. On the contrary, the provincial intellectuals who made the nation-state are those most deeply invested in it as a discourse of value. Everyone who controls part of a valued tradition resists changes in it as potential threats to his or her own position; everyone sees the present realization as a falling-off corrupted by the times; and the actors who denounce change most vociferously are of course the same ones involved in

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<sup>36</sup> The word in Catalan is “light,” usually written in italics and derived from the product marketed in Spain as “Coca-Cola Light.” In the 1980s the term was more often “descafeïnat” (decaffeinated), similarly derived from American commercial influences.

<sup>37</sup> A comparable devaluation of the controlled-appellation designation for European wines has resulted from its overextension (Robinson ed. 1994, entries “Appellation Contrôlée” and “Denominazione d’Origine Controllata”)—although it can be argued that in the long run the system has raised quality overall.

the promotion and instrumentalization of the tradition.<sup>38</sup> The authenticity discourse has long been so prominent an elite framework for the Patum as to be widely parodied: “Accept no vulgar substitutes,” the carriers of the Patum mule told my American husband as they poured *barreja*, a potent mix of anise and muscatel, down his throat from their leather flask. To be sure, from the 1960s through the 1980s the point was to resist commercialization; now it is to protect the brand. To counter the powerful anticonsumerist and isolationist position still held reflexively by many Berguedans, the Patronat’s historian has recently reminded the public of the festival’s long-standing attempt to attract outsiders, without commenting on the most recent and vigorous phase of this promotion during the dictatorship (Rumbo 2004). Suddenly, and for the first time in the festival’s history, tourism is authentic.

Finally, accusations of secrecy and mishandled funds are a routine part of life in Berga: there is a longstanding culture of mistrust. If the Patronat were not accused, others would be: indeed the *comparsa* of the devils has long been popularly understood to sell off performing rights, although I know of no verifiable instance. “L’enjeja...” they lament: envy rules. But it exacerbates rumor and suspicion to have extralocal authorities involved. Not without foundation, Berguedans take for granted a high level of corruption in both the Catalan and the Spanish governments, and the UN is of course not immune to such perceptions. After centuries of abuses and exploitation, the culture of democratic trust is precarious—Spain being anything but unique in this regard. For debate and decisions to carry any legitimacy in such settings, they must be public. With the creation of the Patronat, matters that would once have been addressed in municipal plenaries have gone behind closed doors and, more importantly, matters that would have been resolved in everyday practice and been communicated through the ordinary gossip network have also gone behind closed doors. Gossip becomes more aggressive, beating at the doors, when its access to information is reduced.

## Aftermath

Extrapolating from the situation in Berga, I predict that when the government of tradition is wrested from informal negotiation between competitive actors to formal administrative bodies, certain consequences may be anticipated:<sup>39</sup>

- The displacement of conflict from the tradition itself to its conditions of practice. That is, rather than working out difference within the codes of the tradition,

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Noguera i Canal 1992 on the “potentiation” of the Patum in the late nineteenth century. I came too late upon Herzfeld’s intricate discussion of the close link between culturalism and bureaucratization to incorporate his argument into my own, but particularly germane here is his assertion that the reification of tradition as culture entails its loss as social practice; to wrest it back requires a powerful struggle against the inertia of institutional categories (1992, 182–183).

<sup>39</sup> I do not address here the more general effects of freezing the tradition process as heritage, a theme sufficiently covered in the literature. To summarize them: You can’t have your folklore and eat it too.

through the manipulation of symbols, performance style, and so on, the performances themselves will become increasingly fixed and conflict will take place over personnel, scheduling, audiences, etc., or more generally over equity and ideology in administration. In consequence, the density of meaning within the tradition and its level of integration with ordinary life will fall off.<sup>40</sup> (A telling cartoon in 2004 depicted the Patum effigies up in the mayor's balcony as spectators to the crowd event below.)

- The withdrawal of some actors, either from alienation or in order to prevent conflict within a valued tradition (“give her the living child and in no wise kill it”). Contrarian characters, who for some reason find themselves at odds with their surround, often find a social place within the practice of tradition that they cannot find within institutions, and give traditions much of their vitality and critical edge, as well as gaining a socially constructive outlet for their energies. They are the first likely to withdraw. Apart from the more general negative social effects of such withdrawal, a lessening of engagement and of innovation within the tradition may be expected.
- Fragmentation. Some will retreat to set up competing practices in a differently defined framework. The multiple rival versions of the tradition, refusing the ambiguities that foster coexistence, will become increasingly explicit and monologic. The tradition as a whole may lose richness, flexibility, and integrative capacity.
- Potentially an increase in social conflict. Not only contrarian characters but also socially dangerous groups are key figures in public traditions. European peasant communities made young men the guardians of tradition, a way of channelling their volatile energies to useful ends. Young men performed the charivaris and the mummers' plays. Still economically and to some extent sexually excluded today, young men are, as ever, the most probable recruits for extremist groups. In twentieth-century Berga the most disenfranchised members of the working class supplied certain comparses in the Patum, giving them protagonism and a stake in collective life. More recently, in the neighborhood Patum del Carrer de la Pietat, frowned upon by many defenders of authenticity, young immigrant men of the kind feared by teachers have been taking a lead in the comparses and can be seen caring for the effigies and teaching young children how to participate. The bureaucratization of participation may bar those who benefit most from it and increase an existing sense of exclusion.

In Albert Hirschman's terms, we may expect an overall move from the political strategy of “voice” to the economic strategy of “exit” (1970). That is, those excluded from the decision-making process will not argue but detach themselves from the tradition. Both cultural coherence and social cohesion will be damaged by such a process.

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<sup>40</sup> Thanks to Roxann Wheeler for helping me to articulate this point.

I repeat: The Berguedan situation is not earthshattering, saddening as those involved find it; these are prosperous Europeans with other resources beyond folklore. But it suggests what can happen in more contentious and vulnerable communities.

## Conclusion

If we are not careful in defining what we mean by community control, instead of King Solomon we will end up with Brecht's Azdak. Raised up over his fellows by an inattentive central authority, this local judge is by turns corrupt, compassionate, arbitrary, and inspired. Azdak will be a change and perhaps an improvement on Solomon; if nothing else, the process will bring grist to the ethnographer's mill.

But I would urge us—and WIPO and UNESCO—not to be too hasty. To assume that glaring inequalities and compensatory identity politics will be with us forever is one way of perpetuating them (cf. Magliocco 2004, 235). Before we create instruments that, once adopted, cannot easily be changed, we should carefully consider alternative frameworks to that of heritage/authenticity/community. *Zeitgeists* come and go, but bureaucracy is forever. "Let them eat culture" should not be engraved on its portals.

More generally, I propose a maxim for our field as we negotiate the temptations inherent in winning a place at the table and having at last some power of advocacy. Good policy cannot be made from bad theory. The rapidly increasing stranglehold of intellectual property law, which benefits corporate owners in the short term but stifles innovation in the long term by creating huge disparities of access, shows us one example of the destructiveness of inflexible regimes. Formalized from a conception of authorship peculiar to Western modernity, existing intellectual property law cannot capture the cumulative and collaborative character of creativity even in literary texts, much less technological processes or jazz music. But we will not correct the conceptual flaws of author-based IP law by adding to it a conceptually flawed special regime for communities (cf. Bauman and Briggs 2003, 307–308). Rather than adding Ptolemaic circles to an obsolete cosmology and so increasing its inertia, those of us interested in traditional creativity should be involved in the experimentation with new formulations and the global rethinking of intellectual property regimes. A burgeoning movement among alternative globalizers proposes a revival of the commons as an alternative.<sup>41</sup> Other critics advocate a period of experimentation and the pluralization of governance regimes according to the nature of the resource (e.g., Lessig 2001, Brown 2003). Regardless, it is high time for the so-called residual to join hands with the so-called emergent in the revision of the modern.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> It is surprising that, with the exception of Mary Hufford (2000), folklorists have not looked to the commons as an alternative model of governance, nor paid attention to the intensive sociocultural innovation taking place under the aegis of the "creative commons" <[www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org).

<sup>42</sup> Folklorists can help by documenting social processes in a wide range of traditions and considering how they might be abstracted into flexible ideal types—for if concerns about reductionism make us

It should be understood that I am not in the least dismissing the goals of building solidarity, respect, and recognition between North and South, or the very real contribution that cultural exchange can make towards this end. But I believe that successful imagined communities, local or international, must be built upon stable social foundations. Recognition is no substitute for equality; heritage is no substitute for autonomy. To institutionalize traditional cultural production as distinct from other kinds, necessitating a regime of its own, is to create separate and anything but equal access to the knowledge economy.<sup>43</sup>

This is not to lead us back to neoliberalism. Like all binary oppositions, that of liberalism and communitarianism blinds us to alternative constructions of the problem. Both ideologies rely on a dubious modern epistemology that “entivizes” its objects, attributing the integrity, fixity, and boundedness that commonsense perception confers upon material things to the sociocultural constructs of the individual, the community, and the nation-state (Handler 1988). The newly fashionable network model, although no doubt it will prove to have problems of its own, gives us an alternative framework for experimentation and a starting point for more flexible thinking.<sup>44</sup> Nor does deconstructing community force us into poststructuralist indeterminacy: there is a longstanding tradition of empirical network analysis that holds up to scrutiny rather better than most assertions of bounded community (e.g., Lipp 2005).

This is a moment of great importance to the field, both for our deepest commitments and for our advancement as a profession. All the more reason for caution. Folklorists once put a human face on nationalism; we’re in danger now of providing the same service for globalization. We need to stand back a little from identity politics and put first things first. For ourselves, this means the primary research which is the foundation of our credibility as advocates. For the makers of traditional culture, this is the material and existential security in which humane cultures take shape. Where there is economic and political agency, culture can take care of itself.

## A Double Coda

June 2005. This article was drafted prior to the 2005 Patum, eagerly promoted as “Candidate for Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Patrimony of Humanity.” After this Patum, local realities have for the time being displaced UNESCO dreams in public attention.

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hesitate to build models ourselves, we will have to live with models made by others. For the next step, translating ideal types into models of policy, we can learn from the example of open-source software; as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has long urged us, we should be in conversation with this field. For experiments in formalizing the governance of the open-source creative process and the distribution of use rights, see Weber 2004.

<sup>43</sup> See Briggs and Mantini-Briggs 2003 for how the best-intentioned categorical protections can blind professionals to the actual needs of a given group of social actors.

<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, of course, we may need to think about tradition as both wave and particle.

Berguedan anarchist and alternative collectives, populated by young people of Catalan-independentist tendency, sponsor an increasing number of activities on the fringe of the Patum—an instance of the tendency towards withdrawal and fragmentation.<sup>45</sup> On Friday May 27th, the middle night of the Patum, a concert sponsored by these organizations was violently interrupted by a group of young men of diverse immigrant origins and generations. All of the 18 later arrested are resident in Berga, and all, according to vociferous local opinion, are habitual disruptors of public life, in several cases with long criminal records. Two concert attendees received knife wounds, and one, a dancer in the comparsa of the New Dwarves of the Patum, was killed after multiple stabbings. This unheard-of public violence, cutting into the heart of the community, received Spain-wide media coverage and has traumatized the city. After two weeks, multitudinous protests gave way to painful and, in a small city, unavoidable daily face-to-face confrontations between police (accused of slow response), long-assimilated immigrants and ethnic Catalans (whose generational disagreements have for the moment been elided), and the accused and their families, with other immigrants caught in a tense interstitial position.

The crisis has brought into relief the gradual collective retreat from street life and the consequent erosion of everyday social control, along with the emergence of distinct youth subcultures at odds with the police as well as one another. Calls for *convivència* and dialogue are meeting with powerful emotional resistance on all sides. In short, underneath the dramatic disruption of Berguedan imagined community in the Patum lies the slow dissolution of community's base as a dense network of interaction. It is too early to tell whether this tragedy will influence public opinion to revive the understanding, so generalized in Berga in the 1970s, that the Patum is more valuable to the community as a vehicle of local social accommodation than as an item in the global cultural display case.

March 2006. The question is now moot. In the months after the killing of Josep Maria Isanta, the Platform for *Convivència* in the Berguedà, a coalition of civic organizations, energetically organized demonstrations, raised money, assembled a website, and made declarations. In the course of the autumn the coalition fell apart, with factions accusing one another of politicizing the discussion, while street life in Berga remained tense. In the meantime, on November 25, 2005, the Patum was named Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Patrimony of Humanity by the Director-General of UNESCO in a ceremony in Paris. "Where do we pick up the check?" quipped one of my Berguedan friends. The Catalan media coverage emphasized the nationalist triumph: "The Patum defeated flamenco" (Uría 2005). (To be sure, the Patum now appears throughout UNESCO's website and publicity materials as "the Patum of Berga, Spain": one has to delve deep into the site to find the adjective "Catalan.") UNESCO's blurb explained the threats justifying the festival's protection:

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<sup>45</sup> The quarterly broadsheet of one of these collectives is, incidentally, to my knowledge the only public medium ever to have expressed disapproval of the Patum's Unescoification ("Jo al Fòrum no hi

The continuity of the celebration seems to be ensured. The Patum of Berga is however threatened by transformation, distortion and loss of value in a general context marked by strong urban and tourist development that tend to reduce the Patum to a mass phenomenon. These factors risk denaturing the Patum ritual by encouraging its organization in areas and at dates that are not authentic. Moreover, the hundred year-old Patum figures that require care and restoration by artisans who possess specific secular knowledge and know-how, risk being replaced by modern replicas devoid of all artistic and historical value. (“The Patum of Berga” 2005)

Protection on the ground looks rather different. Safeguarding the authenticity of the Patum figures: this matter has created a series of minor crises in the years since the Patum declared itself a candidate, for the local people who have always done repainting and minor repairs lack academic credentials in restoration and are no longer allowed to do the work. Preventing Patums out of season: on the day after the UNESCO proclamation, the Patronat held a meeting to discuss holding an extraordinary Patum for Berga’s December patronal festival in order to commemorate the designation; this proposal was defeated by one vote following tense and prolonged debate. The dangers of increasing touristic development: the news stories announcing the award explained that the designation would help to realize the city’s plan to create a 4,500-square-meter “Guggenheim-style museum” (Rosiñol 2005).<sup>46</sup> The director of Catalonia’s UNESCO office, Agustí Colomines, was at least somewhat conscious of the ironies. “You can be sure that from this day on you’ll have an avalanche of tourism: be careful it doesn’t spoil the festival,” he warned Berguedans (*ibid.*).

Or maybe not. The Patum was one of 43 winners out of 64 candidacies in 2005, almost equalling the 47 total designations awarded in 2001–2003, a rush to divide the spoils of a vanishing system of distinction. The 2005 proclamation will be the last. On January 20, 2006, Romania became the thirtieth nation-state to ratify UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, thus bringing it into force (“Convention...” 2006). The list of Masterpieces will now be replaced with a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the criteria for which will be determined by an intergovernmental committee constituted by representatives of the signer nations, of which Spain is not as yet one. It is expected that only those Masterpieces from the signer nations will be transferred to the new list (Valdimar Hafstein, personal communication, January 26, 2006).

For the city’s patron saint’s day festival in December, there was no extraordinary Patum, but a Mass by a local composer adapting music from the Patum was premiered and the Dance of the Eagle was played in the main square with a small fireworks display—familiar instances of a civic liturgy of the Patum which began with the festival’s first self-conscious projection to outsiders in the 1890s (Noguera 1992). The latest

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participo” 2004).

<sup>46</sup> Alluding, of course, to the tourist-driven revitalization of Bilbao.



hubbub, in March 2006, has come with the disappearance in the Spanish ambassador's diplomatic pouch of the UNESCO certificate of the Masterpiece designation. UNESCO has promised to send within two or three months a replacement which will be "just as authentic" as the original; this will be displayed in the "remodeled municipal museum," no longer spoken of as a Guggenheim in the making ("Perden el diploma" 2006). As with many of Berga's serial investments in the *deus ex machina* of the moment over the years, the UNESCO adventure seems for the moment to have fizzled—though the Patronat, of course, remains. This is the way folklore ends: not in catastrophic loss but in slow self-estrangement; not with a bang but a whimper.

## Acknowledgments

The first versions of this paper were presented at the 2004 American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City and as the Laura Boulton Distinguished Lecture in Ethnomusicology at Indiana University in April 2005. Thanks to the audiences at those presentations and to Roger D. Abrahams, Lluís Calvo i Calvo, Valdimar Hafstein, Jason Baird Jackson, Elliott Oring, Tok Thompson, Srdjan Vucetic, and Bill Westerman for their insights, too rich to be fully incorporated here. Thanks above all to the people of Berga for their longstanding and more than generous tolerance of my presence in their collective life.

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## 14. Heritage, Legacy, Zombie: How to Bury the Undead Past<sup>(14)</sup>

If we connect up with the law, we'll be connected to this man, this body,  
for the rest of our lives. We've got to get rid of him.

—James Dickey (1970)

Das Widerstehn, der Eigensinn  
Verkümmern herrlichsten Gewinn,  
Daß man, zu tiefer, grimmiger Pein,  
Ermüden muß, gerecht zu sein.  
Recalcitrance and willfulness  
Can mar the most superb success,  
Til to our painful, deep disgust  
We tire of trying to be just.

—Goethe (1832, Pt. II, Act V)

THE PROTAGONISTS OF James Dickey's novel are saved from the consequences of a murder by the construction of a dam. Modern development projects create their own state of exception by making no exceptions. Connections formed by history are sundered by the flood of present necessity. Particularities are forcibly submerged. It is nothing new. In Goethe's Ur-narrative of development, Faust regretfully leaves his pastoral hosts Baucis and Philemon to be dealt with by henchmen so that his dike building can proceed unimpeded, just as earlier he abandoned Gretchen, singing at her spinning wheel.<sup>1</sup> Nor has anything changed in that larger portion of the world we still call "developing." New dams along the Yangtze, Mekong, Tigris, and Euphrates

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<sup>1</sup> For Faust as archetypal developer, see Berman 1982. The translation of the epigraph is Philip Wayne's.

<sup>(14)</sup> Reprinted with permission of the University of Pennsylvania Press. Originally published as "Heritage, Legacy, Zombie: How to Bury the Undead Past," in *Cultural Heritage in Transit: Intangible Rights as Human Rights*, ed. Deborah A. Kapchan, part of *Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 58–86.

Rivers continue to displace millions of people and submerge millennia of human history, with artifacts rescued here and there to serve as “heritage.”<sup>2</sup>

In the nineteenth century, Gretchen’s song was recognized to have the same instrumental value as Gretchen’s spinning. Both the expressive and the productive labor of the common people were conscripted in the construction of the nation-state. The former was christened folklore (chapter 7).

But Gretchen’s body posed a problem; the will attached to it still more. If the modern subject Faust is to preserve his freedom of action, he must be allowed to break his connection with her. Thus she is seduced and goaded into acts of petty violence that disrupt not Faust’s plans but her own community, and these enable her to be condemned to death. Now her song becomes not an adjunct to labor but an uncanny trace of her personhood, issuing from the prison to remind Faust of his own violence against her. “Fliege fort!” she sings. The song flies away, but she cannot.

Folklore is both resource and reminder, both incorporated into and excluded from modernizing projects. Neither arrangement is an easy one. Emergent in the intimacy of making and performing at close range, folklore can never be wholly cleansed of the trace of the subaltern body, with its possibility of independent action. This is the undertone of the nineteenth-century conception of folklore as cultural survival, for while E. B. Tylor and others emphasized the anomaly and absurdity of survivals in a changed lifeworld, the very word asserts vitality and persistence. Early modern and nineteenth-century scholars, who often and not coincidentally were clergymen, state officials, or colonial administrators, were typically concerned not just to document but to eradicate superstition and other purported survivals of premodern social forms. Some survivals threatened efficiency; some of them posed outright political threats—and here we can think of a long history of suppression of worker and indigenous social organization.

Discredited by twentieth-century ethnographic and historical scholarship, survivalist explanations have themselves survived to be revived in the post-Cold War political realm. “Age-old hatreds,” “medieval attitudes,” “cultural tradition,” and so on are routinely applied to the myriad local impediments that once again rise up to challenge the expansionist ambitions of capital or disrupt the reconfiguration of the international community. Survivalist theory as a discursive resource anticipates and molds the range of policy devices that seek to contain, manage, or eradicate threats to processes defined in their turn as progress.

In this chapter, drawing on examples from Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, and Appalachia, I explore some of the successor concepts to the nineteenth-century notion of survival. Heritage is both the most fully developed and the privileged choice within a broader matrix shaping the ways in which local disruptions can be named and addressed under neoliberal conditions. I use the word local well aware of its ambiguous status as the constructed contrary of the equally constructed global. Of course I do not

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<sup>2</sup> Goldman 2005; Morvaridi 2004; Shoup 2006.

mean to construct the local as a bounded, homogeneous small-scale community or the global as a massive engineered apparatus of predation. Rather, I intend local to refer to a cluster or node situated in a complex network. But in contrast to some recent deconstructions of the concept, I continue to privilege those nodes tied to actual places. The characterization of place as no longer relevant to a flat world of global flows has been notably disproved in Afghanistan, where we have learned that it's still location, location, location—to say nothing of terrain.

The label of heritage marks local practices as temporally anomalous and their practitioners as nonmodern, as has frequently been observed, but another effect is just as important. The transfer (or we might, in information-technology terms, call it the migration) of heritage from “first life” to “second life” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998) reduces the typically holistic entailments of vernacular practice to the domain of culture, narrowly defined. Politics, economics, society, religion, education, technology, and other dimensions are cut away. Intentionally or not, this cuts network ties to the larger world, reducing all relationships to that between cultural performers and extracultural spectators. This is part of the violence worked by categorization.

Culture waxes as lifeworlds wane; supporting the first does not sustain the second. Case study after case study reports that the hoped-for payoffs in economic prosperity and political recognition rarely follow on a major local investment in cultural heritage (chapter 13; Hemme, Tauschek, and Bendix eds. 2007; Bendix, Eggert, and Peselmann eds. 2012; Kapchan ed. 2014; Foster and Gilman eds. 2015). Any relationship to social justice is still more problematic. The rising discourse of cultural rights accompanies a larger discourse on human rights, to be sure, but both may seem rather—dare I say—intangible to those on the ground. When not dancing for tourists, most of humanity is busy coping with the erosion of customary rights in a context of advancing propertization, of bargaining rights in a context of union busting and international trade agreements, and of citizenship rights in a context of labor migration and special enterprise zones.

In some cases an inverse correlation between cultural rights and human rights can be directly traced. This is most dramatic in such matters as female genital cutting and other gendering practices (cf. Das 1999) but even such apparently benign acts of cultural protection as the creation of a World Heritage Site can carry unexpected consequences. In Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China, members of the Naxi ethnic minority are subject to fines for not wearing traditional costume in the UNESCO-protected Old Town during the tourist season. Old Town businesses, required to have at least one costumed employee, often employ only Han workers who thus wear Naxi dress as well.<sup>3</sup> Even in democratic Estonia, young women in the protected Kihnu Cultural Space have felt pressured to remain on the island practicing subsistence agriculture and labor-intensive traditional handicraft rather than go off to university; Kihnu cultural activists have difficulty persuading government officials to let them pursue more flexi-

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<sup>3</sup> Eric Mortensen, personal communication.



ble and self-directed strategies of “safeguarding” (Kuutma 2007, 188–89). Rent-seeking states may use culture as an excuse to impede even the core neoliberal right to individual economic enterprise, as when Ghanaian craftsmen and musicians are obliged to purchase a license to practice what has become protected national culture (“Expert Criticises Copyright Bill” 2005). Far from being empowered, local actors often pay for protection.

The right to be cultural easily slips into the obligation to be cultural. Just as the legal personhood of corporations takes ever-greater precedence over the less weighty personhood of individuals in the rich world,<sup>4</sup> so the growing legal personality of cultures tends to accompany the depersonalization of individuals in the poor one. This flattening of the ground that puts large actors on the same footing as small ones, a basic feature of neoliberal governance, also informs this period’s extension of the definition of heritage. Once referring only to the material treasures of the elites of modernized nation-states, the term is now applied to the wider universe of non-Western, indigenous, and vernacular creation, the latter defined as intangible and, significantly, as “living.” Many key actors in the initiative to create UNESCO’s 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and most of those charged with implementing it are of course sincerely concerned to confer dignity on people hitherto denied it and to facilitate agency through inclusion. Viewed another way, inclusion is incorporation in a regime of governance. And in practice this regime equates the embodied living traditions of the poor with the dead detached things of the rich.

Heritage has become both euphemism and policy in relation to troublesome minorities, collapsed industries, dying languages, and other societal liabilities: local situations that look from above like impediments to efficiency and, on the ground, like the aftermath of structural violence. But recalcitrant realities sometimes resist containment in culture. The situation may simply be too complex to stabilize; the practices may not be suitable for celebratory display to tourists; the actors may refuse to play along, having scripts of their own in mind—and their economic needs, political rights, and capacity for making trouble must be taken into account. It is not always possible to get rid of the body.

## Heritage or Legacy?

In the world of “fast-capitalism,” where the pace keeps accelerating and the expectation of return grows ever out of proportion to the proposed investment (Holmes 2000), the immediate past poses a greater threat than the age-old. Temporal anomalies are constructed at ever-closer range. This affects the domain of business as much as that

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<sup>4</sup> For example in intellectual property rights, increasingly held by corporations rather than individuals, and in the United States in the right for corporations to spend freely on political campaign ads, determined by the Supreme Court in the *Citizens United* decision of 2010 to be protected by the right to free speech.

of culture, for business often has an interest in getting rid of inconvenient bodies. Thus, just as expressive labor is detached from the body and fetishized as culture, so productive labor is today detached from the body and fetishized as skill set (Urciuoli 2008). Where the skills in question are not transferable, that is, cannot travel freely in the marketplace across industries and localities because their practice depends on a material, social, and infrastructural context, they are judged to be outdated. The possessors of such skills, if they lose their jobs, are categorized under U.S. labor statutes as “dislocated workers”—paradoxically, for it is usually the job that moves away from them rather than vice versa. If they must for some reason be retained, they are marked with a euphemism now rapidly expanding in scope: legacy.

In long-standing American academic usage, candidates whose family connections procure them preferential admission to a fraternity or private college are referred to as “legacies.”<sup>5</sup> Despite the positive aspect for the institution, which hopes to receive literal legacies from these students, the term has a pejorative cast, for in many cases they would not have been admitted on their own merits.

It is the pejorative implication of being stuck with something, rather than the hope of benefit from its presence, that carries over to the context of business information systems. Here the use of “legacy” as an adjective applied to computer hardware, software, or applications is documented by the Oxford English Dictionary as of 1989. Tasked with the creation of smooth workflows and data flows, information technology specialists face the challenge of integrating myriad local systems developed ad hoc to automate various business processes: order entry, shipping and receiving, invoicing, and so forth. Such processes were originally integrated manually by data entry clerks and other employees. From the 1980s on, with the cult of the MBA consultant, the acceleration of new technologies, and the focus on stock price as an indicator of value, competitive pressures increased to reduce cycle time by eliminating the manual lag. Later, with the mantra of the “real-time enterprise,” corporate IT departments were charged to integrate automated processes into an agile System of Systems.

This was more easily said than done. Typically an organization does not have the resources to upgrade all of its computer systems and migrate all of its data simultaneously, nor can it halt operations in order to do this all at once. The larger the organization, the greater the number of particular and redundant systems accumulated over time. So integration proceeds over the course of years, meeting considerable resistance from individual units and employees who see their existence as well as their routine threatened. The IT staff thus have the ongoing responsibilities of jiggering communicability between new pieces of software and old pieces of software, maintaining archaic databases for which support is no longer being provided, and so forth. By 1993, the association in management thinking between efficiency and the reduction of workforce had brought an extension in usage: employees with outdated skill sets were

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<sup>5</sup> The usage dates from 1930, according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

referred to as “legacy people.”<sup>6</sup> Today the term is being generalized: at my university, for example, we recently reviewed “legacy courses” and “legacy majors” to see which could be dropped and which reintegrated into consolidating programs. More consequentially, there was much discussion in the 2008 banking crisis of “legacy assets” that could not simply be disowned but had somehow to be managed and recuperated.

What does all of this have to do with heritage? Well, there is first of all a symmetry and contraposition between the terms. Both of them seem to be conceptual derivatives of the old notion of cultural survival, splitting its implications between them. Both identify certain continuities of practice or existence as problematic in the present. Both facilitate the broader ideological move defined by Johannes Fabian as the denial of coevalness—the assertion that the Other does not coexist with us in shared historical time, but belongs to the past and therefore, in ethical terms, need not be encountered face to face (1983).

But heritage conceptualizes the persistence as isolable from the larger lifeworld, something that can be preserved in an enclave and indeed requires an enclosure to protect it. Contact with the present is assumed to denature heritage or to threaten its very existence. In practice, of course, this conceptualization legitimates and enables the actual process of creating an isolate. Heritage cuts a practice or an environment or a community loose from its moorings in the world and fixes it in a dedicated frame deemed capable of containing it: an official holiday, a museum, a nature reserve, a tribal reservation. The concentrated practice or resource is frozen and reduced in meaning to an icon of identity. Still more important, the aspects of the lifeworld that it once helped to integrate wither and die when their roots are cut—a result that is sometimes desired.

Legacy, on the other hand, recognizes the practice as a necessary part of a larger whole. Under current conditions it cannot be isolated or expelled, and now the shoe is on the other foot: it is not the system that threatens the practice but the practice that threatens the system. So containment is not possible. Accommodations must be made, and in extreme cases a strategy must be found for reclassifying, repurposing, or otherwise recycling the difficult survival.

## Afghanistan

An extreme case, if ever there was one, is posed for the U.S. government and NATO allies by contemporary Afghanistan. It is in this context of international intervention that an explicit relationship between the two terms “heritage” and “legacy” seems likely someday to take shape. As the projects of war and development merge (Duffield 2007), local practices become resources for appropriation as well as impediments to be managed.

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<sup>6</sup> The OED is again the source. I owe the larger account of the historical and organizational context of the term to Michael Krippendorf.

The concept of legacy has already migrated from organizational systems into international engagements. On December 31, 2007, journalist Steve Inskeep interviewed William B. Wood, the Bush administration's ambassador to Afghanistan, on National Public Radio's Morning Edition. Known to wags in Kabul's diplomatic community as "Ambassador Narc" (Margaret Mills, personal communication), Wood came from a previous posting in Colombia, where he had dedicated himself, with mixed success, to the reduction of cocaine production.<sup>7</sup> To the debate over rapidly increasing opium production in the Afghan countryside, Wood brought his prior enthusiasm for aerial crop eradication. But neither the Afghans nor other NATO allies, notably the British, favored large-scale aerial spraying that would poison Afghan fields, destroy the country's single export crop, and alienate hearts and minds still further. Said Wood, "In purely technical terms, aerial spraying is by far the most efficient method. There's also a political environment. There's also a social environment. There's also a drug environment. And we are going to do the best job we can against drugs using all of the tools that we think are appropriate for the Afghan environment."

A tense interview unfolded without explicit discussion of another problematic form of intervention from the air. After recurrent incidents of heavy civilian casualties resulting from NATO airstrikes, this mode of targeting Taliban fighters had become a still greater point of contention between the U.S. command, NATO allies, and the Afghan government (Gall and Sanger 2007). Thus the ambassador's reluctant recognition of the "political environment," amid continual reiterations of the urgency of the drug problem and the value of spraying, betrayed nostalgia for the straightforward efficiency of aerial interventions in a moment when the paradigm had, however ambiguously, shifted. It was no longer possible to think of either poppies or Taliban fighters as anomalous excrescences upon the territory, to be surgically eradicated without implications for the general population. As the new counterinsurgency strategy laid out in U.S. Army/Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24 had articulated most clearly, interaction on the ground rather than intervention from the air would have to become the new key to U.S. engagements abroad (2006). But it wasn't going well. Pushed by Inskeep as to whether the Karzai government was in genuine control of the provinces, Wood acknowledged that in some districts there might be "political pushback" to a given initiative from local officials, just as often happened in the United States. Asked whether the analogy to, say, California having a separate policy on stem cell research was truly appropriate, Wood conceded, "This is not yet a strong government. There are problems of corruption, as President Karzai himself has said. There are some legacy warlords and others who interfere with institutional government here."

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<sup>7</sup> The six-year, \$5 billion aid package called Plan Colombia was judged by a Government Accounting Office report to have improved human security but to have failed, despite record aerial spraying, in its goal of halving illegal narcotics production. Coca cultivation increased by 15 percent during the 2000-2006 effort, and moved from larger, more centrally located plots to more numerous, remote, and scattered ones (Forero 2006; "Colombia Aid Failed" 2008).

Inskeep did not comment on the extraordinary temporal juxtaposition of the latest management jargon with the exotic archaism by which U.S. authorities designate Afghan paramilitary leaders and other nonstate actors.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, we have become habituated to such hybridities. But the whole bent of the interview challenged the implied manageability of the problem in Wood's description of it as the need to make the new political order interface with legacy systems. Completely on the defensive by the end, Wood abandoned this technocratic idiom and took refuge in a far more sweeping declaration of otherness. "I think that we often feel we understand the country we're in more than we really do. Afghanistan is forcefully, determinedly its own country with its own culture and its own background. It is poor even by African standards. Many parts of the country are tribal, and it is a foreign country, and living in an environment where security constraints limit your access, limit your freedom of movement, does make the job harder."<sup>9</sup> What the US military had begun to term the "human terrain" (McFate and Jackson 2005) of Afghanistan was as difficult to navigate as the geographic: neither offered an integrated system permitting easy communicability between points.

Here the invocation of Afghanistan's "own culture" signals the larger framework in which neoliberal actors conceptualize contemporary conflicts. When not contained as heritage, culture becomes a problem. Understood since the nineteenth century as the natural foundation and legitimation of the nation-state (Handler 1988),<sup>10</sup> with the post-1945 breakup of empires culture has also taken on the relativist baggage of the postwar culture concept popularized and simplified from Mead and Benedict. This double endorsement, nationalist and postcolonial, has helped to naturalize culture and to foster its reification. While the idiom of cultural diversity was instituted in such normative texts as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on Cultural Diversity to promote the dignity of non-Western, indigenous, and minority peoples, it is often invoked in more directly self-interested ways. Subaltern actors may use it to claim rights. Dominant actors may use it to signal incommensurability and incommunicability; in some cases, to disclaim responsibility for ongoing interaction. Wood's usage seems to fall in this category, for by the end of his tour in autumn 2008, he had retreated from the interactional paradigm altogether: "Afghanistan is the most foreign country in the world.... It's a ferociously foreign country" (May 2009).

In December 2007 it was still possible to envision a happy outcome from Ambassador Wood's perspective. A stabilized Afghanistan, purged of its poppy fields, could provide a romantic backdrop for historical epic films<sup>11</sup>—which indeed furnished the image most

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<sup>8</sup> Afghans practice the inverse kind of distancing. The word in Dari and Pashto for what we call a warlord places the phenomenon squarely in European modernity: *kommandán* (Margaret Mills, personal communication).

<sup>9</sup> All quotations come from "Taliban, Opium in Afghanistan Difficult to Contain" 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Note that Wood invokes Afghan culture in the singular, reflexively assuming the isomorphy of state and culture.

<sup>11</sup> To be sure, Afghan directors have other ideas, at least for the moment: the current reference points for aspiring Afghan filmmakers are Tehran in the artistic vein and Bollywood in the commercial one.

Americans had of it before the Soviet invasion—and, better yet, for adventure tourism. We would be treated to reenactments of imperial adventures from Alexander to Kipling; of ancient feuds between haughty tribal leaders. Their swords, if not their severed heads, would be mounted on the walls of our hotel lobbies, and their picturesque garb would be worn by our tour guides.

Some indicators of this development could already be traced. Exile-run websites such as Afghanistan Online <<http://www.afghan-web.com>>, dating from at least early 2006, offered a wide range of historical, cultural, and geographic information on the country, with pages on nature, scenery, the National Museum of Kabul, and so on. The online shop sold cookbooks and clothing; there was a chatroom; the site's advertisers came largely from the international tourist industry, and the site's front page read "Afghanistan: The Friendliest Country in the World, Possibly the Universe." The site was designed to foster a vision of Afghanistan as a normal country and clearly anticipated tourism as key to economic development. Potential demand on the consumer side was also evident, notably in Western fascination with Hamid Karzai's wardrobe. When the creative director of Gucci declared Karzai "the world's most chic man" in 2002, the BBC followed up with a photo gallery and commentary implying that fashion could model a new style of political accommodation between the local and the global. Karzai, "marrying classic tailoring with ethnic fashions...[might] breathe new life into the way leaders dress around the world" ("Afghanistan's 'Mr. Chic'" 2002).<sup>12</sup> Elements of Afghan traditional male costume could be bought on many websites, particularly the emblematic headgear: the wool cloth pakol with the rolled brim, badge of the mujahideen, and the karakul, the elegant lambskin cap worn by Karzai to show allegiance to northern minorities and balance his Pashtun shalwar (Christia and Chantziara 2009).<sup>13</sup> On the website Warlords of Afghanistan.com, created in 2005, you could follow your favorite tribal leaders, read their heroic deeds of war and rhetoric, examine their weapons, and buy beer coasters featuring their portraits. In short, at the time Wood was being interviewed, the manly, feudal trappings of Afghan leadership were already becoming incorporated into American celebrity, hobby, and consumer culture. In the best case scenario, instead of legacy warlords making trouble Afghanistan could soon have heritage warlords making money.

## Northern Ireland

A second case from a different conflict suggests that my imputation of this particular fantasy to the Bush administration is not utterly implausible. I turn now to Belfast in June 2006. Officials of the conservative Protestant Orange Order had been meeting

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<sup>12</sup> Some commentators see the fashion as the visual correlate of a larger project, "selling Brand Karzai" (Herold 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Needless to say, the burqa is not becoming world fashion. While Afghan men's dress is incorporable, women's dress is treated as the emblem of medieval repression to be eradicated.

all through that spring for the first time with the government of the Republic of Ireland, the Catholic primate in Northern Ireland, and the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party of Northern Ireland, in order to consider how both their unionist organization and its notoriously provocative Twelfth of July parades might continue to exist in the era of reconciliation.

Commemorating the 1690 Battle of the Boyne in which English Protestant control over Ireland was decisively established, the Twelfth of July parades and the bonfires on the eve had long stirred sectarian tensions. With the Twelfth a government holiday, the parades were celebrated throughout the North. The flood of lodge banners and the shrill flute bands with their huge Lambeg drums passed along much-disputed routes, claimed as traditional but often passing through Catholic neighborhoods. The parades were received as visual, sonoral, and territorial aggression by most Catholics, and in some cases were intended as such. From the outbreak of the Troubles in 1970, the parades saw repeated sectarian skirmishing, with violent disturbances in the mid-1990s leading to the banning of the parade from nationalist areas in 1998. Even after the Good Friday Agreement, tensions were sustained by the combination of old habits and heavy drinking, and in 2005 loyalist paramilitary violence had broken out after one local parade, while Catholics attacked police after another.

Thus in the era of reconciliation the Orange Order was obliged to confront its own reputation as a body of legacy thugs. In June 2006 the secretary of the order's Grand Lodge, Drew Nelson, announced a solution: a "rebranding" of the marching season as Orangefest, a celebration of the heritage of one of the United Kingdom's ethnic minorities. "I would like to see the Twelfth of July become a tourist attraction. It's one of the most colourful spectacles....Only the Notting Hill carnival can beat it in the British Isles. Notting Hill has overcome its problems of drugs, [policing, and] deaths. We can overcome our problems" (Bowcott 2006).

To substantiate its good faith, the Grand Lodge moved toward developing a code of conduct for the parade and even conceded that some form of regulation from the government would be helpful, recognizing at last the authority of the Parades Commission created in 1998. The Order accepted containment as a condition of survival. The pain was sweetened by government concessions: for the first time since 1970, the British Army was not deployed on the streets of Belfast to keep order during the parade ("Soldiers in Barracks for Twelfth" 2006). And the Grand Lodge obtained a grant of £104,000 from Northern Ireland's Ministry of Social Development to hire a "development officer" to manage the conversion to Orangefest ("British Govt Slammed" 2006).

The transformation of the parades from tangible threat to intangible heritage moved slowly, however, not least because the other side had some reason to doubt the Order's ability to contain the parades. One official of the Social Democratic and Labour Party responded, "We would like to see a carnival atmosphere too, but it's difficult when one community has victims from past paramilitary attacks." Sinn Féin was likewise not encouraged by the creation of "bigotfest" (Bowcott 2006; "Hansen's 'Orangefest'")

2006). Nor were all moderate Irish Protestants. Henry McDonald, Ireland editor of the *Observer*, observed that his middle-class neighbors in Belfast, including many families of an actively unionist background, were choosing the marching season as a time to go on vacation and avoid confrontation altogether: in his view, “the Orange Order was marching into history” and the parade ritual had already become meaningless (2006).<sup>14</sup> A more worried Reverend Brian Kennaway, a disaffected former official of the Order, argued in the *Irish Times* that the current culturalist move was inventing an exclusionary tradition for the Order that narrowed its base and denied the authentic cultural, religious, and regional pluralism found in the history of the organization (Kennaway 2006). Women activists from unionist families expressed skepticism that the rebranding would change the heavy parade drinking, which they described as an almost inevitable incitement to violence both sectarian and domestic (Community Arts Forum 2007). The parade could hardly be inclusive of Catholics and immigrants when it was not even inclusive of Protestant women, one observed.

The London Independent documented the second production of the Twelfth of July as festival in 2007. A tourist brochure referred to the event as a “kaleidoscope of culture and colour” and a “family-friendly pageant,” although it suggested avoiding the bonfires that would take place the night before.<sup>15</sup> Once an exclusionary claiming of public space, the parade now offered itself to the gaze of the other. “We want the whole community to gain from this festival,” said Drew Nelson. “We went to Notting Hill Carnival, to learn from that.” The Independent identified a profit motive supporting the peaceful turn: a block of two-bedroom flats in a newly renovated industrial building along the Ormeau Road, frequent scene of parade conflicts in the past, had recently sold out within hours at £360,000 per unit (“Orange Order Marches On” 2007).

A new resonance thus emerges in the ongoing parallel to Notting Hill (the parade was by now routinely described as “Britain’s second-largest carnival, after London’s Notting Hill Carnival”). Home to supermodels and Conservative Party leader David Cameron, Notting Hill is known today as one of London’s most expensive enclaves after two hundred years as a slum, heavily populated since 1948 by immigrants from the West Indies. But in London as in Belfast, gentrification in fact resolved nothing: the stigmatized population was pushed away but continues to push back. The Notting Hill Carnival, begun in the late 1950s as an act of self-assertion by Trinidadian migrants in response to white violence, has burgeoned in the face of continual tension with both the police and the borough authorities. One side alleges repression, the other violence and disorder. The strategy of accommodation, as later in Northern Ireland, has been

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<sup>14</sup> Catholics have always left town when possible; there is a traditional flood across the border on July 11 for a few days’ respite. Protestant disaffection can also be read in the decline of Orange Order membership from 93,447 in 1968 to 35,758 in 2006 (Geoghegan 2009).

<sup>15</sup> The burning of Irish flags, the mockery of Catholic victims of sectarian violence, and more direct forms of aggression by drunken participants are familiar features of the bonfires, as are regulatory struggles over environmental and safety issues. Of course they are also beautiful and spectacular and traditional.



“rebranding”: a public relations campaign to transform the image of the event in order to generate wealth from it, nominally by clarifying its unique appeal to consumers and in fact by changing its key.<sup>16</sup> The carnival is now represented by its organizers and explicitly recognized by media and local authorities not as a black political event<sup>17</sup> but as a multicultural celebration. As is typical, this has involved much disciplining of the public spaces and a migration of the performances most important to insiders to the less visible peripheries of the event. The carnival bills itself now as the largest street festival in Europe, drawing artists and performers from around the world and hundreds of thousands of nonblack Londoners in search of a good party on the August Bank Holiday. Media coverage of the event is found not in the political news or the social news but is divided rather between the leisure section and the police report.

For the Orange Order to claim a parallel to the Notting Hill Carnival thus spoke to more than just the hope for economic revival through gentrification. “We’re celebrating our survival,” said Drew Nelson. “As a community that has been constantly under attack for 400 years, so we have” (“Orange Order Marches On” 2007). Good faith can be questioned when a normative parade celebrating Protestant identity and allegiance to the United Kingdom is compared to the inversive carnival of a community once enslaved and colonized by that same power. Still more curious is that the Ulstermen should choose to mark themselves and become cultural, claiming kinship with a subaltern population rather than, as historically, standing on their dignity as representatives of the mainstream. As is traditional in the masking practices of Western community-based protest, they may find the disguise of an imperfectly assimilated other to be the safest way of signaling to the state—and contemplating for themselves—their continuing inassimilable existence. More simply, they may just have found that the assumption of otherness is the price of voice for actors too unimportant to gain a hearing by Habermasian means.

The adoption of a culturalist idiom by a once-dominant social group may be seen as a defensive move, and that is surely the case here. But with the present emphasis on cultural rights in international arenas, culture can also be invoked to draw a line in the sand. Said Lord Laird, a unionist peer and parade organizer, “This is a day which celebrates our culture—we are proud of our Ulster-Scots and Orange background. We want people to come out and join us, and people who don’t know what we are about to come and understand who we are” (“Thousands March” 2006). No longer a commemoration of a historical event open to reinterpretation, the Twelfth had become a celebration of irreducible identity. It demanded the presence of others to recognize and accept Orange difference as an essence not subject to challenge. Thus by converting

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<sup>16</sup> For a dramatic extension of the market idiom of branding to address North-South inequality and national development by creating “intangible value” through cultural resources, see Anholt 2005.

<sup>17</sup> I oversimplify for clarity. Like traditional festival in general, including the Orange Order parades, Notting Hill Carnival is of course celebration as well as political action and many other things. As per my introduction, rebranding foregrounds the cultural dimension to the exclusion of all others.

history into identity, the heritage process reduces both the meaning and the flexibility of events.

Going cultural has also allowed Ulster Protestants to garner resources. Since the initial £104,000 to hire a development officer, the Orange Order and the new organizations generated around Orangefest have established themselves among the entities vying for and routinely receiving grants from the overlapping political, cultural, and economic development institutions whose missions they can viably claim to support. In 2008, a company set up by Orange Order lodges along the border received 250,000 from, of all places, the Republic of Ireland Ministry of Community, Rural, and Gaeltacht Affairs (“Ó Cuív Grants 250,000” 2008). In Belfast, the local business community, eager for any activity to counter the current crisis, has embraced Orangefest, now enhanced by street performers, children’s activities, and staged concerts. In 2009 the downtown shops opened on the Twelfth for the first time since the beginning of the Troubles. The Belfast City Centre Management partnership company obtained a grant of £23,000 from the European Union’s Peace III Fund for street cleaning and other services for the occasion (“Orangefest Aims to Bridge the Gap” 2009).

Orangefest is the most publicly visible feature of a larger heritage turn that began in the 1990s (Kockel 2007; Wilson and Stapleton 2007). In 1992 the Ulster-Scots Language Society was founded, arguing that the local version of Lowlands Scots now constituted a separate “West Germanic language” deserving protection under European Union provisions.<sup>18</sup> To be sure, the linguistic status, number of speakers, and very existence of Ulster-Scots are hotly contested, with less than scholarly criteria on both sides of the argument.<sup>19</sup> Ulster-Scots was mentioned in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement as part of the “cultural wealth” of Northern Ireland, and when the UK ratified the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, organizers received a Ministry of Culture grant to develop an Ulster-Scots Academy.<sup>20</sup> An Ulster-Scots Heritage Council was created in 1995 with unionist politician Nelson McCausland as its first director: in July 2009 he became Minister for Culture, Arts, and Leisure for the Northern Irish Government, and in 2011 for Social Development. In short, going cultural has achieved in the Ulster Protestant case what it achieves in many local contexts: creating administrative positions that may become sinecures or political platforms for individuals, as well as providing access to grant monies and legitimation from outside institutions. Heritage institutions help small-group elites to maintain or improve their position in a new political climate (chapter 13).

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<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.ulsterscotslanguage.com/>

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, a testy discussion on the Wikipedia “talk” page <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Ulster\\_Scots\\_people#Culture.3F\\_Language.3F](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Ulster_Scots_people#Culture.3F_Language.3F)>, retrieved July 5, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> An Ulster-Scots grammar was published in 2007, but after several iterations the Academy would appear to be on hold. A revised development strategy was published in June 2013 by Northern Ireland’s Department of Culture, Arts, and Leisure: <[http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/index/language-cultural-diversity-r08/ulster-scots\\_academy\\_development\\_and\\_research\\_strategy\\_consultation.htm](http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/index/language-cultural-diversity-r08/ulster-scots_academy_development_and_research_strategy_consultation.htm)>, retrieved August 26, 2013.

Because the right to culture cannot be challenged in current neoliberal international frameworks, culture can provide cover for inadmissible political projects (Noyes 2009). Although the militaristic tone of the Orange Order parades is monitored and controlled, in more private milieux it is cultivated in a vigorous culture of commemoration and reenactment, not only of the Battle of the Boyne itself, but of the 1688 Siege of Derry, the 1789 Battle of Saintfield, which set off the Irish Rebellion, and more circuitously the prominence of the Royal Ulster Rifles in the First World War. In learning about their heritage, young boys may handle rifles, dress up in uniform, and play at military formations; photographs of this socialization commonly adorn Ulster-Scots publications.<sup>21</sup> The military exploits are naturally Ulster heritage, and need not imply any sinister present agenda. But they are indisputably prominent in Ulster-Scots Heritage activities, more so, for example, than linen and shipbuilding, and more so than any activities of women. Thus outsiders and former enemies might well find this emphasis disquieting, perhaps all the more so now that the military commemorations are increasingly relegated to in-group settings.

In the meantime, although the targets of violence shift, the disaffection of unemployed Protestant youth in Belfast has not been resolved by the celebration of heritage or the commercial success of Orangefest. In 2008, the festival organizers mentioned as proof of their success that Polish and Romanian immigrants had been seen in the crowd. In July 2009, an Irish blogger noted that their return was unlikely.<sup>22</sup> In June, a racist mob chanting slogans from the UK-wide neo-Nazi group Combat 18 assaulted the South Belfast homes of Roma immigrants in a week of violence, breaking windows with stones and setting houses on fire. Twenty families fled to a nearby church for protection, and at least a hundred Romanian nationals immediately left the country. On July 10, a letter signed “Combat 18” was delivered to Islamic, Polish, and Indian community centers in Belfast. Decorated with skulls and loyalist slogans, it read “Get out of our Queen’s country before our bonfire night and parade day.... Other than your building will be blown up [sic]” (McKittrick 2009). The inclusive Orangefest is, then, a work in progress.

Have the Orangemen lost power by admitting their marginality and going cultural? Although the subaltern actor seems doomed to perform by the very fact of marking, to have his or her message eternally inflected by the fixed mask of identity through which it is spoken, the power dynamic is less straightforward than it might appear. The local is not simply subordinate, either culturally or politically. The popularity of the Notting Hill Carnival, indeed, and of the vast number of European “summer carnivals” modeled on it, is but one indicator of the power of so-called pre-modern performance genres upon postmodern subjects, what I have elsewhere referred to as the cultural warming of the northern hemisphere (chapter 10). This cultural influence, prone though it is to

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<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., <http://www.ulsterphotography.co.uk/>; Anthony McCann, personal communication.

<sup>22</sup> “Get Ready to Party for Orangefest,” <<http://liammacuaid.wordpress.com/2009/07/07/get-ready-to-party-for-orangefest/>> retrieved July 5, 2010.

commodification and appropriation by global capital, is nonetheless arguably a conduit of political and economic influence, increasing the global weight of states like Brazil. Many kinds of political actors in Europe and North America, feeling a deadening of the old structures of authority, now seek to appropriate the vitality of the cultural.

More obviously, the heritage riots of the Orange Order and still more the legacy warlords of Afghanistan remind us that the local node has power to hold the entire system hostage. The U.S. military, the arm of a superpower that not long ago fancied itself a hegemon, has acknowledged that the greater the asymmetry, the greater the strategic advantage of the apparently weak party. According to Field Manual 3–24, “Insurgents succeed by sowing chaos and disorder anywhere; the government fails unless it maintains a degree of order everywhere” (U.S. Army/Marine Corps 2006, 4). In their different fashions, cultural containment as heritage and sociopolitical incorporation as legacy are both strategies for buying off local actors who can be neither controlled nor eliminated.

## Appalachia

I first gave a talk about the conceptual relationship between legacies and heritage in March 2009, while the Obama administration was struggling to construct a bank bailout plan. In that climate, my audience immediately observed that I had missed a third term: zombie. Jason Baird Jackson and Merrill Kaplan formulated the typology between them. Heritage is what you freeze cryogenically at the point of death; legacy is what you keep on life support because you can’t afford to kill it off; and zombie is the thing that you try to kill but can’t: it keeps coming back to life and attacking you, like the so-called zombie banks that were devouring capital as we spoke.<sup>23</sup>

Less straightforward and more inadvertent than applying the legacy label or creating a heritage industry, zombification is a third possible treatment of the kind of people we once called the folk. It is not a buying-off but a refusal to engage the problematic population. It is apparent in American pop-cultural representations of rural areas, and notably of Appalachia. A heavily forested mountain region, difficult of access, with a pervasive but historically elusive Native American presence displaced by mostly Scots-Irish (or Ulster-Scots!) settlers in the eighteenth century, Appalachia was not easily incorporated into the United States’ evolving machinery of governance. On the contrary, it exemplifies James C. Scott’s account of why the state can’t climb hills (2009). Land could not be readily surveyed and parceled, straight roads could not be

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<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the economist Paul Krugman speaks of “zombie doctrines,” ideologies that have failed in practice and yet persist in influencing policymaking (2009). This usage of “zombie” derives from George Romero’s horror movies, not from the origins of the term in Haitian vodou belief. By contrast, the IT concept of a “zombie computer,” one that has been compromised and redirected to distribute spam or viruses without the owner’s knowledge, is closer to the original conception but less relevant to my discussion here.

built, populations could not be concentrated in urban areas, illegal liquor production (or, today, marijuana crops and crystal meth labs) could not be monitored, and schools, police forces, and mainstream churches could not reach much of the population with any regularity. Appalachia has long been the site of tax resistance and some war resistance, a place of refuge for criminals and deserters. At the same time, since the nineteenth century it has been imagined as the true reservoir of American folk identity, inhabited by the descendants of those who fought the Revolution, mountaineers who are still self-reliant, beholden to nobody, ethnically pure, and practicing their age-old traditions (Batteau 1990; Hufford 2006; Whisnant 2008). Appalachia is one of certain culturally marked regions in America, imagined as deviant not through creolization, like Louisiana, or border conflict, like Texas, but precisely by being at the heart of the old white settler nation, closed in on itself, incestuous. Appalachia is deep America: it is folk.

The image of Appalachia as isolated and untouched by modernity is belied by its centrality since the nineteenth century as a site of resource extraction: timber cutting, coal mining, and hydroelectric dam-building. State and industry have wrought continual violence on the region's landscape and its people, whose struggles for equitable labor conditions have repeatedly been met with repression unbecoming a democracy, served out by company-paid private security firms and the U.S. Army itself (Eller 1982, 2008; Portelli 1991). The Appalachian landscape has been transformed by the Tennessee Valley Authority's submerging of whole territories under water, by long-burning coal fires in the deep mines, later by strip mining that contaminated watersheds, and most recently by mountaintop removal (Davis 2000). This technique for efficient extraction with a minimal labor force involves the construction of huge machines in situ that blow and scrape the top off a mountain to reach massive seams of coal easily, dumping the residue in the adjacent valley.

Public alarm about the environmental implications of mountaintop removal and vigorous local activism face powerful counterweights. The coal companies themselves, with generations of lobbying experience, have a comfortable relationship with legislators and judges in the mountain states. Ever-mounting demand for energy in a context of anxiety about foreign oil and nuclear power means that coal-burning power plants are likely to remain the primary feeder of the American power grid and a major source of carbon emissions for years to come.<sup>24</sup> The political concern with energy independence tends to distract attention from the problems of coal, and perhaps a changing imaginary of energy, abetted by coal company rhetorics, makes it still easier for Appalachia's problems to disappear.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Of course this passage was composed long before the fracking boom, which has drawn attention away to new problems and opportunities while the coal industry continues to operate and to lobby fiercely to retain its position.

<sup>25</sup> The following discussion draws extensively on conversations with Willard Tucker as well as Geoffrey Smith and other students in the course "American Regional Cultures and Global Transition: Appalachia, Louisiana and the Texas Border Country," during spring 2009 at Ohio State.

Energy companies represent themselves to the public as providing a frictionless flow of clean energy that sustains the power grid, itself, like the internet, an image of a flexible self-adjusting, all-encompassing network. The companies have names like “Constellation Energy”: their advertisements show stars twinkling in clear skies, or light zapping through networks, at once pristine and postmodern (Tucker 2009). And indeed we no longer think of the globalized U.S. economy as bound to localities, mechanical processes, smoke, and dirt. The smokestack is an image of an industrial past, which we can still imagine as contemporary in China, but not in our own “postindustrial” economy with its outsourced manufacturing. Instead, the grid has become the synecdoche of the new world order: Manuel Castells has gone so far as to say that it is not power but connectedness that primarily determines well-being in the network society (1997). But it is precisely the online world of infinite communicability and the associated consumer electronics, never turned off or unplugged, that demands the construction of more and more coal-burning power plants (Mouawad and Galbraith 2009; Bouissac 2009).

Both rural and industrial, its jobs and many of its people departed, Appalachia is a space off the grid, easily forgotten. The companies represent it as empty land that will be made habitable and amenable to development through mountaintop removal’s creation of flat space. Thus far, those flat spaces have seen the development of one coal company golf course and a couple of prisons (Tucker 2009).

Yet Appalachia is not empty despite ongoing outmigration, and this creates problems. Some problems are visible only to inhabitants. Although the forest on the mountaintops is not incorporated land, it is an important resource for local people. As Mary Hufford has shown, the forest serves as a symbolic commons, containing old cemeteries, hunting grounds, place names, and sites of legend (2000). It is still more important as an economic commons in a context of scarce options. Appalachia is the major source for the Chinese market in wild ginseng, which garnered \$450 per pound as of 2002; in 1994 the United States exported 178,111 pounds of wild ginseng (Hufford 2002, 101). Appalachians have always foraged for their own subsistence, and with the vogue for local foods forest plants such as ramps, morels, and berries have become a meaningful source of extra income. Illegal uses of the commons, such as scavenging for Native American artifacts to sell or cultivating marijuana, have for a few people replaced older income supplements such as fur trapping and moonshining. Central to local economies and economies of meaning, to say nothing of a larger environmental balance, the forest is not valued in the calculus of mountaintop removal. Because of its economic value, wild ginseng can be harvested only with a permit, with severe penalties applying to individual violators. But the plant’s habitat can be legally destroyed by mountaintop removal (*ibid.*, 117). On the other hand, death wins more legal respect than life: the presence of a cemetery and proof that it is regularly visited has in at least one case delayed the construction of a slurry reservoir (*ibid.*, 116).

The immediate human consequences of coal extraction receive some attention from investigative journalists and from civil society within and beyond the region. A 2009

series of articles in the New York Times cited routine, unprosecuted violations of the Clean Water Act by coal companies and coal-burning power plants, exacerbated rather than improved by the spread of residue-accumulating scrubbing technologies. The consequences include not only long-term, hard-to-substantiate increases in cancer and other diseases, but widespread incidences of skin burns and damaged tooth enamel immediately associable with the use of the public water supply in areas such as Prenter, West Virginia (“Toxic Waters” 2009). Some churches have assumed an activist role as their parishioners find their water supplies contaminated or cut off by mountaintop removal, intensifying a growing environmentalist movement among American evangelicals (“Is God Green?” 2006). Advocacy groups such as Ohio Citizen Action conduct “good neighbor campaigns” relying on community pressure rather than the slow machinery of law and regulation to influence the practices of companies, but their successes to date have come from industries other than coal.

Catastrophes, with their immediate impact, spectacularity, and, not least, expensive consequences might be supposed more newsworthy than the slow damage inflicted by most coal pollution. Nonetheless, perhaps few Americans outside the region were made aware of the spill of coal ash over Kingston, Tennessee, in December 2008. This was the largest industrial accident in U.S. history prior to the April 2010 BP Gulf of Mexico oil spill, and an environmental accident more than thirty times the size of the Exxon Valdes oil spill. Carcinogenic fly ash from a containment pond at the Kingston Fossil Plant, eventually measured at 1.1 billion gallons, spilled over three hundred acres of land and into the Emory River, a tributary of the Tennessee River, which provides the drinking water for millions of people downstream.<sup>26</sup> The most timely coverage in a major U.S. newspaper appeared in the New York Times the following day, with photographs of a quasi-lunar landscape, but not on the front page, appearing on page A17 in the national news (Dewan 2008a). Most news media barely noticed it in the following weeks, although the Times and the Associated Press covered major developments in the aftermath.<sup>27</sup> The affected land being largely owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority, there were no immediate human injuries. Twenty-two residences were immediately evacuated, and area children started coughing once the sludge dried back into fine ash; other effects will, as always, be more ambiguous and slower to reveal themselves (Dewan 2008a; Copeland 2009). The TVA’s immediate response was felt by many locals to have been inadequately candid: it did not warn people to avoid

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<sup>26</sup> Fly ash, which contains heavy metals such as arsenic, lead, nickel, manganese, and chromium in concentrations far higher than the EPA rates as dangerous, had been left unregulated by the EPA in 2000 because of industry pressures: the potential cleanup costs for utilities at that period were estimated at more than \$5 billion.

<sup>27</sup> As a crude measure of comparison, a LexisNexis Academic search for “Tennessee coal spill” between December 23, 2008, and January 31, 2009, found 22 newspaper stories about the spill and its aftermath (calls for regulation, congressional investigation, TVA announcements, concerns about slurry ponds elsewhere, and so on). A search for “Katrina” between August 25 and September 30, 2005, revealed 818 stories; for “Exxon Valdes” between March 24 and April 30, 1989, brought up 444; for “Three Mile Island” from March 29 to May 5, 1979, found 496.

direct contact with the ash until one week later and issued analyses of water samples judged drinkable that were in fact collected upstream from the spill (Dewan 2008b).

The means of redress are characteristic. An estimated \$1 billion will be spent on cleanup, focused on protection of the Tennessee River. Efforts at remedial regulation to secure sites elsewhere are stalled. Site cleanup has involved the negotiation of the removal of the ash to a site in Perry County, Alabama (impoverished and 70 percent black), where local residents are anxious in their turn about the safety of the proposed landfill but have been promised thirty jobs and a hosting fee that increases the county's existing annual budget by 40 percent (Dewan 2009). Compensation paid to displaced families in Kingston provided for their resettlement elsewhere rather than for the cleanup of their properties ("TVA Buys 71 Properties" 2009). In addition, Roane County leaders are seeking \$40 million in compensation from TVA to help the community to repair its image and economy, based on real estate for retirees ("Tennessee County Wants Millions" 2009). Displacement and image repair take precedence over regulation and land repair. None of this is exciting significant national attention.<sup>28</sup>

Consigned still deeper in the past of the American imaginary now that the heroic age of industrialization and unionization is over, Appalachia has come to embody what economists call externalities (Hufford 2004). We might just call it spillover: the unintended consequences of pollution and destruction that are not considered in the design of industrial production processes or calculated into their costs. They are also external because we on the grid rarely talk about them. But while damaged land and human suffering have long been effaced in national narratives of progress, it is not so with Appalachian culture, which in the form of music has become both self-reproducing and phantasmagoric, like Gretchen's song from the prison. The haunting voice of Ralph Stanley singing "O Death" forever announces the disappearance of the body that emitted it, while ever spreading its own social reach. Bluegrass music focused and stylized Appalachians' own idealization of their past as their world changed around them or they were forced to leave it (Cantwell 2003). Country music today performs the same service for a larger Anglophone world of displaced or marginalized rural people, embodying nostalgias from Australia to Newfoundland. The music moves independently of the land and increasingly of its inhabitants, too fluid even to be pinned down to a list of intangibles connected to place. To be sure, Appalachia also has a conventional heritage industry and heritage institutions, evolved from the folklorism of social work in the region in an earlier age. But these have increasingly been appropriated by local people and turned to local agendas (Whisnant 2008). Conversely, the larger American public is uneasy about Appalachia in ways that are not amenable to its containment as heritage, while structural embarrassments do not conduce to Appalachia's mobilization as legacy. Damaged environmentally and economically beyond easy repair, still infrastructurally deficient in ways unimaginable to suburban Americans, effaced from

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<sup>28</sup> To be sure, the Big Branch mine explosion of April 2010 did excite significant national attention. Where immediate, dramatic mortality makes cause-effect relationships tangible, the stakes are higher.



public view as far as possible, the region nonetheless contains rights-bearing American citizens. This contradiction is registered as uncanny.

When Kentucky sculptor Willard Tucker suggested to me that the hillbilly was being fused with the zombie in current popular imaginings, I did a Google search. “Zombie” plus “hillbilly” raised almost four million hits in April 2009. Although many of these referred to an industrial rock album called *Hillbilly Deluxe* by a musician named Rob Zombie—itself a telling combination—the pervasiveness of the image was nonetheless apparent. It occurred frequently in the neighborhood of Halloween costumes and haunted houses. A homesick student volunteering in Burkina Faso posted photos of his October 31 hillbilly zombie getup on Flickr; an Ohio man enjoys a lively virtual life as a “Hillbilly Zombie Hunter.”<sup>29</sup> Most extensively, the mad hillbilly, inbred and illiterate, has indeed migrated from American legendry and jokelore to the world of horror movies, both serious and burlesque.

The template for the current story is a mainstream Hollywood film, John Boorman’s 1972 *Deliverance*, taken from the 1970 novel by James Dickey. It deals with four men from suburban Atlanta who go on a canoeing trip in northern Georgia to ride “the last wild, untamed, unpolluted, unfucked-up river in the South” before it is submerged beneath a new dam.<sup>30</sup> The men are received with suspicion as probable emissaries from the power company. They themselves have strong stereotypes of the mountain people as moon-shiners damaged by generations of incest, and their preconceptions of chaos come true when they are assaulted in the wilderness by a pair of hillbillies with shotguns. The rape of the landscape is repaid by the rape of one of the visiting canoers. Confronted by the natives, the wildness of the river, and their own weaknesses, the men’s commitment to civilization dissolves, and after multiple murders, the survivors escape, hoping to leave the evidence behind them as the gorge is inundated by the dammed waters.

A succession of B-grade horror films reproduces the plotline, continuing into the present with such do-it-yourself titles as *Hillbilly Zombies from Hell*.<sup>31</sup> Some of the most influential, like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) are set in rural regions elsewhere, but by the turn of the millenium they were concentrating in Appalachia.<sup>32</sup> In every case the chronotope is a deviation off the road of modernity into the backward space of the hills (cf. Stewart 1996). A car accident or a camping trip brings normal middle-class suburbanites into contact with animal-

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<sup>29</sup> Respectively <[www.flickr.com/photos/hypostylin/2918292560/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/hypostylin/2918292560/)> and <[www.myspace.com/hillbillyzombiehunter](http://www.myspace.com/hillbillyzombiehunter)>.

<sup>30</sup> Summaries and quotations refer to the film rather than the novel unless otherwise noted.

<sup>31</sup> <[www.facebook.com/pages/Hillbilly-Zombies.../1213308479](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Hillbilly-Zombies.../1213308479)>. This project appears never to have been realized.

<sup>32</sup> Scott Ashlin argues plausibly that most 1970s exploitation film genres developed from mainstream movie prototypes and describes the influence of *Deliverance* on “the hillbilly horror strain” <<http://www.1000misspenthours.com/reviews/reviewsa-d/deliverance.htm>>. This influence has become so pervasive as to provoke metaparody: the trailer to Ruben Fleischer’s 2009 *Zombieland* features two allusions to emblematic moments of *Deliverance*.

istic, often cannibal hillbillies, driving pickup trucks, wearing overalls, carrying old shotguns or perhaps Indian bows and arrows, moving easily through the wild nature that obstructs the vision of the visitors. But like *Deliverance* itself, each film carries an opening reminder that the hills are not genuinely isolated from modernity: it is modernity that has transformed them. The first intimation of a shift between worlds often takes place at a gas station, the liminal place that perhaps reminds us that the need to harness energy maintains a link between civilization and wilderness. Moreover, the films typically begin with an overt reference to environmental transformation.<sup>33</sup> The hydroelectric dam of *Deliverance* is echoed in films of less artistic ambition. In *The Hills Have Eyes* there is an abandoned Defense Department testing site; the 2003 *Wrong Turn* (Summit Pictures) has a chemical spill; less directly, in *Cabin Fever* (Black Sky Entertainment, 2002) the water carries a skin-eating disease. In the extreme spoof *Redneck Zombies* (Troma Entertainment, 1987) radioactive waste is used to spike moonshine. Although the main characters speak of the natives as primitive and backward, these clues in the films make clear that the hills do not predate but postdate civilization, that the violence suffered by the metropolitan characters is an inevitable return, a mimetic acting out of harm done (Shaw 2005).

Hillbilly horror in this respect can be seen as a variant of the postwar “toxic avenger” narrative that starts with the mutant dragon *Godzilla*: movies about monsters of hybrid autochthony, the local muck animated into menacing but inchoate form by the residues of environmental contaminants. Although it is burlesque horror film that memorably names the genre, the linkage between hybrid monsters and industrial failure exists in oral tradition as well. For Appalachia itself we can cite the 1966–67 Mothman reports from West Virginia, with the creature sighted repeatedly in the vicinity of an abandoned dynamite factory and a suspension bridge that collapsed a few months after the sightings, killing forty-six people (Tucker, personal communication, and the invaluable Wikipedia).

But the peculiar horror of the hillbilly zombie comes from the humanity of the monster. The famous “dueling banjos” scene in *Deliverance* tests the possibility of community between the visitors and the natives, ultimately refused by both sides. Notable in the momentary musical communitas is the pattern of interrogatives. Waiting at the gas station, the outsider Drew offers a chord on his guitar, waiting to see whether a boy with a banjo on the porch of a nearby house will pick it up. The boy is albino and appears to have Down’s syndrome. (“Talk about genetic deficiencies,” murmurs another of the visitors). Encouraged by the response, he tries another chord, a harmonic pattern, a melodic line, another line. The boy first tentatively repeats, then varies the phrases, later takes the melodic lead, and finally leaves the visitor

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<sup>33</sup> The particular context for *Deliverance*, especially the novel, is Cold War nuclear anxiety, stressed as much as the environmental change. The character Lewis, consumed with survivalist fantasies, values the river as a place of testing and refuge. Not yet incorporated into the national infrastructure and its concomitant real estate and recreation industries, upland Georgia is still a training ground for the moment when “machines are gonna fail” (Osborne 2007).

behind altogether. The visitors clap along awkwardly; one of the men from the gas station begins fluently to dance. The scene encapsulates the mimetic relationship of the entire film, but, an inverted *mise en abyme*, it models positive rather than negative reciprocity. Music alone can make a bridge across the river. One of the phrases tested is the first line of “Yankee Doodle.” Through his guitar, Drew is asking the child, “Are you, too, American?”

American, yes. Assimilated, no, and unwilling to be made invisible. This is the message of the cultural style associated with postindustrial and postmigration Appalachia (and the South more generally), known as “white trash.” From a stigmatizing label imposed from above or outside, the term has been appropriated as a badge of subcultural identity and infused with American patriotism.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, its resonance has changed somewhat. Scholars have commonly understood the label to mark the anomaly of white poverty in a society that naturalizes social class as racial hierarchy (Hartigan 1997). But increasingly, perhaps, the emphasis falls on trash rather than whiteness, signaling the transformation of the industrial working class to a residue of modernity, people for whom society has no current use.<sup>35</sup> This marginality becomes a site of performative freedom, allowing acting out of a kind unavailable to those of us with a stake in the system. White trash culture performs matter out of place: junked cars on front lawns, bodies bursting out of clothing, shouting in public places, twanged notes that veer out of tune (Cantwell 2009). It lends itself to burlesque (Penley 1997). It has become the preferred idiom of recreational transgression for working-class white people.<sup>36</sup> A broader conservative populist culture celebrates drinking, guns, junkyards, wild behavior, pickup trucks, country music, racism and xenophobia, nonstandard English, and patriotism combined with antitax, antigovernment rhetoric. The point of this behavior is less its traditional character than its conspicuous flouting of middle-class norms in the present, but these actors also have reason to associate cultural change with the rise of a postindustrial capitalism that has hurt them.

The outrageousness lends itself also to serious protest, as when gentrification is fought by the self-trashing of a community (Morris 1998), and in the carnivalesque elements of mountaintop removal activism (Hufford 2004). Larry Gibson, the Kayford Mountain activist who has defied death threats and lawsuits in refusing to surrender his property for mountaintop removal, now lives on a single hilltop surrounded by 12,000 acres of scraped earth. In his campaign against removal, he wears overalls and

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<sup>34</sup> A fuller genealogy of the category documents its transition from a mechanism of social control and disciplining within southern communities to a mobile cultural style that is recognizable by outsiders and offers an idiom for public self-assertion (e.g., Penley 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Except, dare one say, to fight legacy warlords, each anomaly helping to cancel out the other...

<sup>36</sup> Regional activists often point out that extreme othering of the hillbilly is more socially permissible than blatant stereotyping of African Americans or even Arabs. Outrageous representations of rural whites are still fair game in public settings in the United States. This othering, however, seems to betoken identification rather than rejection on the part of middle- and working-class white people. The white trash image provides an idiom for carnivalesque self-inversion now that racial minstrelsy is no longer socially acceptable, and for some racially polarized whites no longer desirable.

a straw hat every day, speaks the dialect. He is a zombie: his cause should be history, yet he refuses to go away. Horrific, burlesque, or both, the hillbilly image today stands for a return of the repressed. At the end of Boorman's film, the protagonists leave the river and the dead bodies behind, trusting the lake made by the new dam to cover up all evidence of their misadventure. But the narrator, now apparently safe back in his suburban home, dreams of the dead hand of the murdered hillbilly rising out of the lake to point an accusatory finger.<sup>37</sup>

## From Framing Anomalies to Universal Marking?

I have described three very different levels of discursive practice: the rhetorical spinning of a tactical accommodation in Afghanistan, a rebranding campaign with a complex institutional apparatus in Northern Ireland, and a diffuse social imaginary that has emerged in relation to Appalachia. Aware of the mismatches between these cases, I want nonetheless to suggest that there exists a broad semantic field in which problematic survivals or local threats can be addressed from a position of power (Table 14.1). There are different ways in which coevalness can be denied. Each predication of pastness, euphemistic or dysphemistic, entails a different policy option for managing the problem (Fernandez 1986).

TABLE 14.1: Conceptualizing threats as survivals

Each of my three examples highlights an asymmetry: powerful actors go unmarked, while the subaltern are marked by their presumed alterity. Each framing nonetheless recognizes the agency of the marked actors. The legacy warlords are acknowledged as too powerful to be eliminated or assimilated by force. The zombie fantasy implicitly concedes the persistent existence and citizenship rights of the people of Appalachia, and Appalachians themselves may exaggerate their perceptible distinctiveness as an assertion of presence. The heritage strategy, as practiced in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, is effective in buying off local elites and containing potential excesses for the time being, but by reifying differential identities it also reinforces essentialisms and may incubate subsequent extremisms.

Nor are these three terms the only alternatives. A more complete paradigm can be constructed along two axes: whether a practice and its practitioners are construed as of the past or of the present, and whether they are incorporated into or kept at a distance from mainstream institutions (Figure 14.1). Needless to say, I am constructing ideal types and am speaking of representations, not realities.

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<sup>37</sup> Since the initial framing of this article, the hillbilly's revenge on the suburbanite has made some progress. The euphoria for fracking—hydraulic fracturing to capture underground shale gas—has made coal country still less visible, while greatly extending the range of rural areas forced to choose between risky extraction and economic inanition. With the mortgage crisis, suburbs, like rural towns, have seen homes abandoned. And while we continue to ponder the disappearance of the middle class, zombies have completely overrun our popular culture. We are all Appalachia now.



FIGURE 14.1: Labeling anomalies: a broader view

The most fully institutionalized of the concepts is “heritage.” Heritage creates an enclave. Heritage is framed and sacred: to be looked at, not touched by outsiders. It has the right to be but not the right to do. Although it generates economic activity around its edges, heritage itself is conceived as inert and defiled by change. When heritage is celebrated to the neglect of present engagements, it becomes like Snow White in the glass case, a death in life arousing a kind of necrophilia, which, needless to say, does not reproduce the community.

“Legacy” falls squarely in the middle of the diagram: it has to be made to work but is marked as a problem. “Zombie” is represented as external to the system but invasive of it, damaging to it.

But there are other ways of framing the anomaly, with generally more positive implications. “Fusion” and the broader framework of “world culture” allow traditions to live and interact in the present, with all of the trade-offs entailed. If heritage is pure, fusion is impure. Heritage is enclosed; fusion is networked. Heritage is immobile; fusion takes commodity form and circulates. “Diversity,” attached to persons more than to practices, is a euphemism according positive value to difference. Like heritage, it attaches difference to social identity and so restricts it from circulation, but unlike heritage and like legacy, it purports to integrate difference into social and political institutions.

In the final quadrant of the figure we find terms such as “alternative” and “sustainable,” applied to practices more often than to persons. For confirmation that they fall into a common paradigm with terms like “heritage,” I can point to the implicit understanding of my own tribe, the sort of scholars and culture workers who belong to the American Folklore Society and in safe settings refer to themselves as folklorists. A few such practitioners recently created a master’s program at Goucher College in Maryland. It is essentially a program in what insiders call “public folklore,” but this labeling was not judged viable, and they deliberated for some time between “Heritage Studies” and “Cultural Sustainability,” ultimately opting for the latter as better capturing the usefulness of vernacular performances and practices. “Sustainable,” in contrast to “alternative,” implies the desirability of eventual incorporation into the mainstream, but for the time being this quadrant serves as a reservoir of possibilities to be explored for that moment when, as Lewis says in *Deliverance*, “machines are gonna fail.”

In all this frenzy to label and categorize, what disappears by definition is what Michael Thompson calls “rubbish” (1979). By this he means not trash—the visible pollutant or transgression—but the overlooked, the forgotten. If the mainstream is, in linguistic terms, unmarked, and the nuisance survivals are marked, rubbish is the unremarked. Appalachia would be rubbish, were there not people in the region who decline to be overlooked as well as a growing ecological consciousness among people outside the region that has enlarged the modernist conception of the system to something more holistic.

By its nature the process of seeing, categorizing, and ascribing value is not fully accessible to the consciousness of actors, so my observations are accordingly limited. It strikes me nonetheless that in the post-1968 era both the zone of the unmarked and that of the unremarked have been shrinking in relation to an ever-expanding politics of marking (endogenously claimed as a politics of recognition). One side of this history is well known. The universalisms of democratic citizenship and later of more global frameworks such as human rights were called to account for their practical exclusions, their construction of an unmarked subject that is in fact shaped by modern Western masculine bourgeois assumptions. The early civil rights movements of colonized peoples, African Americans, Northern Irish Catholics, women, and other categories attempted to claim unmarked citizenship for their members, to demonstrate that they too were rational individual actors bearing rights and capable of exercising them responsibly. When formal acceptance of such arguments failed to overcome real social exclusions, social movements turned toward identity, embracing the marked status they could not escape.

In the process, the movements succeeded not in unmarking themselves but in marking the hitherto unmarked. Actors who had imagined themselves as mainstream, average American citizens, were revealed in the course of civil rights struggles as carriers of irrational prejudices, social identities, and so on: they were not interchangeable individual units after all, but themselves located in particulars. The system was not straightforwardly enlarged to become more inclusive, as expected, but reconfigured as it incorporated new actors on terms of difference rather than uniformity. In some cases there was a defensive response from within: black power inspired white power, feminism provoked the men's movement, one fundamentalism or nationalism brought forth its mimetic rival.

Modernity did not wither away. In the absence of violent upheaval the machinery of powerful institutions does not dissolve. Rather, politicians, bureaucrats, and social entrepreneurs fighting for job security as well as corporations looking for new market niches in a consumer economy encouraged the multiplication of identity labels and markings,<sup>38</sup> as did ordinary people attempting to find their footing in a world where old ways of belonging had lost credibility. The nation-state, once the mechanism of exclusion and the locus of legitimate difference, now became the guarantor of multiculturalism. Deep in our conceptual habits, the nation also furnished the model for smaller and cross-cutting identities, which reproduced many of its essentialisms, not least the necessity of having a culture (Handler 1988). Thus signs of difference proliferated without transforming underlying structures or power relations, and insofar as the signs became enshrined in institutions they trapped a growing number of actors into ever narrower identity jails.

But these rearguard actions on the part of global, national, and provincial elites attempting to maintain their positions in an existing order are countered by the forward

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<sup>38</sup> As academics and cultural practitioners we too have our place in this field of interested actors.

motion of more confident or more desperate actors at all levels of power. The revelation of markedness in a world of mobile humans, commodities, and technologies taught some actors not that identities were fixed but that they were performative, to be assumed and thrown off as needed. The mark is an act as well as a fact. If some actors have an investment in the structured community with its center, periphery, and boundaries, others celebrate the flexible network, or have no choice but to construct it. Disruptive as he is to the powers above him, the warlord nonetheless has his own power base to conserve. But the zombie has to go out and find food.

The real legacy system is what the 1960s called “the system.” And the real legacy discourse is that of modernity, the operating fiction that (1) the system exists; that (2) it would be transparent, knowable, and predictable were it not for local disruptions; and that (3) good management can either incorporate or eradicate these disruptions. Would anyone still make these assertions of the international financial system? Are they tenable of the international political system, with the U.S. rueful admission of our vulnerability to the “unknown unknowns”? Complexity theory would tell us that increasingly, the system is the disruptions, the events. Thus those of us concerned with cultural practices should not be too quick to conclude—optimistically or pessimistically—that incorporation into the inventory means real containment or that the ICH regime is the end of history. On the contrary, the world is being remade from each of those little local nodes. However many bodies we bury, the intangibles of performance and practice will continue to elude our grasp.

## Acknowledgments

Along with the individuals mentioned in the text, I thank Ilana Gershon, Deborah Kapchan and the two anonymous readers, Bogdan Popa, Ned Lebow, and the attendees of “The Form of Value in Globalized Traditions” at the Ohio State University, March 2009, and “Local Knowledge and Open Borders: Creativity and Heritage” at the University of Tartu, July 2009, for their comments. The chapter was completed amid the collegial stimulations of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University.

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# 15. Compromised Concepts in Rising Waters: Making the Folk Resilient

FOR CARL LINDAHL, who works harder than most of us at getting it right

I been in the right place

But it must have been the wrong time

—Dr. John, New Orleans-born musician (1973)

The folk belong to place: strictly speaking, to a place. The rest of us live in time. The project we call modernity split these two asunder—place and time, the folk and ourselves—and ever since it has been trying to pull them back together again. These campaigns of reincorporation are known to us as modernization.<sup>1</sup>

Classic modernization campaigns conceive of themselves as liquidating a lack that afflicts certain populations. These populations include women, children, poor people, ethnic and religious minorities, foreigners, indigenous people, country people, working people—in other words, most people.

Modernizing interventions seek to introduce literacy and education, self-discipline, rational institutions, industry, free markets, the rule of law, representation, maybe even redistribution. It is argued that in due course the population intervened upon will participate in the blessings of modernity.

How did the population become disabled in the first place?

We don't talk about that. We are liquidating a lack; it would be tactless to ask where the lack came from, and in any case any prior acts of predation and destitution are by now water under the bridge. (Conversely, the good intentions of the present interveners are self-evident.) We need to stay focused on building that bridge—a bridge to the future, as we like to say in America. Modernist interventions do not analyze problems: they propose solutions.

As has been much discussed, modernization campaigns are violent, their efficacy is limited, and they give rise to an infinity of unintended consequences. These observations may be overstressed, however, for in historical practice thoroughgoing campaigns have been comparatively few, half-hearted, or abortive.

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<sup>1</sup> In this introduction I am of course channeling the reworking of Bruno Latour (1993) by Richard

After all, it is very expensive to modernize: one needs lots of coercive power, lots of human capital, and lots of material resources. At some point modernizers usually moderate their ambitions, certainly as regards the full conversion of the marginalized into the masses. Instead of integration the strategy becomes containment: the most disruptive or contaminating actors are framed as anomalies.

How do we keep these non-modern populations from becoming troublesome? Instead of inviting them into the game, we encourage them to develop their own resources. At times we encourage them rather forcefully.

What resources, you may ask? Well, not land, because that has been enclosed for private ownership, not capital, because that is being amassed elsewhere, and labor power only up to a point, because they must be compelled to sell it on terms that will serve the inarguable priority of economic growth. So we cannot afford to encourage godless materialism among the poor.

And we don't need to. For blessed are the poor—in spirit! They hold intangible capital, which cannot be tarnished or stolen or starved: the *Volksgeist*. While we suffering moderns do what we must in the soulless world of things, the folk conserve the spirit of religion, of nation, of nature, making it available to us when we require refreshment—or redemption.

Much of nineteenth-century bourgeois culture is an extended elaboration of this fantasy (chapter 7). Do the folk play along? Sometimes but not always. Sometimes they start to organize and when they do they make claims of a distressingly material kind. Thus we have a problem: how do we get the folk to the table when the food is intangible?

Concessions must be made towards the corporeal subsistence of all these peasants and women and workers. “Let them eat culture” has been a prominent solution first to supplement and now increasingly to substitute for agricultural and industrial labor. The gifts of the spirit can be invested in material practices and these developed into occasions for representation and remuneration. With their colorful costumes, the folk can be made visible in the nation state; their performances can be conscripted to sustain both the state and a tourist and leisure economy, being compensated accordingly. Up to a point, the folk can eat culture, or rather exchange their culture-power for material goods. In this respect containment enables incorporation, on collective rather than individual terms.

While these material incentives exist on both sides—the folk need to eat, the modernizers need to develop every available resource—we cannot deny the power of the intangible means themselves, the ideological work, in winning consent to modernizing containment projects. This is my topic here. The material world is fragile, as our suffering planet and its precarious people attest, but intangible frameworks and concepts, however dysfunctional when realized in practice, exhibit surprising...resilience.

Too important for a footnote: It should go without saying that typically consent is not won freely but coerced, and the performance of consent emerges more often

from self-defense than from conviction (Scott 1992). Large-scale intensive containment projects such as segregation, apartheid, and ideological purges depend on material violence, both institutional and informal. But the situations most often studied by folklorists involve more intimate coexistence and at least some degree of intellectual, ethical, and emotional engagement with dominant projects on the part of subordinates. Above all, to the extent that folklorists address “traditional” situations in which social arrangements have persisted across generations, a history of conflict is likely to have been suppressed or muted. Rationalizations for the present arrangements are likely to have emerged on all sides. (Folklorists have sometimes participated in such rationalizations.)

## Slogan-Concepts

A critical vehicle for mobilizing (or immobilizing) the marginal is what I have elsewhere christened the slogan-concept (Bendix, Bizer, Noyes in press). The slogan-concept is an abstraction that seems to validate concrete realities, the name of a purportedly eternal idea used to launch a time-specific project, a tent providing shelter to actors coming from all directions.

A few examples should make the idea clear. Consider some of the terms that have been advanced over time in our own disciplinary neighborhood:

The list above has perhaps received sufficient exposition, not least the term that currently reigns in government and policy circles: the ubiquitous ICH, or intangible cultural heritage. Summarizing the volumes of commentary on such terms (much of it cited elsewhere in this volume), we can remind ourselves of how slogan-concepts work.

- They simulate analytical power. Slogan-concepts purport to give us a grasp on reality. Academics get excited by this and expend endless energy on the appearance of each new one.<sup>2</sup> First we spend years defining and delimiting its reach. Then we spend even longer debunking and deconstructing it. At last, perhaps, we rehabilitate it.
- They apply a fig leaf, both deflecting and attracting attention. The slogan-concept masks the embarrassment. If you can’t get rid of it, cover it up or put a frame around it and make it decorative. To label a phenomenon as folklore, heritage, etc. marks it as anomalous. It arouses a response of curiosity while disguising the phenomenon’s participation in the lifeworld around it. It also par-

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Bauman and Charles Briggs (2003), with the additional influence of James C. Scott (1998).

<sup>2</sup> More cynically put (and the times are conducive to cynicism), we are obliged to get excited about them because we know where our bread is buttered. Grant programs from government and major funders, administrative and publishing incentives, student interest, and, to be sure, our own commitments as citizens drive us to engage with the slogan-concepts of the moment. See Bendix, Bizer, Noyes in press, chapter 3.

Folklore                      Nation  
People                      Authenticity  
Heritage                      Diversity  
Multiculturalism  
Sustainability  
  
and so on--

takes of the logic of euphemism, offering dignity in exchange for containment. In practice, however, we know that stigma is not destroyed by euphemism but runs straight after it. What we first ennoble as folklore soon devolves into kitsch, so we scrape off the encrustations and what's left is rechristened heritage. When that doesn't work, we add either African percussion or red pepper or both and call it world culture. Thus as one slogan-concept becomes discredited, another arises to take its place.

- They distract us from intractable structural problems. Slogan-concepts effect a Gestalt shift. The big-picture problems like social injustice or climate change fall into the background. As the symptoms are treated, the disease is ignored or naturalized, such that the attendant suffering is just how things are. Slogan-concepts propose solutions for problems that have not been examined. Nonetheless, by attending to symptoms they grant recognition to particularities, and this is appreciated by actors who have long suffered from neglect.
- They offer a direction that enables movement. Slogan-concepts are not inert reductions of what they denote. They are transformative, pulling certain potentialities out of an inchoate phenomenon and organizing them into a vehicle that advances a larger project: building the nation, developing the periphery, resolving conflict, etc. Local actors are recruited to the immediate labor of building



the vehicle by the promise of where it will carry them, making them participants in that wider world.<sup>3</sup>

- They discipline behavior. Slogan-concepts discipline the behavior of marginalized actors by reconstructing all alternatives as a negative Other to themselves, especially those alternatives that seek incorporation into the mainstream. The early celebrants of folklore contrasted it to the corrupt popular culture of the urban masses. The preservers of heritage decry those who succumb to global influences or commercialization. And so on. Concepts that purport to be analytical reveal themselves as normative, providing the principle by which behaviors can be classified as either constructive or destructive. Individuals are urged, perhaps required, to get with the program.
- They attract marchers. All the same, slogan-concepts win adherents, sometimes passionate adherents, among those they seek to discipline. The banner is brightly colored, if indistinct, and it seems to be going somewhere. The alternatives are murky or perhaps all too clear. What else are we going to do?

The jargons of the present have not just intellectual networks but whole industries and professions behind them: public relations, human resources, advertising, policy thinktanks, and more. Consciously implemented, they are also consciously recognized by their targets and received with suspicion, often hostility, particularly by well-placed actors who are losing autonomy and resources under the new dispensation. Thus the rapid restructurings now being imposed on established modern institutions—hospitals, corporations, universities, government offices—have by and large alienated rather than converted their professional workforces. Most resist the new discourses where resistance is possible and adopt them opportunistically where it is not, in what Scott calls “thin hegemony” (1992, 82). In their private conversation and their public protests the professionals denounce not just the changes of structure but the perceived abuse of language. In an excoriating critique of reform in the British National Health Service, for example, Michael Loughlin argues that governance now operates by content-free buzzwords (2002); his exposition of “quality” in the NHS is comparable to Bill Readings’ discussion of “excellence” in universities (1997). When these buzzwords are attached to metrics, they force the operationalizing of something that has not yet been theorized, placing the responsibility of interpretation upon the workforce while retaining for management the power to approve the interpretation. Loughlin sums up the new approach: “We do not solve problems by throwing money at them. We solve them by throwing terminology at them. Or rather, we throw terminology at the workforce, then wait and see what they do” (2002, 240).

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<sup>3</sup> I am building here off of James Fernandez’s account of metaphor as a predication upon an inchoate pronoun (1986). For a riveting treatment of the vehicle metaphor in postcolonial debates over modernization and modes of participation, see Kidlat Tahimik’s 1977 film, “The Perfumed Nightmare.”

Still, insofar as institutional resources are redirected toward special initiatives aimed at producing innovation rather than the reproduction of existing structures, actors are obliged to perform within the new discourse. If not absolutely the only game in town, it is often the dominant one. Thus, just as under state socialism, resistant individuals play the game in public to earn material resources and safety for the indulgence of their private priorities. On the other hand, just as under state socialism, the necessity of playing competently fosters a serious engagement with the game, and this has both individual and collective consequences.<sup>4</sup> By virtue of their inevitable participation, both strong actors working opportunistically and weak actors needing to play the game on any terms strengthen the power of the game itself. As with a language or with a technology, each new user increases the value of the discourse as a medium of access to a social network (Weber 2004, 154). Over time, then, where active participation is a condition of incorporation and the most reliable avenue toward reward, thin hegemony may thicken over time. Even if individuals do not become true believers, they may become convinced of the game's inevitability, the absence of alternatives (Hopf 2002). They will at any rate have considerable sunk costs in the game.

The naturalization of the slogan-concept and its attendant frameworks is evident already as regards intangible cultural heritage. Over the last few years I have observed anecdotally that in much of the world ICH is coming to replace the old term folklore when any unincorporated cultural practice of a certain age is under discussion. This holds true both in academic disciplines that do not normally address such practices and in local public discussion. The new users often know nothing of the term's history as a bureaucratic construct attached to a specific policy agenda. As with the management buzzwords of which professionals complain, the slogan-concept ICH acquires its influence by its very omnipresence and emptiness: the fact that communities are obliged to appropriate it and then to project content into it (cf. Foster and Gilman 2015). Investing their intellectual labor in the thickening of the discourse, they acquire an interest in its success.

## Sustainability and Creative Destruction

A few years ago I thought that we had an appealing alternative to ICH gathering momentum: sustainability (cf. chapter 14). Now I am just trying to catch my breath. The ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon had been arguing since 2008 for "cultural sustainability" as a framework for the ethnographic disciplines. Five years later, just as a master's degree in cultural sustainability had accordingly been created by folklorists at Goucher College, Titon discovered that the term had become passé (Titon 2015). Fewer people seem to be talking about it passionately and when it shows up in corporate annual reports it is usually as a form of greenwashing, a fig leaf over business as

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<sup>4</sup> See Milosz ([1953] 1981, chapter 5) for his conception of Ketman or participatory disguise in the state socialist setting.

usual.<sup>5</sup> The concept of sustainability, Titon observed, assumes that some phenomenon still exists to be sustained, and in that regard was always something of a mystification. We might further account for the deflation of this slogan-concept by recognizing that, unlike such terms as heritage, it aimed at integration rather than containment. As an ideal, sustainability does not separate but hybridizes tradition and modernity: it seeks to use tradition as a new foundation for modernity. And in this respect, it encounters the problems endemic to modernization campaigns: will and resources.

What did happen to sustainability? In the current breakdown of Western democracies between mobile capital and populist anger it has become politically impossible. Nor is it economically appealing to those who would have to finance it. In the short term, it's too expensive. In the long term, it's too cheap. By contrast, there is much money to be made in managing the problems we cannot be bothered to fix. "Creative destruction" generates more profit, in both hard cash and reputation. Thus, for example, in the last few years, the discourse of climate change among self-proclaimed stakeholders in the English-speaking world has made a sharp turn from prevention to adaptation.<sup>6</sup>

Although they articulate an alternative to sustainability, advocating quick, decisive, unitary action in lieu of context-sensitive trial and error, I cannot quite call creative destruction and its recent euphemism disruption slogan-concepts. They are hardly banners capable of assembling masses behind them. On the contrary, they are more often deployed to disperse inconvenient crowds—particularly of workers. Most fully expounded by the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter (1942), creative destruction describes the process by which capitalism both generates and destroys wealth through innovations that render older forms of production obsolete, transforming both specific industries and larger economic structures from within. Free-market economists argue that creative destruction is a major source of economic growth (e.g., Caballero n.d.), while other social actors have been more concerned with the material and human residues of the process. Analysts likewise differ over whether creative destruction generates cyclical economic lows and crises on its own, or whether these are caused by regulation and resistance to the process. In the 1990s, with the large-scale embrace of downsizing or "restructuring" in complex organizations, creative destruction became

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<sup>5</sup> Since the time of drafting this paragraph we have, however, seen the papal encyclical *Laudato Si'*, followed by the Paris climate change agreement. As regards the uptake of these inspiring proposals, we can but hope that Pope Francis is a much of a miracle-worker as his namesake saint.

<sup>6</sup> The summer of 2013 is when I first noticed this transition, and I cannot say that I made a rigorous media content analysis. (Perhaps it is only that every movie I managed to see that summer happened to be about the end of the world: Juan Antonio Bayona and Marc Forster's "World War Z," Neill Blomkamp's "Elysium," Edgar Wright's "The World's End," and Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg's truly post-civilizational "This Is the End.") Still, I was struck by a pretty much complete shift to adaptation discourse at an Ohio State colloquium the following spring ("Understanding Climate Change Risks and Identifying Opportunities for Mitigation & Adaptation in Ohio," Byrd Polar Research Center, May 15, 2014). Michael J. Watts confirms the shift to adaptation talk in the present decade as the marker of a new catastrophism in climate discourse (2015, 19–20).

a buzzword of the kind circulated by the Harvard Business Review (e.g., Nolan and Croson 1995). But it does not seem to be going away any time soon. More than a buzzword of the moment, creative destruction invokes an ethos attached, however tenuously, to the modern idea of progress. In so doing it seeks to legitimate the actions of managers among their fellows and to the higher ranks of the general public: the business, professional, and political classes. The idiom has, indeed, acquired legitimacy in a period of rapid technological advance and the global movement of capital, when the dominant political order aims to free and encourage business rather than acting as a check upon it in the interest of other priorities.

When new organizational forms or technologies replace old ones at neoliberal speed, in the absence of planning, regulation, institutional inertias, or effective large-scale social control or resistance that might place a drag upon the wheels of reform, the shocks are felt widely and powerfully. Whatever one's judgment of the ultimate benefits of the process for society as a whole, the short-term local effects on poorly positioned actors (in other words, most people) may include income loss and long-term immiseration, debt, deskilling, community destruction, displacement, family conflict, heightened gender and ethnic violence, social stigmatization, ill health, reduced political participation, a loss of meaning and self-esteem. In the best case, improved opportunities for income and consumption are gained at the price of familiar forms of security. The direct effects of de- and re-industrialization, globalization, and financialization are exacerbated by the material consequences of unchecked growth, including environmental contamination and the accumulation of trash, biodiversity loss, geological instability, and the extreme weather effects of climate change. These costs are paid initially by the bottom of society but trickle upward, with the gradual transformation of established middle classes in long-developed countries into the "99 percent." Thinkers on the left summarize the well-documented human phenomena as "precarity" and see them as significant social effects of neoliberalism. Thinkers further to the right, while seeing different cause-effect relations in these correlations and often finding positive opportunities within them, equally acknowledge the phenomena.

#### Le dernier cri: Resilience

How then to address the phenomena if we are unwilling or unable to alter the paradigm? The new watchword is resilience, "one of the key political categories of our time" (Neocleous 2013). If creative destruction is the dominant project, resilience is the slogan-concept meant to address and contain its residual—a considerable residue, to be sure. Thus in the long line of slogan-concepts applied to the vulnerable places and persons of the world, resilience is the dernier cri. Resilience is suddenly everywhere being urged upon us, and the timing of its rise is not coincidental. Even intangible culture is becoming a luxury.

Extended into multiple everyday and specialized semantic domains from its base meaning of elasticity, resilience is an important term in engineering and in ecological theory, where it refers to "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure." (Walker and Salt 2006, xiii). Resilience theory posits

that disturbance is inevitable, that all systems are interconnected, that some systems are more resilient than others, and that gradual phase shift is likely to transform even the most resilient systems into new configurations. Fostering resilience has become a central concern of infrastructural and organizational design as well as of the new-style environmentalism, which, given the massive pushback against state regulation, is focusing on communal self-organization and response (drawing on entrepreneurial innovations as resources).

Indeed, the resilience discourse is closely bound up with the language of neoliberal community as the locus of responsibility, by default if not by desire. The ears of folklorists prick up any time that community is invoked, and community is itself a term shared by left and right, but in this case we need to remember Valdimar Hafstein's clarification that the community in such uses is a policy construct rather than an empirical network of interacting persons. Building on Nikolas Rose's account of "third way" or late liberal governmentality (1999, 167–196), Hafstein demonstrates that UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage program is only one of the countless initiatives that delegate the business of governance to communities "as mediating entities to which individuals owe allegiance and through which they reform and manage themselves" (2014, 39).<sup>7</sup>

As we have seen, slogan-concepts are a key vehicle for retaining power through such delegation. Thus communities have lately learned of their obligation to become resilient, and NGO and academic entrepreneurs are seeking to assist them. The network Resilience.org, a project of an environmentalist organization called the Post-Carbon Institute, "supports the building of community responses to the many inter-related crises of our time with information, resources and connections."<sup>8</sup> Large-scale research projects such as the Program in Successful Societies of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research focus on "social resilience" as "the capacity of groups of people bound together in an organization, class, racial group, community, or nation to sustain and advance their well-being in the face of challenges to it" (Hall and Lamont 2013, 2).

Still, the greatest presence of the idiom of resilience in most of our lives is as applied to individuals: this usage dates back to the seventeenth century in English, but is now omnipresent in popular psychology. Resilience is required for facing every kind of deprivation or crisis: impoverished upbringing, sexual abuse, romantic breakup, job loss, chronic disease, natural disaster. The premise of myriad instruments of self-help may be summed up by the topic entry on the website of the magazine *Psychology Today*:

Resilience is that ineffable<sup>9</sup> quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the

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<sup>7</sup> See also Klein on folklore and heritage as reform ideologies (2014).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.resilience.org/> Retrieved 28 August 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Intangible culture, ineffable resilience...is there a pattern here?

ashes. Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make someone resilient, among them a positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback. Even after a misfortune, blessed with such an outlook, resilient people are able to change course and soldier on.<sup>10</sup>

Social policy and corporate governance seek to make us resilient. Companies provide mindfulness workshops to help their lowest-paid employees cope with their life stresses. Working-class schoolchildren are trained in “grit” and resilience to enable them to succeed. Young people with student loans and families whose mortgages went under water after the housing bubble burst in 2007 are offered “financial literacy” courses or coaching to make them resilient in the face of debt and loss (Clarke 2015, Martinez and Brenn under review). Insurance companies give questionnaires gauging the resilience of individuals as part of a health risk assessment.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, we are on our own—and the creek is gonna rise. All of a sudden they are telling it like it is, and this is a change worth remarking. The public idiom of resilience evinces a loss of societal confidence in the modern progress narrative. Its rise indexes the decline of institutional willingness to assume responsibility for the collective wellbeing. We might call it abdication.

If I were not a genteel tenured academic I would put that last paragraph in all caps.

## The Creative Destruction of New Orleans

The creek rose with a vengeance in the last days of August, 2005. The city of New Orleans was not well prepared to resist it. America’s richest city at the time of the plantation economy, New Orleans fell into a long decline after the American Civil War. In accordance with the general principle that identity waxes as the lifeworld wanes, its only steadily rising industry since then has been tourism (against a more volatile reliance on the energy industries in the hinterland). In this context, New Orleans became famous for music and food and parties and crime, for miscegenation and sin, for a deep history in America and yet not belonging to America. It has long been a site on which fantasies are projected while realities are left to fend for themselves.

After Hurricane Katrina took its departure, the neglected realities reasserted themselves in a massive return of the repressed. The levees meant to hold back the waters of the Mississippi Delta had not been properly maintained for decades, and they broke or were overtopped; the low-lying poor areas of the city were flooded. We know the story: how the disaster struck after the hurricane had already passed over; how people were

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/resilience>. Retrieved 23 November 2015.

<sup>11</sup> My own “Resilience and Capacity for Change” have been flagged as insufficient insofar as on the questionnaire I have sometimes expressed less than full confidence in the direction and leadership of my organization.

herded into the Superdome or trapped on a hot bridge and prevented from leaving until agitation met the response of police shootings; how volunteers were prevented from seeking out trapped inhabitants because of rumors that city dwellers were shooting their would-be rescuers. We also know the aftermath: an unknown number of deaths, generally reckoned at over 1400; overwhelming damage to property and infrastructure, especially in poor neighborhoods; the ineffectual and occasionally criminal response from all levels of government; the scattering of the population.

What better natural laboratory for the exponents of creative destruction? The approach could here be applied to urban form, housing stock, and public institutions, not least the school system: this was given over to proponents of school reform in search of a *tabula rasa* for their experiments. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was forthright: “Let me be really honest. I think the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina.” In his defense, bloggers at the Manhattan Institute added,

The outrage of this story isn’t what Arne Duncan said. The outrage is that it took the natural disaster of Katrina to deal with the man-made disaster of New Orleans’ schools. It shouldn’t take a hurricane to bring real change to a failing urban education system. But it did. (O’Leary and Eggers 2010)

And indeed, without endorsing their larger argument one can agree that in practice the chronic problems of poor people are ignored, whereas a mediagenic violent event, preferably natural and limited in scope, will typically excite both humanitarian concern (of a similarly limited scope) and entrepreneurial ambitions.

Many working-class New Orleanians evinced skepticism as to the payoffs of the creative destruction approach, pushing back against a plan to shrink the city footprint and questioning the wisdom, as they lived out the consequences, of other changes on which they were not consulted: the demolition of structurally sound public housing, which reduced the overall availability of low-income housing; the transfer of almost complete responsibility for public education to the charter-based Recovery School District, with the firing of 7500 employees; the closing of the historic Charity Hospital in favor of a new medical complex, which took ten years to open as residents scrambled to find even emergency medical care.<sup>12</sup>

As New Orleans became a “giant workshop” largely managed by business leaders, property developers, and outside experts (“Ten Years After Katrina” 2015),<sup>13</sup> federal recovery assistance funds were misallocated or simply not distributed; rents rose and the incomes of long-term residents fell; historic black neighborhoods such as Tremé were gentrified and whitened. Chronic problems of the city and region—public corruption,

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<sup>12</sup> For comprehensive retrospectives, see “Ten Years After Katrina” 2015; “10 Years Later: A Hurricane Katrina Retrospective” 2015; on rebuilding debates, Richardson 2010 and Russell 2015.

<sup>13</sup> It is important to acknowledge also the innumerable volunteer reconstruction efforts coming from charitable organizations, religious groups, businesses, and concerned celebrities. While doing good across

violent crime, and political dysfunction—found new scope in the crisis. Episodes of plain old destructive destruction continued. The BP oil spill of April 2010 renewed and extended the damage to a fragile coastline with its attendant fishing, refining, and tourism industries. The spill was likewise one more blow to an equally fragile public trust.

The smaller, wealthier, whiter New Orleans that has emerged is “better than ever,” according to the Tourism and Visitor’s Bureau, but even activists of quite other stripes tend to talk optimistically—as of course they must—about the rebirth of communities and culture. Whatever the long-term outcomes of reconstruction, however, no one denies that in the ten years since the levees broke, infrastructures, institutions, and above all individuals have been under heavy stress. The stresses continue, if differentially: African Americans evaluate the recovery much more negatively than do members of other races, and in 2015 one third of African Americans surveyed said they were contemplating moving out of the city, along with nearly half of young adults (Hamel, Firth, and Brodie 2015, 23). Government, business, and policy entrepreneurs have acknowledged a need for remediation. Unsurprisingly, the solution proffered has been the flip side of creative destruction: resilience.

## Resilient City: The Experts

The psychological resilience of New Orleanians after the trauma of Katrina—or, as some prefer to phrase it, during the ongoing trauma of reconstruction—has been the object of much discussion. A large-scale research effort is the RISK Project (Resilience in Survivors of Katrina), a consortium of sociologists and psychologists from several Northeastern universities.<sup>14</sup> This project had the advantage of a baseline: it grew out of a longitudinal study of low-income families in New Orleans initiated two years before the hurricane. Various subprojects examined changes, both positive and negative, in the economic status, educational attainment, social networks, and physical and mental health of survivors in the years since the hurricane. Finding ample evidence of long-term effects ranging from chronic migraines to relationship abuse, the researchers also found a contrary current, with some individuals and families coming out stronger from the experience. Both the situations of individuals prior to the hurricane and the contingencies of their experience afterwards were demonstrated to have affected these outcomes. The primary finding in the study of “post-traumatic growth”—the idea that disaster can actually foster future resilience—is summed up in some of the project’s

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social boundaries is fraught with pitfalls, in the absence of functioning institutions a thousand points of light are certainly preferable to darkness. Borland and Adams argue that such “travel for service” can be effective to the extent that volunteers allow themselves to be guided by local priorities and local knowledge in a collaborative process (2013); see below for folkloristic work with Katrina survivors that confirms such an approach.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.riskproject.org/>



public communications as “God, grandma, kids”<sup>15</sup> or, in more detail, that people are better off when they have stable families and social networks and go to church.

One might observe in passing that comparable studies with similar findings seem never to have been conducted of, say, investment bankers after the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008. More importantly, taking these findings at their word, a vulgar Marxist might translate them from superstructure back to base. People are better off when they have jobs and homes and safe neighborhoods to live in. And indeed, reading deeper into the studies of the project, we find that six material factors—“survivors’ bereavement, property loss, pet loss, food and medicine shortage, and evacuation status”<sup>16</sup>—were the central predictors of stress outcomes for individuals. Similarly, although the study’s policy recommendations dealt overwhelmingly with increasing the availability of mental health services for both immediate and long-term disaster relief, it also advised that government emergency services should address the basics competently (e.g., “disaster preparedness should also include means to fulfill survivors’ basic needs, including adequate shelter, food, and clothing”) and further suggested that structural conditions might profitably be addressed:

Lastly, policies that promote the long-term financial stability of low-income survivors, including diverse training and educational opportunities, increased earnings, affordable childcare, and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, could help promote the long-term psychological adjustment of low-income [survivors]. (ibid.)

To be fair, there has been some learning since the first wave of reconstruction in New Orleans, and some acknowledgment of the criticisms. More broadly, the policy world is coming to acknowledge the bridge between psychological and infrastructural resilience: a moderately stable material platform for human life. In May 2013, at the celebration of its 100th anniversary, the Rockefeller Foundation announced a major “recalibration” of its focus, and with it, a new large-scale initiative.<sup>17</sup> Called 100 Resilient Cities, the project was “dedicated to helping cities around the world become more resilient to the physical, social and economic challenges that are a growing part of the 21st century.”<sup>18</sup> As with the interconnections identified in the RISK Project, the challenges were defined broadly to encompass both short-term “shocks” such as earthquakes and chronic “stresses” such as gang violence and long-term unemployment. Among four hundred applicants, New Orleans was chosen to join the first round of thirty-three participants from five continents.

For participating cities, Rockefeller supports the hiring of a Chief Resilience Officer whose job is to “work across silos” in order to create and implement a resilience strategy,

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<sup>15</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=22&v=ycI9zpB1\\_V0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=22&v=ycI9zpB1_V0)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.riskproject.org/implications-3/>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.100resilientcities.org/blog/entry/33-resilient-cities-announced-/-\\_/](http://www.100resilientcities.org/blog/entry/33-resilient-cities-announced-/-_/)

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.100resilientcities.org/about-us-/-\\_/](http://www.100resilientcities.org/about-us-/-_/)

while receiving expert support and services mediated by Rockefeller and networking globally with his or her fellows to share learning and ideas. In New Orleans, the CRO's responsibilities are described as follows:

Serve as a senior advisor to the mayor

Promote resilience thinking and act as a global thought leader Coordinate resilience efforts across government and multi-sector stakeholders

Liaise with other CROs, 100RC staff, and service providers via the network and platform.<sup>19</sup>

And indeed, CROs from New Orleans, Medellín, Dakar, Ramallah, and so on have been meeting at global summits: sharing challenges and problems along with the work-in-progress of addressing them. The CROs express appreciation of the unexpected synergies across global divides and the holistic approach to framing problems.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the initiative opens up opportunities for rebranding problems as potentially marketable assets—yet another example of transformative valorization. The New Orleans page on the project website is captioned, “From Hurricane Katrina to frequent ‘boil water’ advisories, New Orleans has unique experience with major urban emergencies.”<sup>21</sup>

The Rockefeller's choice of cities as the site of intervention has to do with the locus of primary responsibility for the delivery of material services to the population, as well as the scale at which disaster and stress are experienced. Climate change, structural unemployment, and natural disaster operate differentially within the average nation-state. Furthermore, policy changes in everything from recycling regulations to the minimum wage are more easily implemented by city governments, expected to respond to realities on the ground, than by polarized national governments charged with defending values and asserting principles. Working across silos is also presumably easier at the smaller scale. To be sure, we should recall that working across silos is a classic “disruptive” tactic, and here it is intended to combat dysfunction and corruption in city government. As with such strategies in general, it offers tradeoffs between promised efficacy and democratic accountability.

Popular skepticism about a strategy seemingly based in global schmoozing and new jobs for consultants could be observed in social media and also in video of PowerPoint-heavy meetings with community leaders.<sup>22</sup> There was at any rate a fair amount of public consultation during the long Phase I, a “Perceptions Assessment Exercise.” And despite

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.nola.gov/resilience/chief-resilience-officer/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3TxZ20gj7U>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.100resilientcities.org/cities/entry/new-orleans-resilience-challenge/-\\_-/](http://www.100resilientcities.org/cities/entry/new-orleans-resilience-challenge/-_-/) Retrieved 15 December, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, the comments at [http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/11/new\\_orleans\\_hires\\_first\\_chief.html](http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/11/new_orleans_hires_first_chief.html) and the video at <http://www.nola.gov/resilience/resilient-nola-news/april-2015/resilient-nola-presents-at-quarterly-neighborhood/>

all the managerial jargon, the strategic plan put forward in August 2015 contains many concrete and seemingly sensible proposals. It also evinces a welcome recognition of the recovery's shortcomings to date: one of the three pillars of the plan declares that New Orleans will be an "equitable city" ("Resilient New Orleans" 2015, 6). To be sure, the plan is a laundry list of the favorite policies of the age, it embraces the vision of New Orleans as "urban laboratory" for the foreseeable future, it is unclear where the money will come from, and the actual work remains to be done. Katrina survivors are probably not holding their breath. Still, to the extent that the plan is realized it could improve the lives of many New Orleanians. We live in an age of small mercies.

## Celebrating Resilience: The Culture Workers

It is easy for me to sneer at the descent of CROs on troubled cities like so many *dei ex machina*. The problems are, after all, intractable. What would I have done?

Indeed, folklorists have done quite a bit around the recovery of New Orleans by drawing on their disciplinary skillset and opportunities: rigorous listening, working through grassroots networks, presenting and contextualizing narratives, facilitating public opportunities for musicians and community activists. One project took an explicitly applied focus and, at least in the context of looking for funding, drew on the idiom of resilience. Carl Lindahl and Pat Jasper, based in Houston where thousands of displaced Gulf Coast people took refuge, created a project called Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston that trained survivors to record and document one another's stories of the hurricane. No professional ethnographer was present during the more than four hundred interviews, and publication of the narratives has not been whole-sale or immediate, as with most of the digital story archives that have burgeoned in the new millenium, but gradual, with plenty of contextualization. Mostly young adults, the survivor-researchers of SKRH were paid a small wage for their work and acquired training and a resume credential. Equally important, the project leaders assert, is that the sharing of stories among those who had shared the experience was therapeutic in itself: an opportunity of exercising autonomous judgment and exchanging respect among people who, to the extent that they received any recovery assistance, were put through arduous bureaucratic procedures that implied distrust and were obliged to live with decisions that had been made for them. Furthermore, the very process of seeking out Gulf Coast evacuees and involving them as interviewers or interviewees worked to build social networks among the survivors scattered over metropolitan Houston. In contrast to most of the policymakers, however, the folklorists saw New Orleanians as already resilient, as demonstrated by their narratives of escape and survival.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For an explanation of the origins and program of SKRH and how it responded to the public discrediting of New Orleanian voices after the hurricane, see Lindahl 2012. The project methodology has been extended to disaster recovery work in Haiti, Italy, and elsewhere: see [http://www.survivortosurvivorstories.com/-!about\\_us/csgz](http://www.survivortosurvivorstories.com/-!about_us/csgz).

Folklorists' publications since the hurricanes have insisted and elaborated on this point. One important collection highlights the relative efficacy of grassroots response as compared to institutional dysfunction and media sensationalism in the rescue operations (Ancelet, Gaudet, and Lindahl eds. 2013). The publisher's blurb begins:

Second Line Rescue: Improvised Responses to Katrina and Rita chronicles the brave and creative acts through which Gulf Coast people rescued their neighbors during the chaotic aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Ordinary citizens joined in with whatever resources they had. Unlike many of the official responders, vernacular rescuers found ways around paralysis produced by a breakdown in communications and infrastructure. They were able to dispel unfounded fears produced by erroneous or questionable reporting. The essays, personal narratives, media reports, and field studies presented here all have to do with effective and often ingenious answers that emerged from the people themselves. Their solutions are remarkably different from the hamstrung government response, and their perspectives are a tonic to sensationalized media coverage.

The idiom of resilience appears in this collection as a historical pattern that is now facing its greatest challenge. In the preface, novelist Ernest J. Gaines offers a litany of reconstruction activities, opening each paragraph with "Yes, New Orleans will bounce back," then begins to vary his refrain as the impact of reconstruction becomes clearer: "Yes, for some New Orleans will come back." He concludes, "Katrina and the politicians have made you a different New Orleans for ever" (*ibid.*, xiii). Folklorist Barry J. Ancelet provides the scholarly counterpart to Gaines' poetic reflection, documenting the resilience of both New Orleanian and rural Cajun and Creole communities across centuries of displacement, natural disaster, oppression and prejudice, poverty, corrupt government, and so on—in fact, virtually all of the short-term shocks and long-term stresses that interest the Rockefeller Foundation. The core of his contribution is a stirring account of how rural traditions of mutual assistance were activated just after the hurricane, as Cajun and Creole volunteers took the initiative in rescuing trapped inhabitants from the city and providing relief services to evacuees. Long experienced with boating, cooking for large gatherings, machine repair, construction, first aid, and other necessary skills, they were obstructed less by flooding and physical obstacles than by official blockades and bureaucratic processes. Ancelet's demonstration that remarkable short-term achievements can emerge from deeply cultivated skills of improvisation is framed, however, against his fears for the future, caused not by the recurrence of natural disaster but by the intensifying pressures of inequality, institutional dysfunction, and top-down governance on the region. This time, "loss of context" for both urban and rural cultural practices may have pushed that creole system across a threshold, as the resilience theorists say (*ibid.*, 9). Without the dry land of material security for its practitioners, the culture will fail to renew itself and some new system will assemble itself out of the flotsam and jetsam of the old.

While well aware of the long view, folklorists and culture workers are obliged to live in the present. The immediate need is to rescue those trapped on rooftops—to free people to act—and the skillset brought by culture workers has to do with representations: creating them, critiquing them, revising and repurposing them. Thus inevitably much of the work done since the hurricanes has been rhetorical rescue: affirmation of the agency, rationality, moral sense, and capacity for self-organization of populations stigmatized by dominant representations and made objects of intervention by dominant institutions. This is no new task for folklorists (Goldstein and Shuman eds. 2012), and although our efforts have never attained the collective force to push the ideology of modernity across the threshold that would reconfigure it, we can still hardly avoid responding to egregious dehumanization such as was seen in the rumors of rape in the Superdome and New Orleanians shooting at their would-be rescuers.

## Culture to the Rescue?

Still, the short-term demand for rhetorical rescue remains a trap for the field, an offer we can't refuse. And old slogans die hard. The theme for the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society, held in New Orleans in October 2012, was "The Continuity and Creativity of Cultures." This has been the dominant rhetoric of folklorists and New Orleans intellectuals, community leaders, and cultural activists. They have on the whole not drawn on the alien jargon of resilience but on a parallel idiom, more re-sonant and even religious, of re-turn, recovery, re-building, renewal and indeed re-birth. The language becomes more obsessively iterative as the material hope of restoration becomes less realistic. As per the shift in that last term of my alliteration, the incompatibility of means and ends exists even at the level of etymology. We are stymied by the material. And therefore the rhetoric has once more turned to emphasize the intangible.

The quickest post-hurricane restoration was that of culture: culture as what makes New Orleans a great city, culture as the motor of the economy, culture as the lure for tourists, artists, and the creative classes, culture as the euphemism for racial difference, culture as the foundation of social resilience. There is a history here, and in many ways a useful one. Long before UNESCO dreamed of the ICH convention, New Orleans had a heritage industry self-consciously dedicated to the perpetuation of a vulnerable performance culture. The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival was created in 1970 as an occasion, separate from traditional performance contexts, for tourists to see local performers and eat local food in a concentrated comfortable setting. The income generated thereby is used to support music education and job opportunities for musicians. This hasn't solved bigger problems but it has helped to keep the show going at the grassroots level, and that is not negligible.

The most ambitious product of the newly strengthened alliance between the culture and tourist industries, local intellectuals, traditional performers, and sympathetic

outside artists was perhaps the HBO television series “Treme,” broadcast from 2010 through 2013. It was created by David Simon and Eric Overmyer, fresh from the critical acclaim of their previous series “The Wire.” Set in the historic Créole and African American neighborhood of Tremé during the immediate aftermath of Katrina, the new series proposed to trace the everyday lives of a representative range of New Orleanians as they sought to rebuild. The series was filmed in real locations and relied on many local actors and neighborhood extras; they enlisted local experts to ensure the accuracy of all details; they brought in celebrity chefs and musicians to do innumerable cameo appearances endorsing the importance of the project; production values were high and the acting was impeccable.

The series can be classed, in Franco Moretti’s term, as a modern epic (1996). It is encyclopedic in its ambitions to encompass the social and geographic maps of the city, its array of social types and stances, its practices and performances, its agents of order and disorder, its networks to the world. Along with lovingly detailed presentation of the culture, the series dramatizes all the forces militating against it: real estate speculation, government neglect, police corruption, endemic violence, the temptation of the big time in New York and beyond. The show both represents and participates in the ongoing construction of New Orleans as a cultural reserve. The unique local vernacular is simultaneously protected and appropriated by the culture industries and elite artists who interpret it to the rest of America, validating its claims to dignity. Again, it seems hardly avoidable under present circumstances.

The final episode of Season One closes with the most emblematic of many ethnographic set pieces in the series: the jazz funeral.<sup>24</sup> It depicts the “second line” of such funerals, the mourners who first follow the funeral procession solemnly to the cemetery, then follow the band out again and say farewell to the spirit in a more joyful release. The funeral is of Daymo, a young man who disappeared on the bridge during the evacuation. Months later, he has been discovered to have died in police custody, under mysterious circumstances, after being arrested in a case of mistaken identity. Some of the followers are dancers belonging to the Black Indians, the secret societies that dress up in regalia for Mardi Gras; members of the band comfort one another with the thought that at least they are making some money that day.

The scene concentrates on the victim’s sister LaDonna, a tavern owner whose efforts to find her brother have been one of the main plot threats in the first season. As the procession moves through the streets of her neighborhood, we watch her crumpled face and bent body straighten as she begins to move to the rhythm of the band and is finally caught by the spirit—a characteristic African diaspora religious experience, compellingly rendered. The lawyer who has helped LaDonna through the legal system, a white woman who lives in the neighborhood, looks on with affection but does not

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<sup>24</sup> The clip may be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqwt46qtPU>. As in Ancelet, Gaudet and Lindahl’s book and in many other post-Katrina representations, the “second line” has served as a metaphor for New Orleanians’ capacity to improvise even at the margins of death.

herself receive the spirit, and yet she too is in mourning: in the previous episode, her husband, a professor who has spent his time since the hurricane broadcasting and blogging denunciations of American neglect, has committed suicide in a rage of impotence. Academics are not much good in a crisis.

The show was praised in New Orleans media outlets for its authenticity in both everyday detail and what is locally valued. “Treme” also gave material support to local musicians, providing them with airtime, venues, and pay for performance. African American political scientist Adolph Reed Jr. was suspicious, however, of the larger compromise the show had made by embracing “touristic mystifications.” He complained that the neighborhood, celebrated as the locus of authentic community, was not situated as the product of residential segregation and poverty reproduced across the generations; nor did the show recognize its own complicity in the gentrification it purported to denounce (2011). Acknowledging his points, it is hard not to see what happens in this finale as beautiful and moving. It is hard not to take comfort in the things of the spirit. Certainly David Simon made the show out of such a longing for comfort—he called the show “a story of what’s happened to the American spirit and what the American spirit is capable of, even under great duress.”<sup>25</sup>

But there we are back with the spirit, with intangibles. “Treme” captures the culture in all its material complexity, its rituals of the body—but on video. Moreover, the show was not a popular success; it was renewed through three seasons only because of HBO’s declared commitment to quality and Simon’s prestige as a content creator. By many reviewers and the general public the show was deemed too slow and plotless and esoteric—too ethnographic, in short. This spirit did not move across the waters; it sleeps now on DVD.

The character Daymo, who dies in police custody, was a plot device, but not all deaths are intangible. As I drafted a first version of this chapter, I was watching the news of Freddie Gray, which followed hard on the news of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and all too many others. At this point it was impossible not to think of the great sociolinguist William Labov. Long engaged, like so many ethnographers, in demonstrating the coherence and complexity of vernacular expression, he has not made the mistake of drawing a straight line between cultural flourishing and human flourishing. On the contrary, in a 2010 article entitled “Unendangered Dialect, Endangered People: The Case of African American Vernacular English” Labov observes that in this case the historic dialect is flourishing and continuing to evolve. The correlates of this linguistic resilience are “residential segregation and poverty.” Labov traces the cycle by which social exclusion prevents young African Americans from acquiring literacy in the standard language, which in turn perpetuates their exclusion as adults. Documenting eloquent and complexly argued vernacular narratives of despair from Philadelphia schoolchildren, Labov concludes that the loss of this eloquence would prove the lesser evil.

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<sup>25</sup> Treme Season 3: An Invitation to the Set-Extended. <https://www.youtube.com/>

The point is moot, for social inclusion will not happen tomorrow. In the meantime, vernacular resources are what people have. New Orleans intellectual Michael G. White, writing for Smithsonian Folkways audience, asserted “The jazz funeral philosophy of mourning loss and optimistically transcending to a new existence was a concept that sustained many of us on the long, arduous road to recovery” (2015). If one who lost an irreplaceable archive of music and local history along with his house can say this, it is not for an outsider to express doubt.

But I have my own job to do, and I feel that folklorists too are standing at a threshold, with both our niche and the modern system as a whole at the point of collapse. Resilient in adapting to new slogan-concepts, exploiting their affordances and improvising at their margins, folklorists have found a way of persisting under imperfect conditions; we have also helped some vernacular arts and some individuals to persist, even flourish. We were in the right place, but it was the wrong time: always the eleventh hour. At best we’ve participated in rescue; more often we have been followers at the funeral, casting a sympathetic eye on the second line. Before we relocate completely from the heritage industry to the resilience industry, might we instead find a way of crossing that threshold to participate in the building of a tangible future? I have no idea yet what this reconfiguration might look like, and to be sure I am still concerned with a salvage operation: this time concerning no particular cultural forms, but their battered, necessary platforms: democracy and the climate. For not every New Orleanian feels ready to fly away, and without firmer grounding for our spiritual lives, resilience may become truly *le dernier cri*.

A few years after the hurricane, a poster was scattered around town. Attributed to the Louisiana Justice Institute, a nonprofit legal advocacy organization founded in 2007,<sup>26</sup> it reads

Stop calling me

RESILIENT

Because every time you say,  
“Oh, they’re resilient,”  
that means you can  
do something else to me.

I am not resilient.

## Acknowledgments

Versions of this paper were presented at the conference “Sustainable Pluralism: Linguistic and Cultural Resilience in Multiethnic Societies,” which I co-organized with Brian Joseph for the Merhosh Center for International Security Studies at Ohio State

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watch?v=YUfck\_CzCAc

<sup>26</sup> I found the poster on the website of artist Candy Chang <http://candychang.com/resilient/>; for more on the organization, see <http://www.louisianajusticeinstitute.org/>



in September 2014, and at the conference “Les Roseaux jaseurs: secrets, révélations et ambivalence de la culture populaire” at the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Neuchâtel in May 2015. My thanks to all the attendees and particularly Ellen Hertz and Jonathan Elmer for their insights.

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DOROTHY NOYES is Professor in the Departments of English and Comparative Studies, a faculty associate of the Mershon Center for International Security Studies, and past director of the Center for Folklore Studies, all at the Ohio State University. Her books include *Fire in the Plaça: Catalan Festival Politics After Franco* and the forthcoming *Sustaining Interdisciplinary Collaboration: A Guide for the Academy*, coauthored with Regina Bendix and Kilian Bizer. A Fellow of the American Folklore Society, she teaches courses in folklore and performance theory, American regional cultures, fairy tale, poetry and politics, the cultural history of trash, and cultural diplomacy.

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October 2016

Indiana University Press.

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