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Lore and Language

The journal of The Sheffield Survey of Language and Folklore

The University of Sheffield
Departments of English Language
Extramural Studies
& The Language Centre
EDITORIAL

*Lore and Language* began life as a modest newsletter circulated primarily among the contributors to the Survey of Language and Folklore (SLF – originally called the Sheffield Survey of Language and Folklore) initiated in the Department of English Language at the University of Sheffield in 1964. At that time, there was an extraordinary groundswell of public interest in English traditions, exemplified above all in the widespread and enthusiastic movement which inspired a remarkable revival in the performance of traditional music, song, dance, and drama, especially among the younger generations. The rediscovery of these traditions was accompanied by renewed interest in aspects of the heritage such as dialects and other varieties of language, as well as customs, beliefs, stories, arts, and crafts. When *Lore and Language* was launched in 1969, it had the advantage of being able to tap into this exciting re-exploration of English folklore, first regionally, and later nationally, and to report on the activities and research of those involved in the new movement, while at the same time linking this emerging information with previous scholarly work in the subject area. In its initial role as a newsletter it not only kept those involved with the Survey in touch with each other, but also acted as a focus for the promotion of the study of English tradition in general.

The first issue of the journal in July 1969 comprised a mere ten quarto pages and was priced at two shillings and sixpence. Financial support for the publication was provided by the Departments of English Language and Extramural Studies, and by the recently established Language Centre at the University of Sheffield. These three departments were closely involved in the subsequent development of the SLF and in supporting all ten issues of Volume 1 of the journal. The impetus for publication arose directly from the founder members of the Survey Team who met regularly each month to contribute information, share ideas, and assist in the development of the SLF. This dedicated band of volunteers was largely responsible for the day-to-day organisation and forward planning of the Survey. The prime mover in the proposal to publish *Lore and Language* and the major contributor to its design and preparation was Paul Smith who, together with his wife Georgina, had been researching English folklore for a number of years before becoming closely involved with the SLF. Paul and Georgina were already well-known performers of folk music, song and drama, and had created displays and exhibitions for public viewing on various aspects of English folklore. Among their many other talents and contributions, they injected essential energy, ideas, and practical experience into the Survey, and helped to drive the project.
forward and to galvanise the Survey Team’s efforts to draw attention to the traditional heritage of England.

The first issue of this pioneering venture, as was true of all ten issues of Volume 1 of the journal, carries no volume number. This in itself reflects the tentative nature and uncertain future of a publication in a subject area which then, as now, is not regarded as a discipline in its own right in the English educational system. Numbers 1-10 of this first volume bear the iconic signpost logo, designed by the then secretary of the Department of English Language, Ann Pottage. The members of the Survey Team aimed to draw attention to the six principal genres of the SLF, which delineated the scope of Folklore Studies, and which in due course defined and focused the teaching, research, archival, and publication programmes which developed from the SLF at the University of Sheffield. The genres, as depicted on the signpost, are: Speech and sayings (later to be broadened into Language/Communication); Childlore; Custom and belief; Narrative; Music, dance, and drama; Arts and crafts (later expanded to include material culture and traditional work techniques). These genres are outlined in the editorial of Vol. I, No. 1, where the first category, Speech and sayings, is glossed by the term Folksay, which was at that time an established usage by folklorists in the USA, and which attempted, inter alia, to draw attention to the importance of the oral tradition in the transmission of tradition. Its use in the editorial, and in the early days of the SLF, reflects the ultimate origins of the genre classification. Indeed, the Survey, and all the later developments in the subject area at the University of Sheffield, derive directly from the seminal work of Herbert Halpert, the founder and first head of the Department of Folklore at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. The SLF was inspired and motivated by his work and by his unique approach to the study of folklore. With only very slight modifications, the genre classification system devised and disseminated by Professor Halpert and his wife, academic co-researcher, and editor, Violetta, and which they adapted from earlier classifications by Louis C. Jones and others, became the basis for the largescale programme established and developed in Sheffield. Their approach to the study of folklore has been outstandingly successful in North America, and the Sheffield programme has simply followed their excellent example.

That first editorial also outlines the progress of the SLF over the five years since its inauguration:

"The first issue of Lore and Language marks an important new phase in the development of The Sheffield Survey of Language and Folklore. The Survey’s activities have continued to expand since its inception in 1964. This expansion is due in large measure to the enthusiastic cooperation of interested members of the general public in the task of
collecting and recording items of local traditional usage. This comprehensive collecting programme is organised on a continuing basis and for an indefinite period of time, with the aim of establishing a permanent Archive of traditional material for future reference and research. Although the Survey is concentrating attention initially on the neighbouring counties of Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, it welcomes material from all parts of the British Isles. Its field of enquiry includes local speech and sayings, customs, beliefs, legends, anecdotes, folksongs, folk-plays, folk-dances, and traditional arts and crafts. Many of these are subjects about which everyone has a personal and often expert knowledge and each of us has a unique contribution to make in piecing together a fuller record of our culture. The Survey is therefore very much a project in which any interested person may take an active and useful part. As items continue to be collected from many different areas, those particular usages which we recognise as distinctively local begin to emerge more clearly. It is then possible to trace the progress of individual words, customs and beliefs, and discover which are obsolescent, which are currently most popular, and which are only just beginning to establish themselves.”

It also comments on misconceptions about folklore – a theme so constant in subsequent published work on the subject that it constitutes a recurring refrain – and encourages the public at large to become involved in the collection and study of this aspect of our heritage:

“Perhaps the most fundamental misconception which exists about Folklore today is that which identifies the subject exclusively with the past, with quaint country customs which are felt to be of little consequence. While the fascinating and picturesque customs of the countryside are of course a vitally important aspect of Folklore, attention is now being focussed also on the contemporary traditional usages in urban centres. In recent years we have witnessed the remarkable progress of such important disciplines as Sociology and Linguistics which have concentrated attention on cultural analysis. Their methods and findings paved the way not only for the current countrywide revival of interest in Folklore but also for a reappraisal of its importance as an academic subject in English educational institutions. Folklore in England has at last emerged from the eclipse of the solar mythology theory which benighted it for so long, and once again the study of everything traditionally transmitted takes its rightful place in any representative cultural analysis. Demarcation disputes between the inextricably interwoven disciplines of Folklore, Linguistics, Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology are manifestly futile. Though approaching the subject from different viewpoints, each has its important particular contribution to make to the comprehensive study of a culture. In such a study it is impossible to ignore those traditionally learned activities which it is the province of Folklore to examine. Each one of us is a bearer of tradition. The language we learn
at our mother’s knee, modified though it may be in later life, still forms the basis of our linguistic usage. The rhymes and games of childhood, significant also to the sociologist and psychologist, are set in a tradition centuries old modified only, like language, by the changing conditions of a developing culture. All such activities are part of our everyday lives, and simple observation, accurately recorded, is all that is required in collecting them. Items are contributed to the Survey on specially designed collecting slips which are then copied, catalogued and added to the Archive ...

This brief outline of the Survey’s scope gives some indication of the size of the task involved. If this work of collection is to be carried out effectively over a wide area we need as much voluntary help as possible from members of the public who are prepared to offer their services. To this end, members of the Survey Team and a widespread network of correspondents and local representatives continue to respond to our appeal for the collection of material in their own neighbourhood. The publication of Lore and Language will provide an additional means of keeping all those who are interested in touch with the progress of the Survey. We hope also that it will encourage many more people to assist in its collecting programme and to submit material for publication in the journal itself thus maintaining the friendly co-operation between the University and the general public in this important venture.

It is not possible to turn back the clock and rediscover the full potential of traditions now long since past, but we can help to compile a fuller record of those which flourish around us today. Both language and folklore live in the minds and on the lips of men. They are subject to change but not liable to eradication. As enlightenment and scientific awareness grow, so many picturesque usages may decline, but these are replaced by others equally significant which reflect our changing environment. The time to record them is now, when we are aware of the new usages emerging and while the older ones are still there for the taking.”

The first issue already reflects recent fieldwork and research in three of the six genres, as exemplified in the articles on the usefulness of dialect glossaries in connection with the SLF; on childlore in Sheffield — written by Colin Stork, a wholehearted and enthusiastic supporter of the SLF from the outset; and on collecting mummers’ plays today by Paul Smith, including the text of a performance of “T’Owd Tup”, transcribed from his 1968 field recording in Sheffield. The issue continues with information on the Survey Team, on the correspondents and local representatives involved in the SLF (together with a plea for others to join them), on forthcoming courses, lectures, exhibitions, and displays in the subject area. It concludes with a brief review by Madeleine Blaess — a loyal and indefatigable supporter of the SLF and its resultant programmes — of R. M. Dorson’s The British Folklorists: A History (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), and a notice regarding other recent
publications. The reviewing of relevant publications was subsequently to become an increasingly important feature of the journal. As Volume 1 progressed over the following five years it gradually expanded in size, while retaining the same quarto format. From No. 2 of this volume onwards, contributors were drawn from outside the immediate area, and this second issue, extending to fourteen pages, already features articles by established folklorists such as Alex Helm (“The Dramatic Action in the Vicinity of Sheffield”) and Theo Brown (“The Black Dog in the North Country”). The editorial in No. 2 draws attention to the general revival of interest in English folklore and mentions the Anglo-American Folklore Conference at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire, in September, 1969. The first article on folklore from outside the British Isles to be published in the journal – “Christmas in Bohemia” – is featured, along with articles on proverbs, and on custom and belief. News of the SLF, an expanded list of representatives across the country, and a selection of reviews, round off the issue. No. 3 includes articles on Easter eggs, the Cheshire soulcaking play, carol singing in the Sheffield area, and Whitsuntide house-visiting, as well as the first of a groundbreaking three-part investigation by A. E. Green, a member of staff at the Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies at the University of Leeds, entitled “McCaffery: A Study in the Variation and Function of a Ballad”. Nos. 4, 5, and 6 are similar to No. 3 in format, length and content. A “Notes and Queries” section in No. 6 includes the first reference in the journal to one of the so-called “urban legends” which were later to bulk large in the developing research programme at Sheffield. No. 7 sees a substantial expansion to thirty six pages, including the editorial and other information printed on the covers. No. 8 also extends to more than thirty pages, and includes the historic account of “The Old Horse” house-visiting custom in Sheffield, by Ruaridh Greig – one of many examples of traditions recorded in the field in the early years of the SLF which have since been discontinued. No. 10, the final issue in Volume 1, comprises some forty seven pages, the expansion due largely to detailed indexes to the volume – a time-consuming but practical addition which continues to prove extremely useful in identifying individual items scattered throughout all ten issues.

Looking back, it is surprising that the journal survived its first five years – at a time when computers were rarely accessible in the higher education sector, and desktop publishing was still at the offset-litho stage of development. The budgets of University departments were minuscule, and even the purchase of equipment such as taperecorders – essential for fieldwork in newly established disciplines such as linguistics and other social sciences – made unprecedented demands on available funds. Few universities then had their own printing services, and costs of commercial printing rose steadily. Brave efforts by individuals to publish similar
journals at that time mostly proved shortlived,\textsuperscript{3} despite the burgeoning interest in all aspects of English tradition evident throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Fortunately, after a somewhat uncertain start, \textit{Lore and Language} proved to be quite resilient, and by 1974 it had become more widely known, both in the British Isles and overseas. The list of regular subscribers continued to grow, and the journal received a steady flow of papers for publication. By this time the volume of contributions to the SLF had increased to such an extent that the material had outgrown its cramped accommodation in the office of the Survey’s founder, and the collected data had been formally designated the Archives of Cultural Tradition in 1972. These developments encouraged the editor and the Survey Team to plan a second volume of the journal. This again extended to ten issues, from July, 1974 to January, 1979, and established the twice-yearly pattern of publication which continued until 1996, with the exception of two single volume double issues. Beginning with Vol. 2, No. 1, the journal adopted the A5 page size, and a new format, the first six issues comprising fifty four pages, extending to seventy four in Nos. 8 and 9. By 1976, material deposited in the archives had grown so substantially that in August of that year the project as a whole was formally designated a research unit in its own right, with the title Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language (CECTAL). Volume 2, Nos. 1-4 of \textit{Lore and Language} were published jointly by the SLF and its Archives of Cultural Tradition, and the new Centre assumed full responsibility for publication from Volume 2, No. 5 (July, 1976) to Vol. 4, No. 2 (July, 1985). The journal was largely typeset by the secretaries at CECTAL – notably by the archives and publications secretary, Donie Donnelly – while the printing and binding were undertaken by the University’s Print Unit.

Volume 2 maintains the established mix of articles on a wide range of linguistic and folkloristic topics from the British Isles and beyond, and incorporates an increasing number of reviews. A notable feature is a series of articles by Paul Smith entitled “Tradition – a Perspective”, which explores theoretical approaches to the subject. This volume also introduces four studies of language, literature and tradition from various African cultures – paving the way for many more articles on African topics, which proved to be major theme in later volumes of the journal. Most of these papers were written by postgraduate students in the Departments of English Language and English Literature at the University of Sheffield, a central aim of \textit{Lore and Language} being to publish the work of new and emerging scholars, often for the first time. As in most issues of the journal, papers based on fieldwork and original data figure prominently in Volume 2, a typical example being Gerald Pocius’s four-part description and analysis of the repertoire and
performance of Frank Williams, a joke-teller from Newfoundland. The continuing close association between CECTAL and the Department of Folklore at the Memorial University of Newfoundland is evident throughout the history of the journal. Other noteworthy contributions to Volume 2 include Georgina Smith’s acclaimed discussion of “Literary Sources and Folklore Studies in the Nineteenth Century: A Reassessment of Armchair Scholarship”, and “The Medieval Ghost Story” – a fascinating exploration of early literature by R. M. Wilson who, as Head of the Department of English Language at the University of Sheffield from 1946 to 1955, and Professor and Head of the Department from 1955 to 1973, gave the SLF and CECTAL every possible support from their inception. No. 10, the final issue in Volume 2, includes a separate Reviews Supplement, prompted by an exponential increase in the number of books received for review. The Supplement also incorporates a full index to the volume.

Volume 3 undoubtedly marks the most expansive phase in the history of the journal. Still published in-house, and benefiting from innovations in printing technology, the first three of the ten issues each comprise seventy four pages, but are again augmented by a similar number of pages in a separate Reviews Supplement, which is testament to the recognition of *Lore and Language* as a publication which regularly featured a substantial number of reviews of recent works, listed alphabetically by author in each issue, across the full range of the social sciences and of related subjects of particular concern to linguists and folklorists. Students and others interested in these topics, but whose work had not been published hitherto, were encouraged to participate in the reviewing process. As reviewers were asked to donate the publications to the Centre’s library it was possible to add a wide selection of significant new titles to the growing collection of material for teaching, reference, and research. This was especially important in view of the financial constraints under which the Centre had to operate. Many of the individual articles in Volume 3 are more substantial than those in previous volumes – another beneficial outcome of the increased number of pages in the journal. The variety of contributions is more extensive, reflecting the broad interests of the readership and the established status of *Lore and Language* both at home and abroad. Volume 3 also includes the first of several special double issues, in this case presenting a selection of papers from the 10th Symposium on European Ballad Research, hosted by the Kommission für Volksdichtung of the Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF) in Edinburgh in 1979. R. W. Brednich of the Deutsches Volksliedarchiv, Freiburg, was the guest editor for this special issue (Vol. 3, No. 4/5, January/July, 1981).
Volume 3, No. 6 again includes a separate Reviews Supplement, while Nos. 7-10 combine the articles, the reviews section, and the index within one set of covers — a development made possible by the introduction of advances in the binding process, and which had been tried out in Vol. 3, No. 4/5. This improvement brought *Lore and Language* in line with other similar journals, and established the format for most of the succeeding volumes. The typical variety of contributions referred to above is well illustrated in the contents of volume 3, No. 9, which includes: Robert E. Jungman, “‘Amor vincit omnia’ and the Prioress’s Brooch”; David Birch, “Travellers’ Cant, Shelta, Mumpers’ Talk and Minklers’ Thari”; Venetia Newall, “Love and Marriage Customs of the Jamaican Community in London”, Michael Pickering, “The Farmworker and ‘The Farmer’s Boy’”; Olga Akhmanova and Velta Zadornova, “Towards a Linguopoetic Study of Texts” (one of very few articles to appear in a British journal of this kind at that time); and Ervin Beck, “Children’s Halloween Customs in Sheffield”. This latter paper summarises the results of one of several major fieldwork-based studies which Ervin Beck, from Goshen College, Indiana, undertook during a highly productive year of research at the Centre, supported by the Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowship. During his time at Sheffield, he was instrumental in opening up and/or developing several major fields of research at CECTAL, including calendar customs, contemporary legend, folksong, and foodways, among other topics, not to mention his galvanising of other researchers by his energy, innovation, and sheer hard work.

A major change took place with Volume 4 (1985), when the journal moved to two issues per volume, though retaining the same format as before, including the provision of an index. From the outset, detailed indexes to the volumes had been prepared by Paul Smith, with assistance from members of the Centre’s staff and volunteers. The indexes continue to prove invaluable in identifying authors, titles of articles, geographical distribution of material, and individual topics covered in the thirty two issues comprising the first four volumes. Another major development dates from 1986 when JSOT Press, later Sheffield Academic Press, at the University of Sheffield assumed responsibility for publishing the journal. In 1985 the directors of the Press approached the editor to discuss the possibility of adding *Lore and Language* to its expanding portfolio of publications. Such an arrangement was potentially advantageous to both parties, and the Press took over the publication of Volumes 5-10. This new departure heralded a period of relative stability from 1986 to 1991, the middle years of the journal’s life. It transferred the onus of the typesetting, production and marketing of the journal from the Centre to the Press, which was an enormous relief,
especially at a time when universities were suffering the first of a series of swingeing cuts in their basic funding. We were therefore very grateful to our colleagues at the Press for accepting the challenge of publishing a journal which had managed somehow to survive, until then, with minimal technical and financial support. The format of *Lore and Language* and the range of the articles themselves remained essentially unchanged, apart from a redesigned cover; editorial control remained with the Centre. Sheffield Academic Press also demonstrated its interest in folklore by publishing the second volume in the *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend* series in 1987. There had been growing interest in this narrative genre since the 1970s, and the serious academic study of these legends developed at the Centre, stimulated in no small measure by a series of international conferences organised by Paul Smith, who also edited and single-handedly produced the first volume in the *Perspectives* series, published by the Centre in 1984. In due course, from these relatively small beginnings, the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research emerged, and now hosts annual conferences and publishes its own journal.

Volume 5, No. 1 includes the fourth in the important series of theoretical articles by Paul Smith on “Tradition – A Perspective”, in this case a discussion of “Variation on the Prospective Adopter’s Access to Information”. The thread of articles on aspects of African tradition is again in evidence throughout this middle period, and particular focuses of attention in the Centre’s research programme are reflected, for example, in Peter Harrop’s “Towards a Morphology of the English Folk Play” (Vol. 5, No. 2), Carole Carpenter’s “A Threshold in Children’s Belief” (Vol. 6, No. 1), Martin Spray’s “An Example of Survival in Sheffield Speech” (Vol. 6, No. 1), Paul Smith’s “Trees and Buckets: Approaches to the Classification of Folklore Materials and Some Thoughts for the Future” (Vol. 7, No. 2), Paul Beale’s “‘And so Nobby Called to Smudger …’: Nicknames Associated with Individual Surnames” (Vol. 9, No. 1), Winefride Bennett’s “The Blason Populaire Tradition in English Culture: A Dynamic Model of Social Structure” (Vol. 9, No. 1), Robert Penhallurick’s “The Politics of Dialectology” (Vol. 9, No. 2), and Craig Fees’s “The Historiography of Dialectology” (Vol. 10, No. 2). One of the highlights of this middle period is vol. 6, No. 2, a special issue of papers from the Contemporary Morris and Sword Dancing Conference hosted by the Centre in 1988, with guest editor Cynthia Sughrue, whose outstanding doctoral dissertation on South Yorkshire longsword dance and dance teams was completed in 1992 and is deposited in the Centre’s archives.

The long association of the Centre with the Memorial University of Newfoundland, referred to above, culminated in the creation in 1986 of the Institute for Folklore Studies in Britain and Canada (IFSBAC),
sponsored jointly by the two host universities. While Newfoundland language and folklore had featured in various contributions to *Lore and Language* from as early as 1971 (Vol. 1, No. 4), the close working relationship which led to the founding of IFSBAC is also increasingly reflected thereafter in the 1980s and early 1990s in such articles as those by Peter Narváez, “Newfoundland Berry Pickers ‘In the Fairies’: The Maintenance of Spatial and Temporal Boundaries through Legendry” (Vol. 6, No. 1), by John Ashton and Julia Bishop on “British Ballads in Newfoundland: Some Recent Examples” (Vol. 7, No. 2), by Martin Lovelace on “Douglas Northover: ‘The Language of Old Burton Bradstock, Dorset’, with notes of parallels to Newfoundland usage” (Vol 8, No. 2), and by Gerald Thomas on “Modernity in Contemporary Märchen: Some Newfoundland Examples” (Vol. 10, No. 1), and “The Aesthetics of Märchen Narration in Franco-Newfoundland Tradition” (Vol. 10, No. 2).

While the journal flourished during the six years of its publication by JSOT Press/Sheffield Academic Press, it was unable to shake off the effects of a fundamental problem which had beset it since its inception. This was the perennial difficulty faced by all journals with a limited circulation and by all small publishers, namely maintaining and extending the list of subscribers. In spite of efforts by the Press to publicise the journal, there was no significant increase in income from regular orders, while the cost of subscriptions had more than doubled for individuals, and for institutions had risen well over fivefold between 1985 and 1991. It needs to be borne in mind that this was the period when market forces assumed overwhelming importance in the commercial world, and not least in publishing. The survival of small presses became even more difficult in this highly competitive climate – a situation made worse for those producing academic books, because substantial cuts in higher education budgets were already forcing the cancellation of book orders and journal subscriptions on a wide scale. What is more, institutions in higher education, among many others in the public sector, faced the harsh realities of financial self-sufficiency and accountability. In these circumstances it was hardly surprising that the Press decided that *Lore and Language* was no longer commercially viable within its portfolio of publications. By this stage the cost of subscriptions had also become a matter for concern at a time of economic retrenchment, and the journal faced an uncertain future. It was therefore particularly fortunate that the editor was approached by another publisher, the recently established, London-based Hisarlik Press, which concentrated its attention specifically on folklore studies. The wholehearted espousal of the discipline by this press was especially welcome, and appeared to herald a new era in the publication of material in the subject area. Following
discussions with the editor, Hisarlik Press formally agreed to assume publication of *Lore and Language*, beginning with Vol. 11, No. 1 (1992).

This new phase in the history of the journal brought with it a number of significant changes. The page size was slightly enlarged from the earlier A5 format in conformity with other academic journals, and the page layout was greatly improved. The newly designed purple cover gave *Lore and Language* a distinctive appearance and a more attractive professional finish, in keeping with its established status. An Editorial Board was set up to advise on material submitted for publication, and Hisarlik Press took over responsibility for all aspects of production, promotion, subscriptions, and distribution. In order to attract more readers the subscription rate for institutions was lowered slightly, and that for individuals by over twenty five percent. The aims and scope of the journal are outlined in a section at the rear of these new issues, where it is noted that

"The journal acts as a focus for the redevelopment of folklore studies in England specifically, where for so much of this century the discipline has not enjoyed the status and support accorded to it in most other cultures. In particular, the Centre and its journal emphasise the importance of language in the transmission, interpretation and social impact of tradition."  

The editorial in Vol. 11, No. 1, the issue which effectively relaunched the journal under its new auspices, summarises the essential remit of the journal as follows:

"This interdisciplinary journal includes articles on all aspects of cultural tradition and welcomes contributions from the fields of folklore, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, popular culture, psychology, history (especially oral history) and literary studies, among others. It regards all such disciplines as making their distinctive contribution to a holistic description and analysis of culture, particularly in their mediation through language.

Modern approaches to the study of folklore and cultural tradition, whether theoretical or applied, are emphasised, and the recognition of the importance of urban folklore is central to the aims of the journal. It has a special interest in English folklore, dialectology, sociolinguistics, and British culture, but publishes articles in English from all cultures and languages; material on African folklore and language, for example, is strongly represented. A substantial proportion of the journal is devoted to reviews of recent releases across the very wide field of interest concerned. A Notes and Queries section maintains the discussion forum which has been an important feature from the outset.

The journal also actively encourages written contributions from young writers entering the disciplines concerned. It seeks to promote
the work of younger scholars, especially those in England and other parts of the British Isles where folklore and cultural studies are currently enjoying something of a renaissance after a lengthy period of neglect."

It also provides details of the contents of Vol. 11, and looks forward to Vol. 12, celebrating the twenty fifth anniversary of the journal:

"The two issues comprising Volume 11, which covers 1992-1993, include a typically wide-ranging selection of subject matter – from English regional dialects and blason populaire to folk beliefs, verbal jokes, early English drama, the ballad and aspects of moral education. Volume 12 will consist of a celebratory 25th anniversary double issue of papers presented at the highly successful 22nd International Ballad Conference of the Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore in Belfast in 1992. The conference conveners, Dr John M. Kirk and Dr Colin Neilands of the Queen's University of Belfast will be the Guest Editors."

Vol. 12 was also available as a separate publication, entitled Images, Identities and Ideologies – a further example of the imaginative and entrepreneurial approach of Hisarlik Press. The journal returned to its usual two issue format in Vols. 13 and 14. Notable contributions to Vol. 13 include Richard Leith’s “The Use of the Historic Present Tense in Scottish Traveller Folktales”, Roy Judge’s discussion of “Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the ‘Origin of the Maypole’”, along with “Dialogic Textmaking in Folkloristics” – a groundbreaking paper by Jeffrey Patton, who completed his MPhil on dialogics in folklore and ethnography at CECTAL in 1991 – an outstanding example of the numerous articles by young scholars, especially the Centre’s postgraduates, which have been published in the journal. Vol. 14 maintains a characteristic mix of articles across the full range of the journal’s scope. Significant contributions include Peter Robson’s “Shrovetide House-Visiting Customs in Dorset”, David Atkinson’s “‘The Broomfield Hill’ and the Double Standard”, Sandy Brewer and John Trushell’s “Dead Romantic – The Revenant Lover in Contemporary Film”, Sherry Cook Stanforth’s “‘It’s All Right, It’s OK’: Grief Narratives and Continuity in a Mutable Social Context”, “Off-roaders’ Lingo and the Importance of Language in Folk Groups” by J. David Neal, who had recently completed his PhD in the Department of Folklore at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, George Monger’s “Pre-marriage Ceremonies: A Study of Custom and Function”, Jonathan Roper’s “Two Recently-Recorded South-Estonian Verbal Charms and Some Analogues”, and Kenneth Payne and Roger Shipton’s “English Language Teaching in the Secondary School”.
While on the surface all seemed well with this phase of the journal’s progress, the picture behind the scenes was very different. After a promising start and the generally smooth publication process in Vols. 11-13, the first hints that Hisarlik Press might be experiencing some problems were signalled by a marked slowdown in the production chain as a whole, especially following the publication of Vol. 13. Communication with Hisarlik Press became increasingly difficult and the journal quickly fell behind its normal annual schedule. Although Vol. 14, No. 1 was published, it became clear that Vol. 14, No. 2 would certainly be delayed considerably, and indeed there was concern that it might not appear at all. No explanation was forthcoming for this highly unsatisfactory state of affairs, but it eventually became known that the problems at the Press were due largely to a change of practice in the larger publishing houses. Apparently, the Press had relied quite heavily on providing typesetting services for other publishers, but these publishers had decided to end this outsourcing and to undertake their typesetting in-house, leaving the Press with a major financial shortfall. After repeated efforts to urge the Press to honour its immediate obligations, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1996) was sent to most, if not all, subscribers. The Press passed on a few copies to the Editor for distribution, and also eventually forwarded a list of the subscribers, although no details of the current status of their subscriptions were forthcoming. Shortly after this, Hisarlik Press evidently ceased trading, and all efforts to communicate with it met with no response. This sorry state of affairs was particularly unfortunate for all concerned, especially after such a promising and optimistic start, and the important contribution which Hisarlik Press made to the publication of a wide range of material on folklore studies in England for several years.

It so happened that 1996 was coincidentally a difficult year for the Centre. What had begun as the Survey of Language and Folklore in 1964, generated the Archives of Cultural Tradition from 1972, become formally established as the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language in 1976, and was designated the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition with effect from June 2nd, 1997, was again at the crossroads, and indeed at this time fighting for its very existence. From the outset, the SLF and the Centre had been firmly based in the Department of English Language (and Linguistics) at the University, and throughout its existence it had emphasised the crucial role of language in the expression and transmission of cultural tradition, thereby becoming fully integrated into the Department’s teaching and research programmes. However, the SLF and the Centre also had a close working relationship with the University’s Department of Extramural Studies and its successors, the Division of Adult Continuing Education and the Institute for Lifelong...
Learning. Indeed, the first courses in the subject area were taught in the then Department of Extramural Studies, beginning in 1967. Enthusiastically encouraged by that Department’s Director, Maurice Bruce, and especially by its Deputy Director, John Bestall, these new courses proved very popular. They gradually extended their geographical range, and satellite Survey Teams were set up in Chesterfield, Scunthorpe, and elsewhere, to co-ordinate the collection of material and to provide a forum for discussion of all aspects of language and tradition. Survey representatives in Cheshire, Derbyshire, Devon and the South-West, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire and Yorkshire set up local groups to collect information, and correspondents throughout the country sent in their regular contributions. Members of the original Survey Team in Sheffield travelled further and further afield, promoting the SLF, collecting data, and recruiting more representatives and correspondents, at first in the counties surrounding Sheffield, and eventually extending throughout the country. So frequent were the fieldwork excursions by founder members of the Survey Team that people reported seeing the Survey’s little cars everywhere, whereas in fact the fieldworkers travelled around in a single Mini, which was distinguished by its red colour and by a small sign, handmade by Paul Smith, with the name of the Survey on it, which was placed inside the rear window of the vehicle. Members of the Team publicised the SLF wherever they were offered a platform to do so, and the additional Survey Teams in Derbyshire and Lincolnshire met regularly to co-ordinate fieldwork in the respective counties, to exchange information, and to contribute material to the Sheffield headquarters. Frequent dayschools and weekend courses organised by the University’s Department of Extramural Studies and the Workers’ Educational Association also generated numerous contributions to the Survey. As noted above, the consequent flood of material necessitated the creation of the Archives of Cultural Tradition, and the success of the SLF led in turn to the founding and development of *Lore and Language*.

The SLF took a major step forward in 1968, following a public lecture on “Language and Folklore in the Sheffield Region”, sponsored by the Department of Extramural Studies. This event effectively launched the Survey nationwide and prompted the decision to make it an ongoing open-ended project which aimed to gather and analyse data on English language and tradition in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. In this period of unprecedented linguistic and cultural development the material assembled in the Centre’s archives offers unique opportunities for monitoring and analysing continuity and change in these central aspects of the traditional heritage.
Having quickly outgrown their accommodation in the Arts Tower, the Survey and the archives were rehoused in January, 1973, in a converted terraced house at 40 Leavygreave Road, formally opened by Professor R. M. Wilson on May 19th of that year, which in itself gave the project an independent status. As the archives expanded, the adjacent house at 30 Upper Hanover Street was made available, and these developments led to a productive period in which the unit was able to consolidate and plan ahead. As has been the case throughout their history until 2001, both the Survey and the Centre, apart from vital secretarial assistance, have been staffed primarily by volunteers, including those in fulltime employment at the University who have devoted time, energy and expertise to the project over the years, in addition to their contractual obligations. It is largely thanks to their enthusiasm and commitment that the Centre was established and has been sustained. However, 1976 saw the creation of the first official staff post in the unit when Geoffrey Dyer was appointed Archivist – a position divided part-time between the Registrar’s Department, the University Library, and the Centre. Sadly, having made significant progress in organising and cataloguing the holdings in the Centre’s archives, Geoffrey did not live to see the fruits of his efforts. His sudden and totally unexpected death in 1982 at the age of thirty two came as a dreadful shock to his family and to all who knew him. The Centre and the University as a whole lost the services of a dedicated professional archivist, and it is regrettable that no provision has since been made for recruiting a replacement for this increasingly important position within the institution as a whole. In the circumstances, the Centre had to fall back once again on the assistance of volunteers in cataloguing its collections – a situation which, apart from a brief period in the mid-1980s, continued until 1992, when funding from external grants and later from the Centre’s internal revenues made it possible to appoint a part-time Heritage Interpretation and Education Assistant, and later a part-time Archivist.

The Leavygreave Road/Upper Hanover Street premises eventually became inadequate to accommodate the steadily expanding archives and other activities of the Centre, and in 1982 the unit moved to Palmerston Road, where it occupied a large Victorian house (No. 5) and half of a similar adjacent building (No. 3), the interiors of both having been redesigned to maximise their potential for use by the Centre. Here there was adequate space for the archives, library, administrative offices, audiovisual section, and teaching and research rooms, one of the teaching rooms doubling as a gallery for exhibitions and displays. In addition to all the material in the archives which was available for display, the Centre had been gathering together a collection of artefacts and other items to support teaching and research in the sixth of its principal genres: material
culture, work techniques, and traditional arts and crafts. The incentive to build up this Material Culture Collection came from the earliest days of the SLF, when Paul and Georgina Smith and other members of the Survey Team began to take a few artefacts along for display at the various venues where the Survey was being introduced and promoted. The catalyst for its development was the unexpectedly enthusiastic response by members of the public to an exhibition of baskets and basketmaking tools bequeathed to the Survey’s founder by his grandfather. Initially, people began to offer traditionally made baskets and other items to augment the display, and these offers were very soon followed by a wide variety of artefacts, predominantly from the Sheffield area where it was comparatively easy to transport them. At this time in the city’s history, and notably in the 1960s and 1970s, numerous small businesses were closing, the old handcrafted trades were rapidly disappearing, and a revolution was taking place on the domestic scene where the watchword was “out with the old and in with the new”. A number of local people, including craftsmen and shopkeepers, among many others, became increasingly concerned that many aspects of the industrial, commercial, and domestic heritage would be lost unless determined efforts were made to preserve them. Museums, societies, institutions, and other organisations and individuals in the Sheffield area with an interest in heritage preservation, often acting in isolation from each other, redoubled their various efforts to save a representative sample of material for the benefit of posterity. Acting mainly alone, but also at times in conjunction with Bill Silvester, Deputy Director of Sheffield City Museums, members of the Survey Team began to collect artefacts and other items whenever they were informed or became aware that such material was available locally. This operation posed numerous problems. Firstly, the Centre could accept only material which was donated, as it had no funds to purchase artefacts. Secondly, it was necessary to rely on Team members and other volunteers to provide transport. Thirdly, there was of course nowhere to store the items at the Centre. These three major limiting factors dictated that only comparatively small artefacts could be accepted. When large items – in some cases the contents of a whole industrial workshop – were offered, the offer was passed on to Sheffield City Museums, which in turn at times gave the Survey Team first refusal on smaller items which became available. The material was stored in various unused or semi-derelict buildings scattered around the University, thanks to the kind assistance of colleagues in the Department of Estates who did everything they could to alleviate the problem of storage. As the collection grew, and the storage buildings were gradually demolished or redeveloped, it became clear that more permanent accommodation for the Collection was needed. Several possible sites in the city were investigated
but, for various reasons, all proved unsatisfactory. However, in 1979 the University acquired the church hall adjacent to the Endcliffe Methodist Church on Ecclesall Road expressly to house the Collection. The material was gradually retrieved from storage and moved into the building, which was known initially as the Endcliffe Exhibition Hall and later by its present name: the Traditional Heritage Museum. It was then necessary to design and create a range of exhibition spaces within the main hall of the building to display a representative selection of the material. This daunting task has always been, and still remains, a major challenge for the volunteers. Progress was inevitably slow at first, but gathered pace as a result of successive work experience placement schemes funded by the Manpower Services Commission. A successful application to the Commission’s Community Service Programme in 1984 provided a major boost to the work of the Centre, both at the museum and at the Palmerston Road headquarters. Over a period of some four years, the Commission funded an average of three full-time and three part-time posts per annum under this scheme. This new team included a full-time project co-ordinator, archival assistant, and museum assistant, and a part-time technical assistant and two museum assistants. Most of the team helped at the headquarters, mainly with archive cataloguing and audiovisual assistance, and those who worked at the museum were primarily engaged in constructing the exhibitions and preparing items for display.

During these years the Centre forged ahead, due largely to the fact that, for the first and only time in its history, it had an adequate salaried staffing infrastructure. The establishment and development of the Community Programme team, directed and supported by experienced volunteers, ensured remarkable progress in every sector of the unit’s day to day operation. At long last it seemed that the Centre had come of age and could play its rightful part as one of the University’s specialist research institutions. Unfortunately, this highly productive period proved to be shortlived. Government financial support for the Community Programme across the country was terminated, at short notice, the one in CECTAL ending in September 1988. This immediately plunged the Centre and its museum into a crisis, both having come to rely on an adequate complement of salaried staff during the previous four years. Although the devoted part-time secretarial staff funded by the University continued to provide both clerical and administrative support, and indeed worked many additional unpaid hours in a voluntary capacity, the rest of the ongoing work of the Centre once again became the responsibility of the volunteers. Apart from a period of seven months from September 1988 to March 1989, when it benefited from work experience placements on the Employment Training Programme administered by Community
Rural Aid, the museum again had to rely entirely on volunteers for its operation. By this time the members of the Survey Team who continued to offer their services were fully engaged in the administration of the Centre, and consequently had little time for further fieldwork. While contributions to the archives from the SLF continued to flow in, the work of students in a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses was also being deposited. What began as a trickle of fieldwork and research studies in the 1970s soon became a regular and substantial stream, providing firsthand evidence on the changing patterns of language and tradition as the century progressed, and complementing and extending the data from the SLF and other sources. In 1987 the Names Project was inaugurated, sponsored jointly by the Centre and the Division of Adult Continuing Education, and building on a series of extramural courses on family names and placenames. Under the direction of David Hey, a team of researchers began detailed investigation of local names, and the project is still very active today, thanks to the enthusiastic involvement of the voluntary researchers. Of course, all this material needed to be accessioned and catalogued, and the manuscripts, audiovisual recordings, ephemera, and other information had to be made accessible for research and reference. It had been possible to keep pace with these processes during the period when the Community Programme team was in post, but it was hardly surprising that the voluntary staff struggled to cope with the workload which had expanded remarkably over the preceding few years. As if these demands were not daunting enough, the Centre was obliged to vacate the Palmerston Road premises, following a new strategic plan for the future of the buildings in the immediate area. Already reeling from the aftermath of the sudden termination of the Community Programme, in 1988 the Centre was summarily decanted into single-storeyed buildings, largely of wooden construction, at 9, Shearwood Road. This site had the advantage of being immediately adjacent to the Centre’s parent Department of English Language and Linguistics, and also to the Department of English Literature. However, the accommodation was much smaller than that in Palmerston Road, and it was first necessary to create several separate rooms by partitioning one section of the building, in order to provide space for administrative offices, audiovisual facilities, and a teaching/exhibition area. Shelving had to be installed in what in due course became the library and the archives room, and also in other parts of the building, but this essential work was not carried out until after all the Centre’s material had been moved in. The resulting chaos took more than three years to resolve, in the absence of library and archive staff. Again thanks largely to the volunteers, all the Centre’s material was eventually redistributed in the new building, but as the library area was inadequate to house all the substantial collection of books and journals, a
proportion of these had to be accommodated in the archives room and in the five smaller rooms in the main part of the premises. When the lengthy reorganisation process was finally over, it was at last possible for the Centre to fully resume all its operations, as far as this could be achieved. In the interim, teaching, research, publication, and outreach work had been maintained, despite the difficulties inherent in the loss of the Community Programme team, and the precipitate move to the new accommodation.

During the years 1990-1996 the Centre gradually expanded its work, both at the new headquarters and at the museum. With the active support and encouragement of Professor Norman Blake, who succeeded R. M. Wilson as Head of Department in 1973, courses in various aspects of folklore and English cultural tradition had been introduced into the curriculum of the Centre’s parent Department of English Language (and Linguistics) in 1978, first at an introductory level, and later in more specialised topics, in addition to continuing extramural courses which eventually included MA and Certificate programmes in Local History, Literature, and Cultural Tradition, and in English Cultural Tradition per se, the Certificate course being inaugurated in 1976. MA courses in Modern English Language and Cultural Tradition were offered in the Department of English Language (and Linguistics), beginning in 1977. In co-operation with the Department of English Literature, the Centre offered modules in the MA course in African Literature, which later developed into a joint MA in Oral Culture and Literature. Postgraduate programmes at the MPhil and PhD levels then followed, administered jointly by the Centre and the Department of English Language (and Linguistics) or the Division of Adult Continuing Education.

Undergraduate courses in the subject area were in great demand, and the postgraduate programmes – the only ones of their kind in England – continued to develop. At a time when universities were trying to adjust to new funding arrangements which required that the institutions and their constituent departments became largely self-financing, the Centre was successful in attracting funding from external sources. Among other things, this allowed the appointment of two Library Assistants, whose primary responsibility was to recatalogue the books in the Centre’s library to conform with the University Library’s system, and to pave the way for this material to be acknowledged as a special collection in its own right. All these developments helped to confirm the status of CECTAL as a fully fledged teaching and research unit which enjoyed a high reputation both nationally and internationally. In spite of this success, in 1996 the Centre experienced the greatest threat to its existence, as a direct result of continuing cutbacks in higher education funding. The parent Department of English Language and Linguistics,
which had nurtured the Centre for more than thirty years since the inception of the SLF in 1964, was faced with a major shortfall in its operational budget. In these straitened circumstances it was decided that the Department should focus its attention exclusively on mainstream aspects of language study. This decision inevitably left the Centre in a vulnerable position, facing an uncertain future. The only solution to the problem proved to be a very radical one: it was suggested that the Centre should become part of the Division of Adult Continuing Education, with which it had always had a close association. Fortunately, the Division’s Director, Professor Robert Cameron, was in favour of this move, provided that it did not involve additional costs. After prolonged negotiations it was agreed that the Division would assume responsibility for the Centre, with effect from October 1st, 1996. The package also required that the Director of the Centre would take early retirement from his former Department, but continue to manage CECTAL, contingent upon the provision of increased secretarial/clerical assistance. In the event, the Division incurred significant consequential costs, and there was no increased provision for secretarial/clerical assistance. Nevertheless, thanks to the unfailing support of Robert Cameron, the Centre maintained its schedule of operations. We owe a great debt of gratitude to him, and to his successor, Dr. Susan Webb, and their colleagues, for offering this safety net at such a crucial time. However, the Centre hardly had time to adjust to these changes before the Division and all extramural departments across the country were confronted by radical changes in their funding. The planned expansion of postgraduate work in the Division, which was part of the remit of the Centre’s Director when he was transferred, was summarily halted, and the Division was required to pay its own way, as had become the norm in other university departments in Sheffield and elsewhere. The Division’s promising outreach programme at Dearne Valley College, in which the Centre was very much involved, was also curtailed.

As it became increasingly clear that the Division was to be substantially downsized, the Centre’s Director entered into discussions with Professor Sally Shuttleworth, and later with Professor Neil Roberts, successive Chairs of the University’s newly established School of English, to explore whether there might be interest in incorporating the Centre within the School. Both were favourably disposed to this idea, again providing that the School incurred no additional costs. The Centre’s research profile, publication output, and thriving postgraduate programme were regarded as potential assets. Again following lengthy discussions it was agreed that the Centre, the headquarters of which had remained adjacent to the two constituent Departments of English in Shearwood Road, should be incorporated in the School with effect from August 1st,
1999. We are particularly grateful to Neil Roberts, Sally Shuttleworth and their colleagues for extending this lifeline and for their continued support of the Centre, even though the transfer again involved additional costs, despite assurances to the contrary.

During the negotiations for the transfer of the Centre to the Division of Adult Continuing Education and subsequently to the School of English, the importance of its archives, library, and museum as a unique resource for teaching, research and reference became fully recognised. The wealth of material assembled in these repositories over a period of some forty years offers unparalleled opportunities for study and scholarly exploitation. Central to the archives are the many thousands of items contributed to the SLF (redesignated the Survey of English Language and Folklore, SELF, in 2000, re-emphasising its specific focus on the traditional heritage of England), a sample of some 700 of which is available on a computer database, searchable by subject, personal and place name keywords. There are also over 800 theses and research projects completed by postgraduate and undergraduate students at the University, providing firsthand data and analysis of language and tradition in the second half of the twentieth century. Some 3000 audiotapes and videotapes are held in the archives, along with numerous cine films, 8000 slides, and over 3000 photographs. The principal individual collections in the archives include:

1. The Dave Bathe Collection of Derbyshire Traditional Dance and Drama.
2. The Richard Blakeborough and John Fairfax-Blakeborough Collection of Yorkshire Folklore.
3. The Nigel Kelsey Collection of London Children’s Folklore.
4. The Charlotte Norman Derbyshire Welldressing Collection.
5. The Sykes/Baron Broadside Ballad Collection.
8. The Mary and Nigel Hudleston Collection of Yorkshire and Irish Traditional Song, Drama, Custom, and other Folklore Genres.

Other major collections include several thousand greetings cards, children’s letters to Father Christmas, and other material illustrative of changing traditions, fashions and tastes in the celebration of seasonal customs, birthdays, anniversaries, etc., and extensive holdings of documents relating to industries in the Sheffield area. Among these latter are documents such as those from the local cutlery manufacturers George
Wostenholm, referring specifically to displays and artefacts in the Centre’s Traditional Heritage Museum. These provide essential context for several of the museum’s collections, especially with regard to the economic history, work practices, design, and marketing of local firms and their products. This material offers rare opportunities for the retrospective study of handcrafted trades in Sheffield and for the fuller interpretation of the museum’s collections. In addition, the archives hold major collections of printed and manuscript material, pamphlets, ephemera, and an unrivalled ongoing collection of more than 12,000 excerpts and cuttings from newspapers and magazines, covering the full spectrum of topics in language and tradition. Copies of the fieldwork notebooks from the Leeds University Survey of English Dialects, the fieldwork notebooks and taperecordings of the English and Welsh onomasiological section of the Atlas Linguarum Europae project, and the questionnaire responses from the Survey of Yorkshire Dialect and the Survey of Sheffield Usage are also on file, together with the computer-held materials from the English Dialect Lexicon Databases project (funded by grants from the British Academy, the Aurelius Charitable Trust, and the Marc Fitch Fund), the Traditional Linguistic Genres project, and field recordings of English dialects donated by the American dialectologists W. Nelson Francis and Charles F. Houck, among others.

The Centre’s extensive library, comprising over 40,000 books, journals, and other publications on language, tradition, history, literature, and the social sciences in general, is a unique resource built up over the years to complement and extend the holdings in the University’s Main Library. Many items have been donated by the Centre’s supporters, including the numerous new publications in the relevant fields which have been received for review in Lore and Language, allowing users to keep up to date with recent developments in the subject areas concerned. Special collections within the library include the Geoffrey Bullough Collection of nineteenth century fiction (assembled by Professor Bullough expressly for the study of dialogue), the R. M. Wilson Memorial Collection (placenames, personal names, family history, genealogy, Middle English), the B. J. Timmer Collection (Old and Middle English, Old Norse, Germanic languages) and the Sheffield Theosophical Society Collection. The archives and library have long since outgrown the accommodation at 9 Shearwood Road, and the overflow is now stored in three additional locations on the campus, and at the Traditional Heritage Museum.

The British headquarters of the Institute for Folklore Studies in Britain and Canada, based in the Centre, also has its own library, which includes a representative collection of books and journals on Canadian
language, tradition, and history, as well as other publications on folklore and tradition studies in general. The Institute incorporates archives comprising a range of material on Canadian topics. This includes some 500 tape recordings, copies of tape tables of contents and transcriptions from the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, and an extensive card index of words and phrases which were drawn on in the preparation of the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English.*

The Centre and the Institute have an impressive record in organising major national and international conferences, and also in sustaining an active and continuing publication programme. As noted earlier, CECTAL pioneered conferences and research in contemporary legend, and also in traditional drama, which led to the founding of the Traditional Drama Research Group, based at the Centre. The Group has published its newsletter, *Roomer* and, more recently, the online newsletter *Traditional Drama Forum.* It has also developed its own extensive website, [www.folkplay.info](http://www.folkplay.info), hosted by the Centre. Following the first two international conferences on the subject, the Centre published two books on contemporary legend research, which led in turn to a series of such publications. The Centre has also published four issues of the periodical, *Traditional Drama Studies,* comprising a selection of papers from the conferences which it has hosted on the subject. In addition, it has published some two dozen books and booklets under six principal headings: occasional publications (language and dialect, calendar custom, traditional dance); research guides (traditional drama, ballad and folksong); facsimiles (dialect, and traditional drama); and conference papers (language, culture and tradition).

As noted earlier, in June 1997 the Centre was designated the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT), which gave full acknowledgement to its status as the only university-based institution in England devoted to the study of all aspects of tradition throughout the country. At that time it was engaged in eleven major ongoing research projects, including those funded by the British Academy and other external agencies, and/or in partnership with other external agencies. In the 1998-1999 academic year the research of twenty one PhD and MPhil students was being supervised in NATCECT. Much of this research drew directly on the integrated resources of the Centre’s archives, library, and museum, these materials being essentially complementary, having been built up to serve the needs of students in English Language and Linguistics, English Literature, Cultural Studies, Onomastics, and Local and Oral History. Their strength is augmented by the holdings in the Institute for Folklore Studies in Britain and Canada, and all the materials in the Centre, the Institute and the museum are united under an established scheme of classification which combines the needs of
teaching and research, paralleling the system established in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive.

The study of tradition in culture has been an internationally established academic discipline for more than 150 years, and in England the modern approach to the subject, based on the model of North American theory and practice in the discipline, has been pioneered at the University of Sheffield for almost forty years, focusing specifically on the operation and function of tradition within and across cultures, with special reference to the English heritage. At NATCECT, as already noted, the approach is both holistic and wideranging. While emphasising the central role of language in the transmission of tradition, the study of cultural tradition acts as a bridge to anthropology, linguistics, history, literature, music, religious studies, archaeology, the social sciences, and education. The approach employs a dynamic anthropological mode of cultural description, exploring how an understanding of the past and the present forms of tradition and language can provide insights into the future. The interface between high culture, popular culture and traditional culture is a particular focus of attention in this essentially interdisciplinary programme of teaching and research. Tradition studies are also the key to the establishment and maintenance of central aspects of the heritage industry. What is more, knowledge of cultural tradition serves the needs of industry and commerce, in addition to its academic role. NATCECT’s teaching and research programme, supported by its archives, library, museum and other resources, has a unique contribution to make to the maintenance of academic diversity and to the breadth of discipline expertise in the higher education sector today.

In sum, given the necessarily limited scope of the present overview of the ethos and development of the Centre and the Institute, it is possible here only to draw attention to some of the more significant aspects of what has been achieved by these two interlinked organisations, and to indicate their potential for academic exploitation and development. It also needs to be borne in mind that, while English scholars led the way internationally in the study of folklore in the nineteenth century, the subject has struggled to survive in the academic arena in England over the past hundred years. Although it has been supported consistently in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, it has had to fight for recognition in the country where it was first named and developed. This is all the more reprehensible in an era of unprecedented social and cultural change, and of debates concerning national, regional, and local identity. Fortunately, its cause has been championed by the Folklore Society, the English Folk Dance and Song Society, and the Society for Folk Life Studies, and by numerous individual scholars working within higher education or independently. Even so, in marked contrast to the situation in North
America, much of continental Europe, and elsewhere, it has no recognised status within the country’s national funding agencies for the humanities and the social sciences. As an academic discipline it therefore falls between two stools: universities require it to secure external funding, but the relevant agencies regard the universities as responsible for maintaining the essential staffing and infrastructure of units such as the Centre. At a time when university departments are expected to pay their own way, and when the appointment of archivists, for example, has very low priority, small units in specialist subject areas are engaged in a constant battle to survive. In these circumstances, we owe a great debt of gratitude to the hundreds of regional representatives, students, and other contributors to the S(E)LF who have helped to build up the Centre’s resource base over the past forty years. However, our greatest debt is to the many volunteers, both students and interested members of the general public, who have given, and continue to give, their time, expertise, and experience to the work of the Centre, the Institute, and the Traditional Heritage Museum. In particular, we thank all those who are members of the Friends of the Centre organisation, formally designated Traditional Heritage in 1989, who through their donations and their unstinting voluntary support have sustained the three institutions since their inception. Their loyalty and commitment have been both an inspiration and a source of unfailing encouragement. Several of the Friends have been with us for more than twenty years, and some were members of the original Survey Teams over thirty years ago. It is largely due to the efforts of all these volunteers and students that the unique resources now available at the University of Sheffield have been developed, and made available for reference and research.

In the absence of an appropriate staffing infrastructure, the Centre has been exceptionally fortunate in having the fullest possible support and commitment from its secretarial staff. Although their appointments were all part-time, a succession of talented and experienced secretaries cheerfully shouldered the substantial burden of clerical and administrative tasks which ensured the day-to-day operation of the Centre. The first appointee, Joyce Cook, took up her post shortly after the S(E)LF began, and set the standards which were emulated by those who followed her in later years. Her unquestionable loyalty, and her warmhearted response to students and to everyone she met at the Centre, endeared her to all who knew her. She was joined in 1974 by Irene Cox, and in 1978 by Donie Donnelly who assisted with clerical work in the archives and on the Centre’s publications. When Joyce Cook retired in 1983, she was succeeded by Beryl Moore who had the unenviable task of coping with an exponential increase in the workload as the Centre rapidly developed and its activities increased. Her outstanding secretarial and organisational
skills, and her highly efficient running of the administrative office were valuable assets in the Centre's development. On her retirement in 1996, Janet Alton took over these various demanding roles for the next four years, maintaining the high standards of her predecessors during a particularly stressful period in the Centre's history. The loyalty and commitment of all these secretaries were obvious to everyone, and all of them willingly devoted countless additional hours of voluntary unpaid work for the benefit of the Centre.

Thanks are also due to the many individuals in the university and the region who have assisted and supported the Centre in the past and those who continue to do so today. These include all the members of the Centre's Advisory Committee and its precursors, and our colleagues in the Departments of English Language (and Linguistics), English Literature, and Extramural Studies/Adult Continuing Education. In particular, we thank the colleagues who have devoted their time, energy and expertise to the work of the Centre, whether in teaching, research, or administration, as part of the largely honorary staffing structure: Philip Broomhead (Curatorial Adviser, Traditional Heritage Museum); David Hey (Emeritus Professor, Director of the Names Project, former Deputy Director, NATCECT); Malcolm Jones (Assistant Director, NATCECT); and Paul Smith (Associate Director, NATCECT, Co-Director, IFSBAC).

After its incorporation into the School of English in 1999, the Centre was again successful in attracting external research funding. However, as the Director was approaching retirement age, efforts were redoubled to secure support for a replacement. The continuing pressure for departments to achieve financial self-sufficiency made it difficult for the School to fund a new post. Happily, this problem was eventually overcome and the way cleared for the position to be filled. Dr. Joan Beal, formerly Senior Lecturer in English Language in the Department of English Literary and Linguistic Studies at the University of Newcastle, was appointed Director of the Centre in April, 2001. This appointment ended years of uncertainty during which the post had been effectively honorary, and the Centre's status within the University had been somewhat anomalous. Furthermore, as Joan Beal's principal field of expertise is dialectology, it is especially fortunate that, under her leadership, NATCECT is now in an ideal position to continue and develop that aspect of its work, along with other major established strands of teaching and research activity for which the Centre has become widely known. Given an essential basic staffing infrastructure, the Centre and its integral units, the Institute and the museum, are uniquely poised for development, especially in capitalising on their resources by exploiting their outstanding potential for postgraduate research. After a
long struggle for survival the Centre can look forward to a brighter and more settled future.

Following the appointment of the new Director and the retirement of her predecessor from administrative duties in the Centre’s headquarters, it was necessary, among many other matters of concern, to consider what might be done to maintain the publication of *Lore and Language*. The limited staffing infrastructure at the Centre, together with the impending retirement of the editor, which will take effect on completion of current research projects, raise obvious questions about whether publication could continue in these changed circumstances. Production had fallen behind schedule after the debacle at Hisarlik Press and, in the absence of a replacement editor, the Centre was evidently not in a position to sustain the journal, although the possibility of its continuing as an e-journal remained open. It was therefore decided that every effort should be made to produce three further double-issue volumes before the hard-copy version of *Lore and Language* ceased publication. This decision was partly influenced by the need to honour our obligations to those whose contributions had already been accepted, and partly by the fact that the projected final volume would be dated 1999, the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the journal. All three of these volumes have been prepared in-house at the Centre and, apart from returning to the A5 page size of Vols. 2-10, maintain the same format and range of contents as before. Vol. 15 (1997) presents papers from the International Conference *Folklore 50*, hosted by the Institute for Folklore Studies in Britain and Canada in Sheffield in July 1996, celebrating 150 years of Folklore Studies since the term *folklore* was introduced by W. J. Thoms in 1846. We were very fortunate to have Associate Professor John S. Ryan, of the Department of English and Communication Studies at the University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia as Guest Editor of the volume, which is also available as a freestanding publication, entitled *Folklore Studies: Past, Present – and Future?* Professor Ryan also provided an Introduction to the volume and contributed a closing review article on “Global people or still the folk? – Ways of viewing contemporary introductions to sociology”. The thirteen papers comprising the volume run the full gamut of the discipline, exploring new facets and often challenging accepted views. Vol. 16 (1998) is also a Special Issue devoted to conference papers, this time from the international seminar on popular culture sponsored by the Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore which was held in St. John’s, Newfoundland, in October 1991. We were delighted to welcome Paul Smith, Professor of Folklore at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Co-Director of the Institute for Folklore Studies in Britain and Canada, as Guest Editor. This volume is also available as a
A separate publication entitled Perspectives on Folklore and Popular Culture, and includes six papers from leading scholars in the field which explore the interface between the two disciplines and not only indicate ways in which they are in many ways complementary, but also how each may develop in the future, perhaps achieving a greater rapprochement than in the past.

The present valedictory double issue, Vol. 17 (1999) is especially wideranging in its coverage, reflecting a central aim of the journal throughout its history, namely to publish papers on an extensive variety of topics across the whole field of the humanities and the social sciences, with particular reference to language and tradition. On this occasion the articles are presented in the sequential order of the genres referred to above, which have been the dominant feature of the classification of folklore and cultural tradition in the teaching and research programmes at the Centre from the outset. The volume begins with a varied group of papers on aspects of language, followed by two articles on childlore, and others on narrative, music and song. A general overview of the interface between folklore studies and sociology is then presented, followed by a review of the journal, Australian Folklore. As in many previous issues, papers on tradition in African cultures feature prominently. Among these is a unique collection of proverbs from the oral tradition of the Haal Pulaar culture of Senegal, as recalled from memory in the late 1980s by Djibril Thiam, a former postgraduate at the University of Sheffield. The volume ends with an index to all the papers published in Lore and Language over the thirty years of its existence, which will facilitate the identification and accessing of over 300 articles for future reference and research.

For the past three decades, Lore and Language has offered an alternative perspective on the importance and interrelationships of language, tradition, and culture, and in particular on the study of the diverse ways in which tradition operates in the social context. Among other achievements it has helped to establish, disseminate, and popularise the term “cultural tradition” as a more acceptable designation in England than “folklore” appears to be with reference to the holistic approach to tradition studies, based on the cultural anthropological model proposed and successfully put to both theoretical and practical use by Herbert Halpert and his associates, and adopted in turn by his colleagues and students. During these three decades, the fifty three issues of the journal have included some 340 articles and review articles, and over 2,600 reviews. Collectively, these serve to illustrate not only the perennial fascination of the subject, but also its development in the late twentieth century, the contribution which tradition studies can make to our
understanding of the cultures in which we live, and the future potential of such studies.

Finally, we extend our grateful thanks to all those who have submitted articles and reviews to the journal over the years, to the members of the Editorial Board, to those who have been involved in its preparation and production, and to those whose subscriptions and support have sustained Lore and Language and in so doing have helped to raise awareness of folklore and tradition studies, both at home and abroad. Special thanks are due to Jean Alexander, Honorary Secretary of the Friends organisation for over twenty years, for all her voluntary help in administering the subscriptions, accounts, publicity, and reviews section of the journal, as well as for assistance with proofreading, in addition to many other tasks at the Centre and the museum. She is also responsible for the preparation and production of the Friends’ newsletter, Our Heritage. We are also particularly grateful to Janet Alton, Assistant Editor of Lore and Language, for singlehandedly typesetting all the material in the current and recent issues, and for editorial advice and expertise, not to mention her many other current responsibilities as Honorary Research Fellow and Publications Assistant at the Centre. It is our hope that in due course others will take up the challenge to build on what the journal has achieved, and to champion the investigation of the myriad ways in which tradition manifests itself and operates within culture, and not least in multicultural Britain in the twenty first century. In the meantime, information on the Centre’s teaching and research programmes, its unique archives and library, its museum, publications and other activities can be found on its website: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/projects/natcect. A full run of back issues of Lore and Language is available from the Centre.

Notes

3. See, for example, Traditional Topics, a magazine initiated in 1968, edited and published by Peter Nalder, which focused primarily on folk music. For more recent and more enduring endeavours, see, for example, Musical Traditions, edited by Keith Summers, inaugurated in 1983 and now issued as an e-journal, and Tradition, edited by Paul Salmon, inaugurated in 1991.
7. For a full account of the long association between the SLF, CECTAL, and the successive departments responsible for extramural provision at the University of Sheffield, see G. Mitchell, Responsible Body: The story of fifty years of adult
During this period, interest was renewed in the preservation and restoration of such important local historical sites as the Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet, and in the collection of artefacts for what in due course became the city’s industrial museum at Kelham Island. Individual enterprise in collecting artefacts and information on the city’s industrial heritage is exemplified in the remarkable achievements of Ken Hawley, whose internationally renowned Collection is now housed in the Hawley Building at the University of Sheffield, administered by the Ken Hawley Collection Trust; see www.sheffield.ac.uk/uni/projects/hp.

We are grateful to Gordon Hunter of the Estates Surveyor’s Department of Sheffield City Council, and to Derek Whomersley, for their efforts to find accommodation for the Collection.

Thanks are due to Colonel C. E. Eley, Estates Officer, and Mr. N. L. Costain, Director of Works at the University, for their sympathetic consideration of the Centre’s needs for the housing of its Material Culture Collection, and for facilitating the purchase and refurbishment of the building.

These included the Work Experience, STEP, CEP/YOP and Youth Training programmes.

As a result of an application co-ordinated by the University Library, a major grant was awarded by the Higher Education Funding Council of England to enable the Centre’s library holdings to be catalogued on the University Library’s STAR system. We are grateful to Michael Hannon, Martin Lewis, David Jones, and their colleagues in the University’s Main Library for all their help, advice and support in the planning and administration of this project.

The Teaching Quality Assessment report on the Department of English Language and Linguistics in 1996 notes: “The Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language (CECTAL) constitutes a major resource of exceptional richness in terms of specialised library and archive materials, including audio and visual materials, which are currently being processed to make them available by ... modern means. CECTAL supports a wide range of research on oral culture and cultural traditions central to the Department’s individual approach to the study of English language, and has benefited from substantial funding.”


This study, undertaken over some thirty months in 2000-2002, funded by a Research Grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, investigated continuity and change in five genres of traditional English language (proverbial usage; sayings and expressions; rhymes and riddles; blason populaire; and the language of children’s traditional play and games) in the second half of the twentieth century. The results of the investigation are presented in J. Green, and J. D. A. Widdowson, Traditional English Language Genres: Continuity and Change, 1950-2000, Sheffield, National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, 2003.


regrettable that the resolution drafted by the then Presidents of the Folklore Society and the American Folklore Society, Dr. K. M. Briggs and Professor R. M. Dorson, and signed by twenty four distinguished participants in the Anglo-American Folklore Conference at Ditchley Park in 1969, deploring the neglect of folklore as an academic subject in England, and addressed to the vice-chancellors of English universities, urging them to initiate programmes in the discipline, should have fallen on deaf ears. Apart from the universities of Leeds and Sheffield, no other higher education institutions heeded the resolution’s call to “introduce courses in Folklore into their curricula”. The resolution was also published in the Journal of the Folklore Institute, Vol. 7 (1970), 95-97 and reproduced in the Folklore Society’s FLS News, No. 3 (July, 1986), 6, with a rider by the editors, Steve Roud and Paul Smith, deploring its non-implementation, and calling for positive action. But is anyone out there listening?

22. Funding included the award of a Fellowship by the Leverhulme Trust in support of work on the Nigel Kelsey Collection of traditional games of London children (1999-2002), and the research grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board in support of the Traditional English Language Genres research project (see note 17 above). Research on traditional narrative and traditional drama in the Institute for Folklore Studies in Britain and Canada has been supported by two grants from the J. R. Smallwood Foundation (1999-2004).
“Geordie Nation”: Language and regional identity in the Northeast of England

JOAN C. BEAL

1. The “Geordie Nation”

1.1. Origins

On June 21st, 1994, Sir John Hall, then Chairman of Newcastle United Football Club, uttered these fighting words: “The Geordie nation – that’s what we’re fighting for. London’s the enemy. The South-east’s the enemy. You exploit us, you use us, you take everything you can from us but never recognize our existence.” Sir John Hall seems to have taken up the phrase “Geordie Nation” in an attempt to explain the passion inspired by football in England’s most northerly city. However, in his choice of words, he revealed much more about the sense of identity shared by the ex-colliery worker turned multi-millionaire and the man and woman in the black and white replica shirt. The word “Nation” is used in its Native American sense here, suggesting that the Geordies are a tribe with a unique language and culture, threatened and exploited by the colonial power in the Southeast. Sir John certainly struck a chord with the media and the people of Newcastle, for the phrase “Geordie Nation” has become associated with Newcastle and Newcastle United in particular, so that a search of The Independent on CD-ROM sees it cropping up several times each year since 1994, though less frequently than the more economical “Toon”. One of the latest instances gives an insight into this tribe’s pride in the face of adversity: “A lot of fans are nursing broken hearts here, but they’re still singing away and doing the Geordie nation proud,” said one fan quoted in a report of Newcastle’s 1998 Cup Final defeat.

1.2. Geordieland

The phrase “Geordie Nation” is quite new but the idea behind it is older. Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster point out that the term “Geordieland” is used in a letter to the Tyneside author, Jack Common, dated 1951. This term was to become popular, but is perhaps less serious than “Geordie Nation”, carrying connotations of Disneyland or Fairyland. The Independent records its use by Newcastle United to welcome their new manager, Ossie Ardiles: “The tracksuited Ardiles was given a warm reception before taking his place in the dug-out. ‘Newcastle United welcome Ossie Ardiles to Geordieland’, read the electronic scoreboard.” “Geordieland” is a term used in the tourist industry on souvenirs carrying slogans in “Geordie” for the delight of visitors from other parts of
Britain and abroad who patronise the shops and stalls of Eldon Square and the Metro Centre. Over the past decade, tourism has become an increasingly important part of the economy in the Northeast of England, but the emphasis on “Geordieland” as a kind of theme park carries with it a danger anticipated by an unemployed shipyard welder quoted by Paul L. Younger: “Geordies could end up like Red Indians, as extras in films about the North East.” Younger goes on to relate his experience of meeting the Plains Indians of the U.S.A and finding that they, unlike other Americans, understood the sense of regional identity that made him feel unable to describe himself as English. He concludes that the Geordies have the following in common with the Native Americans: a feeling of isolation from the political decision-making process; a feeling of isolation from the dominant culture; and a ravaged economy. This is what Sir John Hall captured in the phrase “Geordie Nation”.

1.3. A nation apart

What, then, is the “Geordie Nation”? Like its Native American counterparts, the phrase is used more often to refer to the people than to a geographical territory, but it is worth considering where “Geordies” consider their homeland to be. Just as a Cockney is said to be born within the sound of Bow Bells, a Geordie is supposed to be born within spitting distance of the Tyne. However, putting these myths aside, we find that, although the heart of the “Geordie Nation” and the capital of “Geordieland” is most certainly Newcastle, or “the Toon” as it is called locally, those who would consider themselves as Geordies can be found throughout Northumberland and even in the northern part of the old County Durham, at least in Gateshead and South Shields. Some would make a distinction between the urban Geordie and his/her country cousin the Northumbrian, but the distinction in terms of language and identity is not sharp and is certainly nothing like as clear as that between, say, a Liverpudlian and a Wiganer in Lancashire. The important boundary is that in the south, where the limits of the City of Sunderland bring us to the territory of that rival tribe, the “Mackems”, distinguished in language by their tendency to drop aitches and to use words such as matey, and in custom by their adherence to Sunderland F.C. There is a certain common identity in the Northeast of England as a whole (the area from the Tweed to the Tees), but anybody mistaking a person from Sunderland or Middlesbrough for a Geordie has made an unforgivable social gaffe.

What the Northeast as a whole shares with Newcastle and Northumberland is a sense of isolation from the rest of England. Harry Pearson, a Teessider, writes:
“In the North-East, England, or rather the notion of England, seems a long way off. The North-East is at the far corner of the country but it is separated by more than just miles. There is the wilderness of the Pennines to the west, the emptiness of the North Yorkshire moors to the south and to the north, the Scottish border. The nearest major city to Newcastle is Edinburgh, and that is in another country”.

Paul L. Younger writes that, when asked by a Kiowa Indian where he came from, “I found myself unable to describe myself as English. “Northumbrian” or Geordie is how I feel”.

1.4. A nation united

Why do Geordies, and also “Mackems” and Teessiders, feel this sense of “otherness”? The geographical isolation is perhaps the most obvious factor, as Harry Pearson suggests, and this is emphasised by the tendency for the whole region to be influenced by the gravitational pull of Newcastle. Only when you go as far south as Middlesbrough does an alternative centre (Leeds) come into play. There is no other region of England in which a single centre has so great an influence over such a wide area, and it is the presence of this “capital” which gives a focus to the “Geordie Nation”. Moreover, whilst other cities of England and Scotland (Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow) are divided by football, Newcastle is United. There is only one “Toon” (Newcastle) and there is only one “Toon” (Newcastle United). Comedians have remarked that entering the city centre on a Saturday afternoon is like stepping into a giant barcode, so ubiquitous are the black-and-white vertical stripes worn by the citizens of Newcastle proudly sporting their football team’s colours.

Bill Lancaster points out that another unifying factor is “the dominance of regional over class identity”. Middle-class Geordies consider themselves Geordies, and have their own networks which reinforce local solidarity, such as the “old boy” networks of prestigious schools, both state (King Edward VI, Morpeth) and private (The Royal Grammar School, Jesmond). Middle-class Geordies do not speak, or aspire to speak, RP, but have a “posh Geordie” accent all their own. Like middle-class Scots, they tend to use certain items of vocabulary not found in Standard English, (e.g. canny with the meaning “good”) and use certain syntactic constructions not found in Standard English without even being aware that their usage is different from the “norm”. Middle-class Geordies are active in local history societies and in the Northumbrian Language Society, set up by a retired schoolmaster, the late Roland Bibby, in 1975 “to research and preserve the splendid language of the historic county of Northumberland (Tweed to Tyneside)” (quotation taken from the Society’s letter heading.) We shall
return later to the matter of attitudes to the local accent and dialect: the point to be emphasised here is that there is a common sense of identity between middle- and working-class citizens of the “Geordie Nation”.

1.5. A nation once again?

One factor contributing towards this may well be the sense that Geordies of all classes and occupations shared in the sense of disenfranchisement in a region ruled by a Conservative government from Westminster, but having only two Conservative MPs, a region whose unemployed were famously dismissed by the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, as “moaning minnies”. I write in the past tense here because the region now has only one Conservative MP, (Hexham) there is a Labour government with a massive majority, the Prime Minister has a constituency in County Durham and, most importantly, he supports Newcastle United. The Geordie sense of propriety in this turn of events was most tellingly expressed by the chant at the first Premier League match of May, 1997: “Tony Blair’s a Geordie”. More seriously, the recent moves towards devolution, including the opening of the Scottish and Welsh assemblies, have led to growing support for a Northern Assembly. The Bishop of Durham, speaking at the Northern Constitutional Convention on July 24th, 1999, claimed that fifty percent of people in the Northeast of England were in favour of home rule.

1.6. A proud nation

The sense of “isolation from the dominant culture” noted by Paul L. Younger perhaps takes a different form in more recent times. Geordies never tire of telling visitors that they do not live in a backwater: they will point out that the Royal Shakespeare Company has a major season in Newcastle every year; that Britain’s largest sculpture, the Angel of the North, has just been installed in Gateshead; and, above all, that Newcastle was voted eighth best party city in the world in a Texan poll. The Independent reported this last item as follows:

“The secret’s out. Newcastle is, according to the American company Weissman Tourism Report, the eighth best party town in the world. This may seem surprising, but to those who have experienced a night on the Toon, Newcastle sits comfortably alongside Rio and New Orleans. The only question, Geordies ask, is: why only eighth?”

However, as with the erstwhile “cultural cringe” of Australians, there is a certain defensiveness in the Geordie’s readiness to sing the region’s praises, born of the expectation that southerners will assume that “it’s grim up north”.

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2. The Geordie language

2.1. Attitudes to the Geordie accent

Given the strong sense of regional identity in the Northeast of England, can we expect attitudes to the Geordie accent and dialect to be equally positive? Although the word “Geordie” was not used in reference to a distinct dialect until relatively recently, the people of Tyneside have long been aware that their language is very different from that of the rest of England, and have taken pride in this. Daniel Defoe, in his *Tour thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain (1724-1727)*, remarked upon the distinctive pronunciation of /r/ generally known as the “Northumbrian burr”.

"I must not quit Northumberland without taking notice, that the Natives of this Country, of the antient original Race or Families, are distinguished by a Shibboleth upon their Tongues in pronouncing the Letter R, which they cannot utter without a hollow Jarring in the Throat, by which they are as plainly known, as a foreigner is in pronouncing the Th: this they call the Northumberland R, or Wharle; and the Natives value themselves upon that Imperfection, because, forsooth, it shews the Antiquity of their Blood." 14

The insistence on the superiority of the “burr” noted by Defoe is consistent with the “accent loyalty” of Geordies as demonstrated in recent commercial surveys. A light-hearted feature in the women’s magazine *Bella* (“Which accents turn you on?”) involved interviewing 1,000 men and women “to rate which accents send temperatures soaring”. Whilst Geordie was rated fourth overall, with ten percent of those interviewed nationally rating it the “sexiest” accent, the proportion of Tynesiders rating Geordie highest was “almost a third”. This high degree of accent loyalty was not found elsewhere in England: Midlanders, along with the rest of those interviewed, regarded “Brummie” as the “worst” accent. The Geordies’ accent-loyalty as reported in the *Bella* survey, and as hinted at by Defoe in the eighteenth century, runs counter to what J. R. Edwards has referred to as “the general tendency for non-standard speakers to accept the larger, and negative, stereotypes of their own speech”. 15

Although it would seem that Geordies have always taken pride in their accent and dialect, the attitude of the rest of the country towards the speech of Tyneside has not always been as favourable. Surveys such as that reported by Giles and Powesland showed Geordie rated below RP, Scots, Irish, Welsh and rural English accents, but above Cockney and Birmingham. As late as 1993, Denis Freeborn felt able to write that “accents from Newcastle, Liverpool, Glasgow and Birmingham ... are
rated negatively". More recently, though, the rest of the country has begun to agree with Tynesiders in rating the Geordie accent more highly. The Bella survey has Geordie fourth after Scots, Southern Irish and Welsh and therefore the highest-rated English accent, with RP sixth ("only five per cent of women find posh accents sexy"). Admittedly, the Bella survey asked informants to rate accents in terms of sexual attractiveness, and Geordie has always scored high on the dimension of "friendliness", but recent press reports suggest that this positive view of the Tyneside accent has led to investment in the area. The Newcastle Evening Chronicle of June 12th, 1998, reports that "the North East’s growing reputation as Britain’s calls centre capital was confirmed today when communications giant BT announced plans to create 468 new jobs. ... The region’s available and flexible workforce, plus the North East accent, have been cited as potential reasons for the calls centre boom." Thus, far from being a hindrance to jobseekers, a Geordie accent is now, at least in the service sector, an asset: a "sexy" or "friendly" Geordie- accented speaker is more likely to sell an insurance policy than is an "unfriendly" RP speaker.

If the stereotype of the Geordie is so positive, and if the Geordie accent is such an asset, we might expect to find less accent-levelling here than elsewhere in Britain. Why lose the very features which mark you out as friendly and sexy? However, recent investigations by, e.g. Watt (1998), and Dalban (forthcoming) point to the demise of distinctive Tyneside variants such as [iæ] in FACE, [uə] in GOAT and [u:] in MOUTH in favour, not of RP, but of supralocal norms. In this section, I shall examine the history of two features which are stereotypical in the sense of having been overtly associated with "Geordie" or "Northumbrian" speech and consider whether positive social evaluation has in any way led to their preservation.

2.2.1. The Northumbrian burr: "it shews the Antiquity of their Blood"

I have already quoted Defoe’s remark concerning the burr, that "the Natives value themselves upon that Imperfection, because, forsooth, it shews the Antiquity of their Blood". That the "burr" was regarded as an "imperfection" by the rest of England in the eighteenth century is evident from the remarks of elocutionists such as William Kenrick, who describes it as "very awkwardly pronounced, somewhat like a w or oau" and Stephen Jones who writes of "the rough sound of r, as it is pronounced by the natives of Durham, who sound it in their throats with a disagreeable rattling". Thomas Spence, the political activist and spelling reformer born into a poor family on Newcastle’s quayside in 1750, was described as having "a strong northern ‘burr in his throat’ and
an impediment in his speech”. Despite these negative comments, if Defoe is to be believed, the Northumbrians prized it as a sign of their distinct heritage even in the eighteenth century, when the clamour for guides to “correct” (i.e. London) pronunciation created a lucrative market for the likes of Kenrick and Jones. More than a century later, the Northumbrian dialectologist R. O. Heslop writes of the “burr” as being “the birthright of people of every station in life” and goes on to note that Lord Eldon (a native of Newcastle and Lord Chancellor at the beginning of the nineteenth century) used the “burr” on the Woolsack. However, Heslop then goes on to quote Murray, writing in 1880, as stating that “most people of Northumberland, who can afford it, send their children south for education to cure them of the burr. I know many a man, who himself burrs, all whose children pronounce r like other Englishmen”.

Although the burr is found throughout Northumberland in the Survey of English Dialects, there is no trace of it in O’Connor’s 1947 transcription of the speech of working-class Newcastle youths, and both Warkentyne and Viereck report in 1965 that it was not found in the speech of young people. Påhlsson’s study of Thropton, a village in North Northumberland so renowned for its “burrers” that the burr is referred to as the “Thropton r”, also shows that the burr is recessive. Påhlsson shows the percentage of “Burrers” in the different age-groups. The percentage is highest in the groups 25-44 and 45-64, and lowest in the “youth” category (15-24). The dip in the “retired” group can be explained by the fact that Thropton is seen as an attractive place to retire to, so that a good number of the oldest group would be of a higher social class and/or born outside the area. Interestingly, Påhlsson, like Heslop in 1903, finds the burr used “at the top as well as at the bottom of the social dimension” and that it is a spatial rather than a social marker, as it “was found only in informants born in the Burr region outside the conurbation area of Tyneside”.

It would appear then, that, by the middle of the twentieth century, the “burr” was no longer a feature of (urban) “Geordie” speech. However, the 1960s saw a whole series of booklets printed by the Newcastle firm Frank Graham and mostly written by Scott Dobson, in which the language and customs of the Geordies were humorously described. In these, the burr features prominently as a feature of Geordie speech. Take this extract from Larn Yersel Geordie:

“The first sound to learn is the Geordie ‘R’
This is both rolling and guttural, combining the best effects of Doctor Finlay [a Scottish doctor in a popular TV drama – JB] at his homeliest with the sound of a very old nanny-goat being
sick. ... The sound is very rarely heard outside the Geordie enclave although certain vintage records of Mr Maurice Chevalier do contain an approximation.”

Dobson proceeds to give explicit instructions as to how to produce this “Geordie ‘R’”, ostensibly for the benefit of outsiders, but in reality for the amusement of Geordies. Given Pålsson’s findings, Dobson here seems to be celebrating a feature which, at the time of *Larn Yersel Geordie*’s publication, had all but disappeared. Labov, outlining the “stages in the mechanism of a sound change” writes that “under extreme stigmatization, a form may become the overt object of social comment, and may eventually disappear. It is thus a stereotype, which may become increasingly divorced from the forms which are actually used in speech”. In many ways, the history of the “burr” outlined above suggests that this feature is a prime candidate for the category of “stereotype”: it becomes an “overt object of social comment” in the eighteenth century when it is stigmatised by elocutionists; in the nineteenth century, although some upper class speakers (Lord Eldon) retain it, wealthy (middle-class?) Northumbrians send their children south to “cure” them of it. Here we are reminded of stage 9 in Labov’s “mechanism of linguistic change”: “if the group in which the change originated was not the highest-status group in the speech community, members of the highest-status group eventually stigmatised the changed form through their control of various institutions of the communication network”. By the mid-twentieth century, the burr had moved to Labov’s stage 12, “stereotype”: it had become a subject of affectionate humour, a party trick, and was fast disappearing even from the rural area with which it was most closely associated.

Labov’s definition presupposes that the speakers of the nonstandard dialect collude in the stigmatisation of the stereotyped feature and eventually “drop” it for fear of being ridiculed, but the quotations from Defoe and Heslop suggest that this was not the case with the “burr”. It seems to have been a regional, rather than a social marker in the eighteenth century. Heslop’s quotation could imply that, by the early twentieth century, the burr was, like final /n/ in *huntn*, *shootin*, *fishin* etc., used by the lower and upper classes, but perhaps not the middle. However, the stereotype of the burr is by no means a negative one: there is a widespread myth that it originated in the speech of Harry “Hotspur” Percy, the son of the Duke of Northumberland, who appears in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*. Shakespeare describes Hotspur’s speech thus:
“And speaking thick, which nature made his blemish,  
Became the accents of the valiant;  
For those that could speak low and tardily  
would turn their own perfection to abuse,  
To seem like him.”

Shakespeare’s words “thick ... abuse” do not point to any specific phonetic feature, but in Northumberland, folk-linguistic lore asserts that Hotspur had the “burr” as a speech impediment which, as Shakespeare suggests, Northumbrians copied as an act of homage. Hence, being associated with royalty, the burr “shews the antiquity” of Northumbrians’ blood. Today, the “burr” is associated with Northumbrian rather than urban Tyneside speech and, as such, is revered as “authentic”. The dialect writer Dorothy Sandved (a.k.a. “Dorfy”) writes in her poem The Northumbrian Burr:

“Northumbrians tryin’ t’ rowll thor ‘R’ s’ produces growls maist curious—

But that’s nee reason wy Northumbria’s lads shud feel inferior  
Wor broad, grand, Doric dialect is definitely superior.  
So – up! – brave, bowld Northumbrian lads; yor larynx nivvor fettor  
Rowl oot them rich resoondin’ ‘R’s’. Than ye thor is nyen bettor.”

The use of the term “Doric”, normally associated with literary Scots, is significant here, associating the Northumbrian dialect in general, and the burr specifically, with a dialect which, far from being stigmatised, is viewed as superior to Standard English.

So the burr, although clearly a stereotype in that it became the object of overt social comment and is fast disappearing, is not and seems never to have been stigmatised by the natives of Northumberland, except for the nouveaux riches of the nineteenth century. The social stereotype with which it is associated is a positive one: that of the authentic Northumbrian descended from the followers of Hotspur. Why, then, should it disappear? In order to understand this, perhaps we should look at a more recent example of a stereotyped “Geordie” feature: the unshifted Middle English /u:/ in words such as town, down, brown, out.

2.2.2. The “Toon Army”

I have already referred to the widespread press use of the word “Toon” in reference to either the city of Newcastle, or Newcastle United FC. “Toon”, with its semi-phonetic spelling indicating the presence of unshifted Middle English /u:/, began to appear in the Newcastle press in 1993 when the takeover of Newcastle United by Sir John Hall and the subsequent appointment of Kevin Keegan (known on Tyneside as “the
 Messiah" as the club’s manager signalled a dramatic change in the club’s fortunes. As the football team went from strength to strength playing attractive, open football, the national press adopted the conveniently short “Toon” to refer to the team and the fans’ own description of themselves as the “Toon Army”. An article on football songs in The Independent describes one such song as “banal in print, but not when the 30,000-strong Toon Army breathes life into it”. The same newspaper in January 1995 has “‘The Toon’ are back and carrying the hopes of a region which has lost its industrial heart”, referring here to Newcastle United, and in May of the same year, another article uses the term in reference to the City of Newcastle and its famed nightlife: “Just what is it about the Toon that makes going out so good?”

Although this use of “toon” was taken up by the press in the 1990s, it is not a new phenomenon. The semi-phonetic spelling is intended to convey the sound of unshifted Middle English /u:/, which is a traditional feature of the Tyneside dialect. Wells notes with regard to the Tyneside accent that “the MOUTH vowel may be of the [aʊ] or [ɛu] type, though traditional-dialect [u(:)] is still very prevalent”.

In a study of dialect writing in Tyneside English, I note that the most common and constant feature in all the texts, from nineteenth century music-hall songs such as The Blaydon Races, to the contemporary adult comic strip “Sid the Sexist” in Viz comic, was this use of <oo> for the SE <ou> or <ow>, indicating the traditional Tyneside pronunciation of Middle English u: as unshifted /u:/). The persistence of this feature through more than two hundred years of dialect writing is remarkable, especially in the face of evidence from a recent sociolinguistic survey of Tyneside English by Sandrine Dalban, which shows that the actual use of /u:/ for ME u: is relatively rare in samples of the speech of present-day Tynesiders. Dalban’s study shows the [u:] variant in MOUTH words as not being used frequently by any category of speaker in her adolescent sample, but being used more frequently by boys than girls, and more frequently by lower-class than middle-class boys. What Dalban does not specify is the lexical items in which [u:] occurs in her sample, but the use of this variant in [tu:n] with the meaning “Newcastle” or “Newcastle United” can be overheard daily and is attested in the speech of a young boy cited in the Newcastle Evening Chronicle:

“Teenager Michael Campbell rolled out his sleeping bag on the tarmac beside the entrance to Newcastle United’s St James’s Park club shop yesterday - four days before the club’s new away strip goes on sale. The 16-year-old admitted his family had all called him ‘mad’ for choosing to spend so long on the streets of Newcastle – but defiantly added that the
long wait would be worth it. ‘I just love the Toon,’ said the Longbenton Community College student."³⁹

The pronunciation /tuːn/ for town could perhaps be said to have been lexicalised, for, as we have seen in the examples from the press, it has acquired a meaning quite distinct from /təun/. There are many towns in England, but only one Toon.

The unshifted /uː/, like the Northumbrian burr, seems to be a prime candidate for Labov’s category of stereotype: it is the subject of overt social comment and it is, according to Dalban, disappearing. However, unlike the burr, which has disappeared from the urban dialect altogether, unshifted /uː/ appears to be going through a process of lexicalisation. The status of this /uː/ pronunciation on Tyneside is similar to that of what Coupland refers to as the /aː/ variable in Cardiff. In both cases, a stereotypical local pronunciation is reinforced as a marker of regional identity by its appearance in words which have a particular resonance and importance in that locality. In Cardiff, the /aː/ pronunciation occurs in all words in the phrase Cardiff Arms Park, and in the name of a local beer, Brain’s Dark, whereas on Tyneside, the /uː/ for ME uː occurs in the words town “Toon” and (Newcastle) brown (ale). As Coupland so neatly puts it: “regional pronunciation and local experience have a mutually encouraging, we might say symbiotic, relationship”.⁴⁰ Tyneside /uː/ would appear to qualify as a stereotype in Labov’s sense, for, as demonstrated in Beal,⁴¹ the use of the semi-phonetic spelling <oo> to represent this pronunciation in words such as town, down, brown with such regularity and over such a long period indicates that there is overt recognition of it as a Geordie feature. In contrast with the dese, dem and dose and toity toid stereotypes of New York City, though, this traditional Geordie pronunciation, far from being stigmatised, has become a token of a regional identity of which Geordies are proud. In this case, the stereotyping may lead to the preservation of traditional pronunciations, albeit in a small set of lexical items. The burr, whilst having been positively evaluated, does not have the benefit of being associated with specific lexical items with local associations. Whilst both the burr and the unshifted /uː/ have been affected by urbanisation and migration in the course of the twentieth century, the latter feature, because of the “symbiotic relationship” referred to by Coupland, can be preserved lexically, whilst the burr cannot.

This preservation of a traditional dialect feature in toon would be better described as an icon (in the sense of a symbol of belief or of a cultural movement) than a stereotype: it stands for all that the Geordie holds sacred. Does this mean that the demise of traditional features like
the [u:] variant in MOUTH words will be halted, or, to return to the Native American analogy with which we started, is toon simply a totem for the Geordie Nation? All the evidence from surveys such as those of Watt and Dalban\textsuperscript{42} seems to point to the latter. The attitude of younger people on Tyneside to the Geordie stereotype is ambivalent: on the one hand, the regional pride referred to at the beginning of this paper is still strong, and the stereotype of the "friendly" Geordie prevails. Against this we must place the earlier but still prevalent "grim up north" stereotype of the unemployed Geordie with his flat cap and whippet, which still has a basis in reality. A recent report in the Newcastle Evening Chronicle shows that the attitude of young, upwardly-mobile Geordies to the "Toon" is that they love it and leave it. Referring to a report from the Chartered Institute of Housing that 46,000 people leave the Northeast annually, half of these between the ages of fifteen and twenty nine, Jon Bennet writes:

"A note arrived the other day from one of my friends in London, just as the first figures proving the North loses thousands of young people to London every year were published. 'Jon, just thought I'd let you know I particularly hate you for still being in the Toon when it's summer and I'm stuck on an hour-long Tube journey home to my £125-a-week box room and you can get to the beach or Quayside in 20 minutes, Adam.' Adam Mason 'absolutely loved' the North-East but the 25-year-old still left three years ago, caught in the brain drain to the South which threatens to create huge divisions between one half of the country and another.\textsuperscript{43}

Bennet goes on to survey his school and college friends, most of whom, like Adam, have reluctantly left Newcastle to seek work in London and concludes "I can count on one hand those who've managed to resist the Dick Whittington tractor beam and stayed to start their careers here."

This "brain drain" is not a new phenomenon and nor is the sentimental nostalgia of the "exiled" Geordie. In Robinson's biography of the Newcastle-based engraver, Thomas Bewick, there is a letter dated August 8th, 1791 to Bewick's brother John in London, to which Thomas adds a song in dialect and writes "if you have not the above, it will add one more to your collection". Robinson goes on to comment: "Newcastle can boast of many capital songs in the vulgar tongue, remarkable for their genuine wit and humour ... John Bewick and his friends ... would often entertain themselves with such ditties on an evening, when the work of the day was over. Though resident in London, Newcastle would ever be fondly remembered."\textsuperscript{44}

What is noticeable here is that the interest in Newcastle's "capital songs in the vulgar tongue" begins to manifest itself at precisely the point in history when the Industrial Revolution leads to the rise of
provincial cities such as Newcastle and to an increased social and geographical mobility of the population. It is also the time when pronouncing dictionaries are being produced to provide the provincial middle classes with guides to “correct” (i.e. educated London) pronunciation. 1791, the date of Bewick’s letter, is also the date of publication of John Walker’s Critical Pronouncing Dictionary. Thomas Bewick himself was an avid amateur dialectologist, and given to performing tales in the “Teynseyde dialect”. Despite the contempt for “provincial” pronunciations shown by the likes of Walker, and the eagerness of wealthy Northumbrians to send their sons south to eradicate them, Geordies in the late eighteenth century, as today, took a pride in their separate regional identity. Perhaps the preservation of stereotypical pronunciations in key words like “Toon”, along with the levelling towards supraregional rather than national norms reported by Watt, represent a strategy for maintaining the positive aspects of the “Geordie” stereotype: friendliness and a strong sense of regional identity, whilst dissociating oneself from the negative, “grim up north” aspects of that stereotype. The future of the Geordie dialect is that it will evolve: some features, like the Northumbrian burr, will disappear; others, like unshifted /u:/, will be fossilised or lexicalised; others, like the FACE and GOAT vowels, will be levelled, but there will still be a distinctive voice for the Geordie Nation.

Notes

3. The earliest citation which I can find is in S. Dobson’s Larn Yersel Geordie, Newcastle, Frank Graham, 1969, p. 20, where it is used humorously.
7. “Mackems” are citizens of Sunderland first and foremost, though the term can be extended to those from other parts of County Durham. The term comes from the tradition of shipbuilding in Sunderland, when workers would “mak” the ships and “tak” them down the River Wear. The Survey of English Dialects shows that the northern limit of the pronunciation /mak/ for “make” is just north of the Wear. This distinction holds only for the northeast of England, since /mak/ is a common pronunciation in Scotland.
11. A telling example here is of a student at Newcastle University, who had attended a private girls’ school in Newcastle. On attending her first-year lectures in English
syntax, she was astonished to hear from the lecturer that the sentence *The lift mustn't be working* with the sense “the evidence leads me to conclude that the lift is not working” was considered ungrammatical.

13. The first citation in the *OED* is from 1959: “He had a faint Geordie twang” (M. Ainsworth, *Murder's Catching*). Geordie is first cited in 1866: “The sailors belonging to the ports on the north-eastern coast of England are called Jordies”, but by 1891 Heslop cites it as the term used for the natives of Newcastle by outsiders. There is no sense that the term Geordie was ever pejorative.

18. This change in the evaluation of nonstandard accents as compared with RP seems to be part of a larger pattern. When the BBC recently launched a revamped evening news programme, the focus groups rejected an RP-accented female speaker as “too snooty”. The job went instead to a man with a Welsh accent.
30. Ibid., p. 179.
33. The Independent, August 12th, 1993.
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A dialect word’s progressive erosion in England and expansion overseas: skerrick

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The central theme of the 1999 publication from the ongoing English Dialect Lexicon project at the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT) at the University of Sheffield, *Lexical Erosion in English Regional Dialects*, exemplifies a concern to record particular cases of the general and observable trend that

"many regional dialect words and expressions familiar to the older generations were not being taken up in the everyday speech of younger people."

In the antecedent "Survey of Sheffield Usage" it was decided that questionnaires containing some one hundred words "at risk" would be placed in Sheffield Central Library and some ten local libraries around that city. Contributors were asked simply for a definition of any such familiar word, and if they had heard it used within the last five years, and whether they themselves had/still used the word in everyday speech. The particular lexical items, including the noun skerrick, were chosen because research at NATCECT suggested they had fallen into disuse locally, although they might perhaps still be in use elsewhere.

This present note is concerned to record a type of reverse of the loss process, namely a fairly steady expansion away from England of one such regional word which was included by Joseph Wright in his *English Dialect Dictionary*. It is concerned with the noun skerrick, recorded in the EDD thus:

"SKERRICK, sb, Wm. Yks. Stf. Not. Lin. Nhp. Hmp. Also written skerrik Not.; and in forms skerrig Not., skirrack, skirrick w. Yks. ... A particle, morsel, scrap, atom; also used fig." ²

On my being informed recently that the word was thought to be "at risk" of slipping almost completely out of use in Yorkshire, apart from retention by certain older informants, it seemed obvious that I could report on the fairly widespread (colloquial) use of it encountered personally in both New South Wales and in Queensland from c. 1960. I also recalled the words of lexicographer George W. Turner on the subject in 1966, soon after his moving to Australia:

"Razoo, like the English jot or tittle appears to be used only in negative contexts. The same is generally true of not a skerrick 'nothing', though
a positive use is found in a poem by J. S. Manifold in the phrase ‘just a skerrick at a time’.

The word skerrick is Yorkshire dialect. It frequently happens that a dialect or obsolete word in England retains currency in Australia and New Zealand ...”

The word *skerrick* is recorded by S. O. Addy in his *A Glossary of Words Used in the Neighbourhood of Sheffield* (1888), thus:


S. J. Baker, the New Zealand born student of Australian English, observed of *skerrick* in 1945 in his own *The Australian Language*, that the word was not found in New Zealand, in his experience. When he had been more than twenty years in his new country he wrote, in the much expanded 1966 edition of his pioneering Australian vocabulary/idiom text:

“Two Australian uses of particular interest are *razoo* and *skerrick* ... hard-worked Australianisms ... employed mainly in negative texts. ... For instance ... we can say that there *isn’t a skerrick of anything left*, but a remnant itself is only rarely described as a skerrick. Loosely, *skerrick* may be defined as ‘a small amount of anything, a small amount of money’, but it nearly always indicates the lack of rather than the possession of anything. The origin is to be found in Yorkshire dialect – [here his footnote says: ‘I quote from R. W. Hamilton’s *Nuggae Literariae* (1841)’] – in which it is defined as ‘the smallest thing or fraction’. English dialect has *skuddick*, anything of small value.”

Sometime after this, Professor G. A. Wilkes, in the first edition of his *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms* (1978) included the word *skerrick*, as usually being in the negative, meaning “a particle, morsel, scrap, atom”, as in *EDD*, 1863, and gave these examples of the usage:

1961 Patrick White, Riders in the Chariot, p. 226: ‘There ain’t no 22-gauge [wire], Harry,’ the gentleman announced. ‘Not a bloody skerrick of it.’

The writers just cited above came from several states, the third writer being a woman member of a distinguished pastoral family in Western Australia. Such a range of distribution attests the word’s general currency, regionally and socially, in the twentieth century.

In 1988 the Oxford University Press in Melbourne issued The Australian National Dictionary, which defined the word as “a scrap”, usually in the negative, and gave a sequence of informal usages covering some 130 years:

“1854 S. Sidney Gallops and Gossips 88, I have plenty of tobacco, but not a skerrick of tea or sugar.
1914 T. C. Wollason Spirit of Child 65, ‘Had any luck, so far?’ I asked. ‘Not a skerrick,’ he answered, ‘not a colour.’
1915 Drew and Evans Grafter 85, He stuck to the paper, and never let up until he read every skerrick there was to read.
1930 ‘Brent of Bin Bin’ Ten Creeks Run (1952) 17, She won’t have a skerrick on her, and that’s all there is about it.
1946 Bulletin (Sydney) 17 July 29/4, Cripes, the soot’s that thick I couldn’t see even a skerrick o’ daylight!
1955 R. Lawler Summer of the Seventeenth Doll (1965) 27, ‘Who’s been at my vinegar?’ … I took a tiny skerrick to put in a salad.
1964 Overland XXX.23, There wasn’t a skerrick of attraction for me.
1985 J. Clancy Lie of the Land 201, ‘Eighty-seven? For that skerrick of …?’ Couldn’t be more than ten squares.’’

By the time The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles had appeared in 1993, further research on both sides of the Tasman led to the word being thus described more confidently as


In early November 1999 a quick computer search revealed the following very recent World Wide Web uses of skerrick.

(a) from Australia:

“November 1996, The mayor of Hurstville, Sydney, … ‘without a skerrick of consultation’;
September 1997, The Age (Melbourne), … ‘figures that the media is happy to repeat without sometimes a skerrick of documentation’;
9 July 1998, *The Age,* ‘the barest skerrick of promotion’ for a rugby match;
27 July 1998, *The Sydney Morning Herald* quoted the Liberal leader in Tasmania stating that his opponent manifested ‘not one skerrick or inkling that there’s any intellectual horsepower there at all’;
14 November 1998, *The Australian* [of a heroin seizure] The quality seized is but a skerrick of the quantity missed;
25 January 1999, In an address by the Hon. K. Beasley, Federal Opposition Leader, ‘— not a skerrick of our republican fervour need be anti-British’;

and (b) from New Zealand:

“early 1990s, David Longe (former New Zealand Prime Minister) in An Address – ‘without the slightest skerrick of the science, intelligence or learning that you have’;
August 1994, from the *Maori Law Review:* ‘The argument … was not supported by “one skerrick of material” …’;
14-15 June 1999, in London, the New Zealand Minister for the Environment, speaking to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, referred to a lobby group which ‘frequently seizes triumphantly on any skerrick of evidence that suggests “natural” warming trends may be discernible …’

At this point *The Dictionary of New Zealand English … on Historical Principles* (1997) was consulted, which gave some five examples of *skerrick,* from 1960 to 1993, with the following inserted preliminary comment, after the definition:

“[Note] The word is of much earlier use in New Zealand than its first recorded date.”

H. Orsman’s annotation here would suggest that some degree of more recent informant recollection may well contradict the lack of familiarity with such a New Zealand usage for both S. J. Baker and G. W. Turner (see above). Certainly the internet-derived examples from New Zealand for the 1990s would suggest a very wide and longtime usage of *skerrick* for it to be so used in the cited more formal contexts. Similarly, the following example from an internationally known novelist may well indicate that *skerrick* is establishing for itself a more recent bridgehead in North America:

“1977 C. McCullough *Thorn Birds* vii. 143. If I had paid you a skerrick of attention it would have been all over Gilly in record time.”
Summary conclusion

While the case for this and other survivals and expansions of the usage of earlier regional dialect words, perhaps now passing finally from the English scene, is a complex one and dependent in every case on both general and particular societal and occupational factors, one can do no better than quote the wise and pertinent words of Emeritus Professor Ian A. Gordon, formerly of the Victoria University of Wellington, in 1988:

"The original settlers who in the 1840s founded the then colony of New Zealand were all English-speaking, predominantly a middle-class and working population drawn from England and Scotland, including many from rural areas."\(^\textsuperscript{15}\)

"The earliest New Zealand colloquial vocabulary has much in common with that of Australia.

Language crossed the Tasman in both directions and each country often claims, as indigenous terms, speech forms the other regards as its own.

... the continued survival of British dialect and regional forms ... [is] so deeply embedded in New Zealand speech that their very presence is unknown to the user."\(^\textsuperscript{16}\)

In 1951 in a short note on "New Zealand English"\(^\textsuperscript{17}\) the then youthful Harold Orsman had speculated on the possibility of research into dialect English coming south with "agricultural labourers". The same point was made at greater length by R. Lass in 1990.\(^\textsuperscript{18}\)

The case of skerrick, a word of now much increased Australasian (and other?) usage would seem to indicate the presence of a most fruitful field for research not merely for erstwhile dialect’s occurrence, but also for a steady elevation in/broadening of the contexts and register in which it was/is used and may be expected to be encountered. The generous scholarship of English dialect survival on the eastern littoral of Canada\(^\textsuperscript{19}\) has yet to be matched by similar close work on its later "southern outreach" to Australia and New Zealand.

Notes

2. J. Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary*, London, Henry Frowde, 1898-1905, Vol. 6, p. 467; many citations are given, some including dates, e.g. w.Yks, 1873; 1863, s.Stf. 1895.
9. This is a gold-mining idiom, referring to a gold flash seen in a miner’s pan, amongst the river shingle, or on wet crushed rock.
12. Conducted at NATCCT, Sheffield, by Jeffrey Bernstein, to whom the present writer is much indebted. He consulted various Australian and New Zealand home pages in the search.
16. Gordon, p. 181. Gordon also cites various occupational usages of English dialect words from mining, forestry, timber construction, etc., all flourishing in New Zealand but forgotten in England and/or Scotland.

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A linguistic approach to the analysis of folk etymology

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Introduction

Every language changes as long as it is spoken. It is by its nature dynamic. Language can easily build and rebuild itself out of its existing or borrowed resources. The process known as folk etymology is one way, among many others, in which language changes. For the most part, these changes escape our attention as they occur. Although this phenomenon is usually considered to be minor, or irrelevant to "serious" linguistic research, it should not be neglected, because a multitude of words owe their present form or present meaning to the influence exercised upon them by popular misconception and modification.

This article aims to give a brief description of folk etymology or false etymology from a linguistic point of view. The projected plan is to present a sample of words which have been modified under the influence of false derivation, or have in some way been altered from their original form or meaning by false analogy. The intention is to point out the phonetic and semantic changes which such words undergo. In this study, folk etymology is not seen as a corruption, but more as an enrichment of a language. The words concerned are assumed to illustrate the creative use of language. It might be said that people in speech communities very often distort their language, manipulating it to create new expressions. Folk etymology is often applied to loanwords to make them resemble familiar, native words. The tendency to give strange words a familiar form has been so constantly at work that it has made the search for the true origin or etymology more difficult than it would otherwise have been. Thus, ravenous has nothing to do with ravens; pantry is not connected with pans but with bread (Old French paneterie = where bread was kept < Lat. panis = bread); buttery had originally no connection with butter, its origin being Middle English botery < Old French boteillerie = a place for bottles > bottlery.

It is evident that conditions in which folk etymology flourishes are basically connected with language borrowing. Normally, when a word is borrowed it is made to fit the phonological system of the borrowing language. According to Palmer, "These words will be regarded with suspicion till they put on an honest English dress and begin to sound familiar". So what is not understood should be converted into what we recognise. Actually, the word is transformed until it can be understood. Associations with other words can change the form of a word.
Investigation and critical study are especially needed in this area of language for the following reasons:

a) A multitude of words (e.g. *cannibal*, *admiral*, *mohair*, *carnival*, *Jerusalem artichoke*, *rosemary*, *cockroach*, *rhyme*, *reindeer*, etc.), considered to be a well-established part of the standard language, owe their present form or present meaning to the influence exercised upon them by popular use, misuse, and favourable associative links. It is only possible to trace their true origins via the process of folk etymology.

b) Not only individual lexical items but even some set phrases are created through misconception of foreign structures, e.g. *raining cats and dogs*. The origin of this expression has never been satisfactorily explained. Suggestions for its origin include the archaic French *catdoupe*, meaning waterfall or cataract. There are some suggestions that it is a modification of an Italian phrase: *acqua a catinelle e dogli* = to rain in basins and casks. It could also be that the expression was inspired by the fact that cats and dogs were closely associated with the rain and wind in Northern mythology. So when some particularly violent tempest appeared, people suggested it was caused by cats (bringing the rain) and dogs (the wind).

c) Even some popular beliefs and patterned behaviour might be influenced by a linguistic misconception. The plant named *menta* in Italian (Lat. *mentha* = mint), was associated with the word *rammentare* = to remember, apparently on the basis of mere surface similarities of sounds. Due to possible linguistic misconception this plant is sometimes given to someone as a token of remembrance. In this case linguistic confusion has resulted in an enduring form of cultural behaviour.

It is evident that many words, phrases and even popular beliefs can be explained only if we take into consideration the phenomenon of folk etymology.

**Basic features of folk etymology**

When dealing with definitions one is always faced with the same problem: different approaches, different definitions. According to *The New Grolier Webster International Dictionary*, folk etymology is defined as: “Modification, through extended popular usage of an unfamiliar word to give it an apparent correlation with a familiar or better understood word, often as a result of misconception of the word’s source and derivation”. Thus *asparagus*, so oddly Latin in its appearance, became *sparrow grass*, especially among speakers of regional dialects.
As Palmer suggests:

"By folk-etymology is meant the influence exercised upon words, both as to their form and meaning, by the popular use and misuse of them. In a special sense it is intended to denote the corruption which words undergo, owing either to false ideas about their derivation, or to a mistaken analogy with other words to which they are supposed to be related". 3

Webster’s definition is taken as a starting point for the present discussion because it includes modification through the exchange of an unfamiliar word for a familiar one. This view corresponds with general attitudes towards the production of new words. Partridge states: "There is a constant tendency, sometimes unconscious, sometimes deliberate and humorous, to give strange words a familiar form, to link the unknown with the known". 4

In the present study it is assumed that misconception and corruption cannot be taken as defining characteristics of folk etymology. Here, folk etymology is considered to be a process which implies transformation and adaptation of lexical items via associative links and analogy. The attempt to explain the puzzling, the unknown, by the wellknown, and even the known by the better known, is seen in the form of many English words. The folk etymology process is a phase of a very general tendency, manifested among the learned and the unlearned, which usually affects foreign words, technical terms or rare words. Some familiar examples may now be given of the operation of popular etymology in English words:

a) Individual lexical items

   buzzard <Old French busart, through the influence of buzz, became buzzard.
   sovereign <Old French soverain through the influence of reign.
   admiral <Old French amiral <Arabic amir = a prince, chief. The insertion of d in the first syllable is due to confusion and association with the word admire, as we see in the Low Latin form admiralis.
   gillyflower is from Old French girafle blended with flower.
   Jerusalem artichoke is from Italian girasole (turning with the sun) and Italian articiocco.
   mongoose is from Marathi mangus. Its assimilation to goose has occasionally caused it to be given a wrong plural, by analogy with geese.
   standard is from Old French estendart and is related to extend. Association with stand has affected both spelling and meaning.
   walnut originally had no connection with wall. It is from Old English wealh (foreign) and is related to Welsh.
b) Compounds – tautology

In many instances, folk etymology has led to a compound in which the second element means the same as the first, i.e. renders the meaning tautological. For example, the second element of *turtle dove* is redundant, since *turtle* is from Latin *turtur* = dove; Old English *hran* (*hreinn* is its Norse cognate or perhaps original) signified *reindeer*, but because the animal was used as a beast of burden, like a draught horse, *hran* became *rein* and *deer* had to be added. A similar situation occurred with *salt-cellar* < Latin *salaria*, Old French *salier* (receptacle for salt) which was associated with the word *cellar* and was added to *salt*.

Folk etymology is not always the work of uneducated speakers. Even the learned have fallen prey to it; for example, sixteenth and seventeenth century writers often spelt *abominable* as *abhominable* on the assumption that it came from Latin *ab homine* = from man; on the other hand, Old English *rime* has become *rhyme* by analogy with *rhythm*.

These well-known examples demonstrate that modification is primarily based on the analogy and associative links between words. It is in fact by analogy and “metanalysis” that many new words come into use. In order to demonstrate this process, the following analysis of the phenomenon is seen within the framework of the linguistic sign and of associative links.

Folk etymology – production through association

In analysing the structure of words it is necessary to pay attention to semantic and phonological information. According to de Saussure the relationship between the form (phonetic structure) of the word and its content (semantic structure) is arbitrary (apart from a small number of onomatopoeic words), but this hypothesis cannot be applied to words refashioned via folk etymology. Such words cannot be viewed as arbitrary linguistic signs because they are motivated by other words with similar phonetic structure. For example, *cockroach* < Spanish *cucaracha*, was modified in form to make it resemble the English words *cock* and *roach*; *rosemary* < Latin *ros marinus* (sea-dew) was modified into the English words *rose* + *Mary*.

It might be concluded that arbitrariness is not a dominant feature of folk etymology. Such words cannot be treated as isolated linguistic signs because they owe their form (phonetic structure) to the associative links with other words. They can be considered as relatively motivated linguistic signs closely linked with other signs of similar phonetic structure. Their origin can be traced via associative links and analogy. Tracing the process of folk etymology, therefore, is likely to shed light on the organisation of the various components in the human wordstore. Though this is not the principal focus of concern here, the following
suggestions regarding the nature and process of folk etymology are based on the work of Aitchison.\textsuperscript{6}

When faced with a foreign or strange word we always seek for apt parallel words among the various possibilities in our mental lexicon. People usually recognise unknown, foreign or strange words by choosing the "best fit": they match the portion they have heard with the word in their mental lexicon that appears to be the most likely candidate to offer a possible explanation. They frequently choose a word which matches the unusual item in sound or meaning. We suggest that such words should be termed "activation models", e.g. \textit{mohair} \textless Arabic \textit{mokkhayyar} (a cloth made of goat's hair), the transformation being made under the influence of the English word \textit{hair}, which in this case serves as the activation model.

We suggest that the process of transformation and modification might be summarised as follows: when we hear a "strange word" we try to activate all known similar words from our mental lexicon. We usually choose a word matching the sound or meaning. Words which sound similar, particularly in their beginnings and endings, are those which are most closely linked. It is evident that the formal and semantic associations of words are initiated by a similarity factor. We have considered various kinds of links found between words based on a similarity, or having shared units, and they may be summarised thus:

a) similarity of meaning (Latin \textit{turtur} – English \textit{dove} = turtle dove);
b) words having sounds in common (Spanish \textit{cucaracha} – English \textit{cock} + \textit{roach} = \textit{cockroach});
c) similarity of sound structure and meaning (\textit{belfry} \textless French \textit{beffroy} = tower; \textit{belfry} because bells are housed in it)

The tendency to give meaning and form to adopted words via modification based on association and analogy has exercised a permanent and appreciable influence on every language, e.g. Old French \textit{sourdite} \textgreater adj. \textit{souffreteux} because of associations with \textit{souffrir}; German \textit{durchbläuen} = to beat \textless \textit{bliuwan}; the meaning of this word is connected with the word \textit{blau} = blue, because of the association with bruises. This process is continually at work in the creative use of language.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Folk etymology seems to be an important source of linguistic invention and new word creation. The process is the same as that of any other innovation in language. Hundreds of examples can be found in English, some of which are considered to be international words, e.g. \textit{carnival, cannibal, admiral}, etc. They were probably adopted into the
language as words which had already been modified in the donor language, the most frequent source of such English terms being Latin and French. On the other hand, the vast majority of words are clearly modelled on the existing English morphemes in a fairly transparent manner and in accordance with the English linguistic system. In sum, folk etymology employs linguistic virtuosity while still operating within the general framework of a language’s rules. Folk etymology happens only in specific conditions and mainly refers to unfamiliar, foreign or “barbaric” words. In this case the notion “barbaric” corresponds with the original meaning of the word barbarian (Greek barbaros > Latin barbarus = one whose language is unintelligible, a foreigner). It seems that “barbaric words” are the main source of folk etymology. In conclusion, we can say that a linguistic approach to the analysis of the folk etymology process helps us to explain the origin and formation of many English words.

Notes


References


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The etymology of *gob*, *gab*, "mouth"

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There is no accepted etymology for the colloquial word *gob* (also, *gab*) "mouth". At the end of the nineteenth century, Skeat stated baldly that "the provincial English* gob, the mouth, is borrowed from Celtic directly". He was referring ultimately to an Irish word, *gop*, which is defined by the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* as "muzzle, snout, beak". Twentieth century etymologists, however, are more circumspect. The *OED*, after noting the word’s northern distribution, as Grose, Halliwell, and Brockett had done beforehand, remarks that the word is "of obscure origin" and that it may "possibly" have been adopted from "Gael[ic] and Irish", and the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* says that it "perh[aps]" derives from the Celtic. The etymology of *gob* may have been under-investigated because it is considered a low word, yet it and the variant form *gab* have several common derivatives: the simple verbs *to gob* and *to gab* and the frequentative verbs *to gobble*, *to gabble*; the adjectival forms *gobby*, *gabby*; and possibly, the substantive *gobbet*, in the sense "mouthful".

If the word had been investigated further, perhaps one of the above dictionaries would have mentioned a stronger etymological candidate. An alternative derivation suggests itself when we examine the distribution map of dialect words for the notion *mouth* in Orton and Wright’s *A Word Geography of England* (a work based upon the Survey of English Dialects), where we see that the word *gob* is found in Yorkshire, County Durham, Westmorland, the northern parts of Derbyshire and of Lincolnshire, and in an area of Norfolk – in other words, almost exactly the Danelaw area. We also find one of the very earliest printed occurrences of the word in Ray’s late seventeenth century glossary of Northern English words. This suggests that, as an alternative to the Celtic hypothesis, we should seek a Scandinavian origin for the word. We do not have to look far. One of the terms for the notion *mouth* in modern Danish is the word *gab*. So, it was surely Scandinavian settlers who brought the words *gob* and *gab* to England. Cognates also exist in modern Swedish and modern Norwegian: *gap*. And this is the form the word had in Old Norse, the period we should assume the word was introduced here.

The nouns *gob* and *gab* are related to the modern English verb *gape*, (*gapen* in Middle English) which refers to the mouth, and is recorded as early as c. 1225. As this verb has been linked with the Old Norse verb *gapa* in the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, the
failure to identify the strong possibility for a Scandinavian provenance of
the related nouns gob and gab is all the more surprising. 14

Notes

6. OED, s.v. “gob”, n.2.
8. See note 13 below.
11. The most popular term is mund, an immediate cognate of English “mouth”.
14. One possible cause for this oversight may be confusion arising from the existence of the French word gobet, loaned into English and now spelt “gobbet” which also clearly contains the element gob – as is clear from the definition of the word in the French dialect of Normandy as given by the Dictionnaire du patois normand: “morceau que l’on ‘gobe’, comme dans le style familier, et par suite fragment” (M. M. Edélestand, and A. Duméril, Dictionnaire du patois normand, Caen, B. Mancel, 1849, s.v. “gobbet”. But, in fact, what we have here is corroboratory evidence, as the Norman dialect is alone among all the dialects of French in having experienced an influx of North Germanic loanwords.

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"They got the English hashed up a bit": Names, narratives and assimilation in Newfoundland’s Syrian/Lebanese community

JOHN ASHTON

One of the largest of all westward migrations from the Old World to the New took place over the course of roughly three decades between the 1880s and the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914. An extensive and prolonged exodus from the Eastern Mediterranean to Canada, the United States and parts of South America resulted from the uprooting of a large proportion of the population of the Mount Lebanon region of what was then Syria, in turn, a dominion of the sprawling Ottoman Turkish Empire. Fleeing a combination of endemic poverty, pestilence, military conscription and religious persecution by their Turkish rulers, tens of thousands of Maronite Christian Arabs, along with a smaller number of the Moslem Druze community, joined refugees from Southern and Eastern Europe in a massive population shift towards the Americas.

As a result of this migration, it is estimated that the population of Mount Lebanon declined by more than one quarter and New World Arab communities appeared throughout Eastern Canada, along the entire Eastern Seaboard of the United States and as far South as Brazil and Argentina. A small portion of these emigrants found their way to the island of Newfoundland, at that time itself a British colony. Some came directly to the port of St. John’s and smaller communities in nearby Conception Bay, but the majority arrived as a result of secondary migrations, occasionally from major centres like New York or Montreal, but more often from Yarmouth, Sydney and other small towns in Nova Scotia. Typically, Arab businessmen who had established themselves in those places would send out junior family members to extend their trade, first as pack-peddlers and later as the operators of more conventional business enterprises in Newfoundland’s commercial centres.

A pivotal figure in the early history of Syrian/Lebanese settlement in Newfoundland was Kaleem Noah (1868-1957). A native of Hadeth El-Joubeh in Northern Lebanon, he emigrated to New York in 1887 and worked as a peddler in the Northeastern U.S. and Canada before settling in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. He moved to St. John’s, Newfoundland in 1896 and established a wholesale dry goods business with premises at several locations near the St. John’s waterfront. Kaleem became a spokesman and father figure for the burgeoning Syrian enclave that grew up around the North side of New Gower Street in the capital city and sponsored a number
of his countrymen whom he brought to Newfoundland to work for him as pack peddlers on the Avalon Peninsula and beyond.  

Like many of those who came after him, Kaleem Noah used a name that was not entirely the one he had brought with him from the homeland. His family name was Bacile and in Hadeth he had been Kaleem Noah (the son of Noah) Bacile. His daughter, Winifred Basha, told me that the customs officers on Ellis Island where her father had embarked, thought it was “easier” just to keep Noah as the family name. She also confided that not all members of the family were pleased by the change. On one occasion her sister Mary erased the name Noah from above her father’s store on Water Street and replaced it with the original Arabic family name.

Some family traditions suggest that Syrian/Lebanese immigrants were duped into staying in Newfoundland by being put ashore on Bell Island or in St. John’s and being told or assuming that they had arrived at Ellis Island or New York respectively. Such was the case of William Mikel Alia as told to me by his nephew:

“... there's a story about Uncle Willie, that’s Willie ___ , my father’s brother, he, (Q. He was the first to leave was he?) He was the first of our family. He drank a lot he did. He never did well. My father supported him all the time. Anyway, he was drunk. He thought he was going to New York. So the ship had to call into St. John’s for repairs and he was hung over so he got up, ya know. ‘Where are we, where are we?’ They said ‘Newfoundland.’ He thought it was New York and he got off (laughter) poor fella.”

Newfoundland’s Arab communities formed around the cumulative immigration of select kinship groups from a surprisingly small number of Levantine source areas. The vast majority of the Island’s Syrian/Lebanese population can trace an ancestry back to one of three places: the small agricultural settlement of Hadeth El-Joubbeh in Lebanon’s Northern Mountains, the ancient city of Baalbek to the East and, least significantly, the port city of Beirut, capital of present-day Lebanon.

Arab families gravitated towards areas of Newfoundland where trade and commerce were growing at the end of the nineteenth century. Consequently, Syrian/Lebanese enclaves emerged in the business district of the capital city of St. John’s, in Wabana on nearby Bell Island, site of a booming iron ore mining operation, and in Western Newfoundland in the Bay of Islands, centre of a thriving herring and cod fishery. Families from each of these locations would later extend the range of their operations, first by peddling and later by establishing permanent business premises in communities that dotted the route of the trans-island railway which was completed in 1898.

In Newfoundland, Arab immigrants found a society in which, with the exception of a few Chinese families residing in St. John’s, they
comprised the only visible immigrant minority; a society distinguished by a level of ethnic homogeneity unparalleled in North America. The population was made up almost entirely of two residentially segregated, primary settlement groups, the descendants of eighteenth and nineteenth century migrants from the Southwestern English counties of Somerset, Dorset and Devon and the Southeastern corner of Ireland encircling the port cities of Wexford and Waterford. “It is unlikely”, asserts cultural geographer John Mannion, “that any other province or state in contemporary North America drew such an overwhelming proportion of its immigrants from such localized areas in the European homeland over so substantial a period of time.” The shaping influence of these unique forces of history and settlement meant that for the newly arriving Syrian/Lebanese immigrants, the pressure to assimilate was immediate and intense.

The immigrants’ initial frame of self-reference was “Syrian” (occasionally “Assyrian”), or “Maronite”, but the majority seem to have adopted the designation “Lebanese” in the 1920s after much of their homeland was formally incorporated into the Republic of Lebanon. They were more pejoratively dubbed “Jews” or “Tallymen” (Italians) by local residents with whom there were occasional conflicts such as that described in the Western Star in January of 1909:

“Lively Scene at Bell Island: Miners and Syrians Fight
Bell Island witnessed another very disorderly scene on Christmas Eve and as a result, three men are under the doctor’s care, one being in a very bad state having been stabbed in three places. It being the festive season, some of the men procured liquor and made merry. Evidently they indulged in too much as a quarrel arose with some Syrians near the mines. Words lead to a fistic encounter which ended in knives being drawn. For several minutes the mêlée was furious and the wonder is that some of the combatants were not killed outright.”

Institutional intolerance towards the Arab community was embodied in a series of immigration restrictions enacted by the Newfoundland legislature in 1906 with the express purpose of severely limiting, if not entirely eliminating, the flow of Chinese and Middle Eastern immigrants to the island. This legislation followed upon a series of provocative editorials in the local press and xenophobic diatribes by members of Newfoundland’s Legislative Council. A number of prominent Arab business people did their best to counter this rhetoric through a letter-writing campaign to the St. John’s Evening Telegram. Despite their best efforts, however, the so-called “Aliens Act” effectively put an end to the growth of the Syrian/Lebanese community on the island.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that assimilation happened quickly and accelerated as the profile of the Arab community was
established. The Maronite faith of the old country was rapidly displaced by a liturgically similar Roman Catholicism. The Arabic language was soon abandoned in favour of English so that by the third generation its use was almost entirely restricted to the terms of endearment for family members, terminology associated with Middle-Eastern foods, and the occasional profanity. A whole range of Levantine custom and belief was also quickly relinquished.

Among the most dramatic manifestations of the process of acculturation and an almost universal feature of ethnic minority cultures in North America is the transformation of Old World family names, ostensibly to make them more readily acceptable to or more readily understood by members of the dominant receiving culture. To this date, almost fifty family names of Syrian/Lebanese derivation have been located in Newfoundland. One or two, such as Kawaja, a name borne by the descendants of Assah Kawaja ("lord" or "master") from Beirut, or Suffidy, a name found in St. John’s and Burin in Southern Newfoundland, have remained unaltered. The vast majority, however, have undergone greater or lesser degrees of modification by one of a limited variety of means involving one or both of the name’s translation and reconfiguration.

By “translation” I mean any attempt at anglicisation. This would include an Arabic name being changed somewhat in order to render it more readily pronounceable by members of the host community. It would also encompass a more radical transformation of the name to produce a recognisable approximation of an English or Irish surname. Hence, Suliman Yousef Saleh took the name Joe Solo, Jerus Karbaj was recognized as George Corbage and Boat El Teen, the members of the house or clan of the “Fig Farmers,” became the Alteen family. Meanwhile, the Arabic surnames Andrea, Khalil, Miffleh and Shaheen in Newfoundland were rendered Andrews, Kelly, Murphy and Sheehan respectively.

Reconfiguration of Old World nomenclature involved rearranging the components of Arabic family names. This resulted most often in the foregrounding of the biblical Christian names of the Maronite tradition more easily recognisable to members of the receiving culture, although it was also a naming strategy occasionally employed by Druze immigrant families. In its simplest form, the family name of the immigrant kinship group was dropped and replaced by the patriarchal given name. Thus, two Newfoundland-Arab lineages were created when Karem, the son of Simon Bacile from Hadeth El-Joubbeh, adopted the name Karem Simon and Kaleem, son of Noah Bacile became Kaleem Noah. Joseph, son of Boulos (Paul) Chedraoui, also of Hadeth, founded the Boulos line of Newfoundland-born Syrian/Lebanese. The adoption of the father’s given name as a middle name, by a son, is a longstanding practice in the Middle East generally and the Mount Lebanon region particularly. In the case of
Newfoundland’s Arab community the Levantine cultural heritage became a valuable resource for the creative modification of family nomenclature. The device of reconfiguration accounts for many of the familiar Syrian/Lebanese surnames in Newfoundland, including Daniels, David, Michael and Joseph.

A somewhat more complex modification would take place when an Arabic family name was displaced by a father’s given name, which was in turn adapted to form a more English- or Irish-sounding surname. Hence, Saleh Wahid Awaidat, a Druze immigrant of the early twentieth century, became Peter White, while a Syrian Lebanese resident of Botwood in central Newfoundland explains the genesis of his family name as follows:

"When my father came to Newfoundland he translated his middle name Domit to the English Dominic and dropped the family name Saadeh. He then went by the name of Saliba Dominic."12

The naming patterns outlined above are accompanied and supported by a tradition of etymological narratives and quasi-narratives that both validate and compensate for modifications of traditional nomenclature within the Newfoundland Arab community. E. R. Seary, for example, cites family tradition in explaining the provenance of the name Gaultois, commonly found in parts of Western Newfoundland:

"The name seems to have been given arbitrarily to a Maronite family ... whose original name, presumably of Arabic origin, was unintelligible to some official or other."13

Such narratives are by no means unusual and are framed around motifs that will be immediately familiar to students of ethnic and family folklore. For example, the following narrative was related by the granddaughter of an immigrant who entered Newfoundland bearing the name Mikiel Khanife ("The first Christian"). It accounts for the provenance of "Daniels" a well-known family name of Corner Brook:

"His father’s name was Michael, and they were coming through immigration. I don’t know what their Lebanese name was, but my father told me the literal translation would be ‘Christian’. But he thinks that whatever it was that the customs official or immigration official couldn’t figure out what his father was saying. So, he said ‘Michael Iben Daniel’ which is ‘Michael, the son of Daniel’ which was father’s name. So he put down Michael Daniels and that was it."14
Nora Alteen, who was born on Bell Island, Newfoundland and now resides in Corner Brook, provides the ensuing account of the origin of her maiden name, which was “Tuma”:

“Well father came from a little town on the outskirts of Baalbek, called ‘Duma’, D-U-M-A. And he was only a child when he came here and they got the names, I think, mixed up, because I’m sure I heard my father say the real family name is Nasser ... Duma people there’d spell Tuma, y’know, because they got the English hashed up a bit (laughter).”

Nora’s daughter later elaborated that, upon immigration, members of the family were asked to provide their name and thought they were being asked where they came from. The response, “Duma” was written down as Tuma.

Suliman Yousef Saleh was one of a handful of Druze immigrants to Newfoundland. His grandson relates how changing his name for the sake of his English-speaking neighbours went hand in hand with the adoption of a new religion:

“The last name, Saleh, was my grandfather’s surname. When he came here it was anglicized, Solo, because people couldn’t pronounce a lot of those names. Listen! ‘Saleh’, English doesn’t sound like that and people couldn’t pronounce Saleh, so, ‘Solo’ people called him. He went by the name. He became a Christian. He was a Druze. That was his religion ... When he came here he became a Christian and he was Simon Joseph Solo.”

There is an extensive onomastic, sociological and folkloristic literature devoted to the transformation of traditional nomenclature within ethnic communities of all kinds. Interpretations of the phenomenon fall, broadly speaking, into two categories. The first portrays the modification of family names as a straightforward expression of the immigrant community’s need to assimilate—an abandonment of the Old World culture in order to secure acceptance by the receiving community.

A second set of interpretations views name-changing as a more consciously applied form of cultural adaptation; in Betty Blair’s words, “... a dynamic and deliberate response to current needs rather than a departure from past traditions.” Names are modified over time in order to achieve a variety of calculated objectives for members of the ethnic community, including the achievement of social acceptance, commercial success and disassociation with the political and/or religious culture of the Old World, and so on.

In observing Syrian/Lebanese naming practices in Newfoundland I have come, for a variety of reasons, to question each of these interpretive frameworks for the modification of traditional nomenclature in this particular community context. In the first instance, the resort to Levantine
tradition inherent in the practice of displacing family names with allusions to patrilineal descent would appear to render simplistic assertions that the transformation of Arabic surnames in Newfoundland is merely an abandonment of the Old World culture or an articulation of the Arab community’s openness to complete assimilation.

On the other hand, the majority of Middle-Eastern immigrants, Christian and Druze, who arrived in Newfoundland at the end of the nineteenth century were poor and desperate; fugitives of various kinds who almost unanimously adopted peddling as an occupation of first resort. It seems unlikely that name-changing for purposes of improving social standing, attaining success within the business community or implying political and religious conformity would have taken precedence with them.

However, the modification of traditional nomenclature may be differently perceived when viewed in the light of the tradition of name-centred narratives alluded to here. These stories emphasise the immediacy and serendipity of the transformations of family names. For the most part, these transformations are portrayed as being uncontrived and perpetrated initially by, or for the benefit of, members of the receiving community rather than the immigrants themselves. They result from intentional or unconscious failures to correctly interpret the meaning or intent of the original Arabic frame of reference, and the immigrants are seen to obligingly accept the ensuing mispronunciations or translations.

In my view, these narratives function as what Alan Dundes once termed “metafolklore”, providing a folkloristic commentary upon the naming practices referenced, and adumbrating their meaning from an emic or group member’s perspective. As such they project an ambivalent attitude towards the transformation of Arabic family names. They represent the process as acculturative (embodying cultural change as the result of culture contact) but not necessarily assimilative (embodying the submission of the immigrant culture to the dominant receiving culture). They present an inside view, and a surprisingly dispassionate one at that, of the reality of name-changing for members of Newfoundland’s Syrian/Lebanese families. In so doing they contextualise and clarify a crucial phase in the transition from immigrant to ethnic community.
APPENDIX

Lebanese/Syrian Family Names in Newfoundland

Abbas
From the Arabic “one who frowns” (Seary, p. 3). In St. John’s (Census, 1921) and Corner Brook, a barber on Broadway, came from Nova Scotia (SWGC 01-001).

Abbiss
From the Arabic “morose, sullen” in Buchans (Seary, p. 3).

Alexander
A name of Syria-Lebanon from the Greek “defender of men” (Seary, p. 6).

Alteen
*Boat el Teen*, “house of the fig-farmers” (SWGC 01-001) in Corner Brook and Grand Falls. From Ryshya, Lebanon (Seary, p. 7).

Andrews

Basha
Reflecting the Arabic pronunciation of the Turkish *Pasha* “emperor, sovereign” (Seary p. 27). In St. John’s, Bell Island, Harbour Grace, Twillingate, Corner Brook, Bay of Islands. (Census, 1921).

Boulos
Christian-Arabic form of Paul (Seary, p. 46). In St. John’s, Corner Brook, Badger, Bishop’s Falls, Millertown, Deer Lake, Stephenville (Census, 1921).

Carbage
A surname of Lebanon from the Turkish *kurbaj* “whip”. Abraham from Baalbek moved to Burin, his family to Bell Island (Seary, p. 81). Mike Carbage came from Baalbek to Bell Island. They had a big store (SWGC 01-001).

Corbage
Jerus Karbaj became George Corbage. From Beirut via New York to Bonne Bay (SWGC 01-001) in Bell Island, Burin (Census, 1921).

Corey
Khourri from Montreal (SWGC 01-011) in St. John’s (Chafe, p. 3).

Daniels
Michael, from Syria, of Harbour Grace Parish, 1898 (Seary, p. 133). In Corner Brook.

David
In Deer Lake. Freddie operated a restaurant, married a Joseph (SWGC 01-001).
Dominic
Saliba ("cross"). Dominic had a store in Corner Brook (SWGC 01-001) also in Botwood.

Ellis
Possible derivative of Elias, in St. John’s (Census, 1921).

Faour
Variant of the Turkish name Fawri (Seary, p. 174). Gidoun came to Corner Brook from St. John’s (SWGC 01-001). In Corner Brook.

Ferris
Kay had a convenience store in Corner Brook (SWGC 01-001). In St. George’s, Bay of Islands (Census, 1921).

Fiscobie
In Bell Island (SWGC 01-001).

Gaultois
In St. George’s. They had a dry goods store (SWGC 01-001) also in Stephenville Crossing (Seary, p. 200).

Gosine
From the Arabic gusn ("small branch, twig"). In Bell Island, Portugal Cove, St. John’s (Seary, p. 212).

Hemeon
A surname of Syria-Lebanon of unknown origin. In Botwood (Seary, p. 243).

Herro
In Burin and Bell Island (Seary, p. 246, Census, 1921).

Joseph
Name adopted by two different Lebanese families since arrival in St. John’s in 1911 (Seary, p. 278). In St. John’s, Deer Lake, Corner Brook, Bay of Islands (Census, 1921).

Kawaja
From the Persian "lord, master" (Seary, p. 281). In Corner Brook.

Kelly
Originally Khalil (SWGC 01-001) in Corner Brook, Bay of Islands (Census, 1921).

Kyte
From Chikite (SWGC 01-001) in Corner Brook (Bassler, p. 83).

Michael
In St. John’s and Corner Brook (Seary, p. 356, Census, 1921).

Monier
Pronounced “moneer”. “He must have come from the old country because he could barely speak a word of English.” (SWGC 01-001). In Corner Brook.

Murphy
Originally Miflleh (SWGC 01-001). In St. John’s.

Neimas
In the Bay of Islands (Encyclopedia Vol. 3, p. 265).

Nikosey
In St. John’s, Bell Island (Census, 1921, Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, p. 269).

Noah
From the Hebrew and Arabic personal name ("long-lived") (Seary, p. 382) in St. John’s, Corner Brook (Census, 1921).
Richard
In St. John’s (SWGC 01-001, Chafe, p. 3, Encyclopedia, p. 269).

Saab
(Sabb) from the Arabic “hard, difficult” (Seary, p. 460) In St. John’s.

Sapp
Alternative rendition of Saab. Also in Botwood, Bell Island (SWGC 01-001, Census, 1921).

Sharlotte
In St. John’s (SWGC 01-001). Michael, a peddler buried in St. John’s 1893 (Encyclopedia, p. 268).

Sheehan
Anglicisation of a surname of Lebanon (Shaheen). Suliman of Beirut settled in Deer Lake in 1912 (Seary, p. 473); also in Bell Island (SWGC 01-001).

Simon
In St. John’s, Botwood, Cape St. George (SWGC 01-001, Seary, p. 477).

Solo
A name of unascertained origin (Seary, p. 484). Suliman Yousef Saleh from Majdal Shams, Syria. Settled in Branch, St. Mary’s Bay in 1912 (Census, 1921). Baptised Simon Joseph Solo (SWGC 01-001).

Sphire
In St. John’s (Census, 1921, SWGC 01-001).

Suffidy
In St. John’s, Burin (Census, 1921).

Tooton

Tuma
The Christian-Arabic form of Thomas (Seary, p. 522). In Bell Island, Corner Brook (SWGC 01-001).

White
In Corner Brook. Replaced the Druze family name Awaidat (SWGC 01-001).

Zarouk
Pronounced “saroo”. “He was a preacher of sorts.” (SWGC 01-001). In Corner Brook.

Notes
1. This paper was originally presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society in Columbus, Ohio, October 25th-29th, 2000. The research upon which it is based was generously supported by a grant from the J. R. Smallwood Foundation for Newfoundland and Labrador Studies.


5. I spoke with Winifred Basha shortly before her death at the age of 95. Regrettably I was unable to record our conversation on tape. Taperecordings of all other interviews cited in this paper are housed in the Folklore collection at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College under accession number SWGC 01-001. Information on Arabic surnames in Newfoundland is taken from these interviews as well as a series of questionnaire responses housed as part of the same collection. Name spellings are as provided by my informants. Additional information on Arabic nomenclature in Newfoundland is found in E. R. Seary’s *Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland*. Subsequent references to items in the archival collection will be noted in the following format: SWGC 01-001, F.276, etc.

6. SWGC 01-001, F.283.


10. I would like to make special acknowledgment of the invaluable assistance of Mr. Joseph Boulos of St. John’s, Newfoundland, in all aspects of my research on the Newfoundland Syrian/Lebanese community.


12. SWGC 01-001, Q.13.


14. SWGC 01-001, F.280.

15. SWGC 01-001, F.284.

16. SWGC 01-001, F.277.

though dealing with personal not family names, nicely summarises these tendencies in the literature and provides bibliographic references to works on name changing among several of the more prominent ethnic communities in North America.


**References**


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Hidden depths: exploiting archival resources of spoken English

J. D. A. WIDDOWSON

The end of a century is traditionally a time for reflection on the past and the future, a time for taking stock of every aspect of our culture. As we approach a new century, and indeed a new millennium, we have a unique opportunity to appraise the present state and future development of the English language, which itself mirrors the many and diverse cultures where English is spoken. In the British Isles, as elsewhere, the twentieth century has been one of extraordinary upheaval and change, inevitably reflected in the language. Among these changes, perhaps none has had greater impact than the remarkable advances in all aspects of technology. To take a single example of particular relevance for linguists, the advent of electronic sound recording has freed us from dependency on studying language as dimly filtered through the uncertain and capricious medium of print. We are now so used to such technological resources that it is easy to forget their significance, not only for the study of twentieth century English but also in preserving an extensive record of speech for the future. At the close of a century of momentous and unprecedented change it is important to rediscover the currently unfashionable historical dimensions in the study of English culture and tradition. In this process of rediscovery the unparalleled resources available since the advent of sound recording more than a century ago, and notably the wealth of information in the numerous existing archival collections of recorded speech across the country, is crucial to the documentation, analysis and conservation of data on all aspects of the recent history and development of the English language.

The first hundred years of sound recording have left us an enduring legacy of spoken English, a rich store of primary evidence for the study of linguistic variation and change throughout the twentieth century. In theory, this material should provide unlimited opportunities for research across the whole range of spoken English in an era of extraordinarily rapid change. In practice, however, much of this data remains hidden and inaccessible, scattered in numerous, often obscure, repositories. Certainly, linguists need to explore ways in which all this unique data can be preserved, and utilised in charting continuity and change in the language over the past century. Folklorists and other social scientists also of course have much to gain from accessing this wealth of data. To harness and exploit these resources requires a major collaborative exercise, involving as many institutions and individuals as possible, in
order to identify, assemble, collate and make accessible the massive body of recorded speech held in the various repositories. This is such a major undertaking that the task may best be approached in two phases. A first step would be to identify, locate, catalogue and collate the relevant material by means of a nationwide survey. A second phase would include strategies for copying, preserving, analysing and exploiting the data, and making it generally available for reference and research. As the burgeoning field of corpus linguistics develops, the addition of a nationwide database focusing specifically on the extraordinary range of variation in English speech, not just phonological, but also lexical, grammatical, syntactical and semantic, would fill a major gap in current provision for research in this area.

Since this is a spoken record it is of course particularly appropriate for the study of accents, and of social and regional dialects in general. The apparently rapid erosion of regional dialects in the twentieth century is just one aspect of linguistic variation and change which would repay investigation through a comprehensive database of the kind proposed. In turn, this might lead on to a consideration of whether the term dialect is appropriate for the study of social and regional varieties of spoken British English in the twenty first century. Perhaps surprisingly in an age of political correctness, the term continues to have pejorative connotations in England. As distinct from its use in other countries, in this country it appears to share with folklore a totally unjustified association with the uneducated, the rural, the older generation, the socially disadvantaged, and so on. Such wilful misunderstanding of historically and regionally based linguistic variation, and of traditions which lie at the heart of our national culture and identity, perversely perpetuates class conscious stereotypical concepts in a peculiarly English way. Quite apart from class-conscious attitudes to nonstandard varieties of the language, older terms such as provincial and vulgar with reference to these varieties may well lie at the heart of the poisoning of a word which originally simply denoted “Manner of speaking, language, speech”, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Scholarly use of provincial and vulgar with reference to regional speech fell prey in due course to the degeneration of their meaning in the language as a whole, reflecting the gulf between the elite and the masses. Even as late as 1934, H. C. Wyld was still using provincialism and vulgarism in his infamous discussion of Received Standard English. The degeneration of the meaning of the word dialect in general usage, despite the efforts of linguists to deny its negative connotations when using it in an academic context, militates against its viability as an unmarked designation of its referent. As distinctive local and regional varieties decline and supra-regional varieties such as so-called Estuary English advance, dialect seems to be an increasingly
inappropriate term to characterise them. Rebranding may be the only escape from these deeprooted misconceptions, and the replacement of dialect by the neutral term language variety, though somewhat vague, is at least a step in the right direction. In the same way, the use of tradition and cultural tradition clearly circumvents the problems associated with the word folklore in England, notwithstanding its ready acceptance in other cultures.

The proposed database, with the suggested overall title Corpus of Recorded Spoken English (CORSE), would act, inter alia, as a modern equivalent of the printed collections of the nineteenth century and earlier, as exemplified for instance in the glossaries of regional dialect published by the English Dialect Society, the English Dialect Dictionary, studies of pronunciation, and glossaries and dictionaries like those of Brockett, Forby, Grose, Halliwell, Hotten, Nares, Walker, and Thomas Wright, among many others. It would be a valuable and revealing adjunct to the many studies of linguistic variation, both published and unpublished, which have been undertaken over the past hundred years, and would provide an invaluable record of language variety and change during the past hundred years. It would also act as a baseline for future research, whether diachronic and/or comparative, or synchronic – focusing on a specific period or even presenting an overview of variation in usage over the whole of the twentieth century and beyond, and assessing its significance at this important point in the history of the language.

Since variety is not only a hallmark of English but also one of its perennially most fascinating aspects, it is surprising that to date there have been no attempts to create a nationwide corpus representative of variation as such, let alone one which gathers together the available evidence of speech preserved in electronically recorded form in numerous repositories. While some efforts have been made to survey, preserve and augment existing archival holdings in certain fields – as for example in oral history – most institutions and individuals directly concerned with recording and analysing English speech and its variation tend to do so in isolation, having little or no contact with each other, especially with regard to sharing information on their actual sound recordings. By focusing on the variationist perspective, we are able to raise issues, suggest future trends, and hopefully discover potential scope for collaboration in developing these subject areas within the general field of sociolinguistics, and, much more widely, in the broad fields of social, cultural and historical studies.

The main objective of this paper is to outline a possible strategy for creating the proposed corpus. An obvious starting point is to identify and survey what is already available, though with varying degrees of accessibility. Firstly there are the major existing linguistic corpora, a
number of which include spoken usage, whether in the form of recordings and/or transcriptions. Among these are: the British National Corpus; COBUILD; the Lancaster/Oslo/Bergen Corpus; the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English, and so on. However, these are purpose-built corpora and, despite their huge range, may not be truly representative of all the many types and styles of spoken English, even in the British Isles, let alone across the English-speaking world. Although accessible, they function separately and independently – each with its own protocols, which tends to frustrate interactive research seeking to draw on more than one of them. Secondly, of course, we have the major archives and repositories in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland: the National Sound Archive; the BBC Sound Archive, and its Millennium project on oral history, noted above; the British Institute of Recorded Sound; the Linguistic Survey of Scotland; the archives of the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh; the Museum of Welsh Life in Cardiff; Cultra Manor, Belfast; the Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin; the former Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies (now designated the Archives of Vernacular Culture) at the University of Leeds; the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT) at the University of Sheffield; the recently established collections at University College, Cork; and regional archives such as the North West Sound Archive, to name only a small selection. Thirdly, and especially important in view of their largely unexploited depth and breadth, the surveys, dissertations, theses, monographs, research projects and studies, recordings, transcriptions and other data scattered throughout the higher education sector, notably in universities and colleges of higher and further education. Some of this data is held in the archives and/or libraries of the institutions concerned, but much remains in often widely dispersed and inaccessible locations in departmental collections or, we must admit to our shame, kept in inadequate storage conditions in our own offices, or even at home, gathering dust, wow and flutter, print-through and meltdown, silently shedding the hard-won sounds of twentieth century speech in the constantly dispersing particles of ferric oxide of an obsolescent recording system whose electronic successor remains uncertain amid the rapid advance of technology and the lack of financial support for preserving this unique data in a new and hopefully more permanent form.

An untold range and depth of data, much of it recorded in the field lies, often deteriorating and largely unused, in many of these repositories. While data from the Tyneside Linguistic Survey is being rediscovered and the recordings of the Survey of English Dialects at the University of Leeds are being prepared for access on CD-ROM, the material in other major collections remains comparatively inaccessible and underexploited.
This is certainly true of the wealth of information on audiotape, videotape and film in the archives of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition. These archives include tapes from the national Survey of English Language and Folklore; the English and Welsh section of the *Atlas Linguarum Europae* onomasiological survey; the Survey of Yorkshire Dialect; the Survey of Sheffield Usage; a Yorkshire oral history survey; the David Bathe Collection; the Nigel Kelsey Collection; the Charlotte Norman Collection; the Russell Wortley Collection, and the Mary and Nigel Hudleston Collection. Data in the last five of these, together with that from the Survey of English Language and Folklore, includes information on all six of the major categories in NATCECT's teaching and research programmes: Communication; Childlore; Custom and Belief; Traditional Narrative; Traditional Music, Dance, and Drama; Material Culture; Traditional Work Techniques, Arts and Crafts. The last five collections listed above, along with the material from the Survey of English Language and Folklore, demonstrate the crucial role of speech in the transmission of tradition in all the major categories central to NATCECT's wideranging interests. A substantial number of the recordings in the archives have been copied onto analogue preservation master tapes as part of a major research project on traditional genres of the English language, funded by a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board. In addition, some 500 tapes recorded during fieldwork in Newfoundland in the 1960s and 1970s are held in the archives of the Institute for Folklore Studies in Britain and Canada, the British section of which is based at NATCECT. These recordings, accompanied by extensive preliminary orthographic transcriptions, offer unique opportunities for comparing the varieties of spoken English and of the cultural traditions in the two countries. Investigating and exploiting collections of recorded material such as those at the Centre and the Institute allows us to retrieve the past of the language through the archival linguistic heritage, and to reveal trends in the future development of English. A proportion of the recorded data in the NATCECT archives has been transcribed and/or analysed in theses or monographs, and the existence of such material needs to be taken into account when compiling an inventory of available data.

Also on the positive side, there is the wealth of recorded data accumulated during fieldwork by academic researchers in universities and other institutions of higher education throughout Britain and Ireland. Foremost among this, of course, is the tape-recorded material on which the major publications by established British scholars on sociolinguistic and dialectal variation are based. These would include, for example, the work of Cheshire (Reading), Heath (Cannock, Newbrook (Wirral), Parry (Anglo-Welsh), Macafee (Glasgow), the Milroys (Belfast), Parry
(Wales), Petyt (Leeds), Trudgill (Norwich), among many others. To this might be added the many unpublished studies by British scholars, and the numerous works on English dialects by scholars in continental Europe and beyond.

Casting the net more widely, there is also, of course, the research of all those working on other varieties of English, including slang, colloquialism, occupational usage, English overseas, pidgins and creoles, etc. Furthermore, a number of individual researchers, whose work is perhaps less well known, have built up substantial collections of recorded speech during their fieldwork. Unfortunately, not all these have survived. We should draw a discreet veil, for example, over the scandalous loss of unique recordings of Yorkshire dialect made on Ediphone cylinders by F. W. Moorman in the early years of this century. The cylinders were evidently discarded, apparently on the mistaken grounds that the material on them could no longer be retrieved. As taperecorders in their turn become obsolete and are also discarded, it is to be hoped that the precious evidence preserved by this later technology will not suffer a similar fate. Much more fortunately, recordings made in the 1950s by W. Nelson Francis during fieldwork for the Survey of English Dialects, and by Charles Houck in his pioneering urban speech survey in Leeds in 1967, were preserved by the collectors and are deposited in the NATCECT archives, and it is very likely that many other important collections are languishing undetected and unexplored in repositories elsewhere.

Most, if not all, field collectors of material on language, folklore and oral history still have in their possession at least some of their own recordings, probably unknown to others. One of the reasons which prompted the present paper was the realisation that the first taperecordings made during my own early fieldwork are now more than forty years old, and yet I have hardly begun to exploit them, and several remain untranscribed. Yet I am acutely aware that the speech in the small coastal East Yorkshire community where I began recording some four decades ago has since changed beyond recognition, and these tapes, like all those which still survive, continue to increase in significance as time goes by. All the more reason, then, to ensure that recordings such as these do not follow Moorman’s cylinders into oblivion. At a more personal level, for me the recordings instantly recall the men and women, mostly from the local fishing community, who so willingly agreed to be interviewed. Armed only with a basic knowledge of phonetics from my research supervisor, Harold Orton, I began fieldwork with no formal training, not knowing what to expect or how to go about the task. Paradoxically, this proved to be an advantage, because I had to discover for myself how to tackle the assignment. The experience inevitably involved a steep learning curve in which trial and error played a central
role but, thanks to the sympathetic and patient response of those interviewed, it was possible to record a representative sample of relaxed informal local speech at a time when the inshore fishing industry was still flourishing, but which has since declined dramatically. It was only later that I realised that, in addition to dialect, the recordings also captured a great deal of folklore and oral history which not only set the language in its local context but also demonstrated the richness and ingenuity of its rhetoric.

Fourthly, in constructing the proposed database it is important to recognise that there are a number of regional and local research centres and repositories which hold recordings and other information on local speech. Some of these are linked to higher education, some to national or regional societies and associations, and some are to be found in local authority libraries and archives. Examples include the Centre for East Anglian Studies at the University of East Anglia, the Institute of Cornish Studies, the regional dialect societies, and the extensive collections of taperecorded oral history scattered throughout Britain and Ireland. Societies such as those concerned with regional and local history are often involved in the collection of information on language, including taperecordings, which document and illustrate the speech of their respective localities. Many schools also undertake similar projects, often as part of an anniversary celebration or other appropriate occasion. All too often, these are discarded once their immediate relevance wanes. Local radio stations are of course in a prime position to record the speech of their neighbourhood on a daily basis, particularly in chat shows and other interactive programmes when the conversation is often informal and spontaneous. Unfortunately, however, only a tiny fraction of this evidence has been preserved, due to the constant re-use of tapes and the difficulties of storing large amounts of recorded information, although the advent of CDs should greatly reduce the problems of storage.

Last, but by no means least, we should note the existence of countless numbers of recordings held in private collections and/or by families and individuals, and even within industry, commerce and kindred institutions and organisations, as well as in the professions and trades. These range from major collections focusing on a specific topic, theme, region, or locality, to single tapes and disks, perhaps of the speech of a relative or friend, kept within a family, often as a memento – much as one might keep a photograph. Our experience at the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition is that such recordings often succeed in capturing natural language in flight, as it were, and they are uniquely valuable in piecing together the history of spoken English, frequently offering crucial information on aspects of the language which are not documented in more formal surveys and collections. They would of
course be particularly difficult to survey or acquire, and may simply be
discarded by families and individuals who see no use for them beyond
their immediate purpose. Even so, these recordings are especially
valuable in that they frequently overcome the problems of the formal
interview and the observer’s paradox and reveal everyday speech and
conversation as they really are.

This preliminary overview of the material potentially available for
the generation of the proposed *Corpus of Recorded Spoken English*
makes no claims to comprehensiveness. However, even a cursory account
such as this nevertheless reveals the extent and depth of material
available, to a greater or lesser degree, within the field of dialectology in
particular, and to some extent across the broader field of sociolinguistics.
It now remains briefly to suggest some practical first steps towards the
setting up of the corpus. Again it must be emphasised that these are
merely intended as starting points for the discussion of possible ways
forward. They are presented here within a chronological framework,
indicating successive stages of development:

1. Establish a comprehensive national register of collections and
holdings. Initially this will involve identifying the institutions and
other repositories concerned, and a listing of their holdings, including
the format in which these are held — cylinder, disc, and/or tape,
compact disk, video, etc. Ideally, the register will be open-ended,
allowing for future expansion, as for example by the data from
currently ongoing surveys and research, and those in prospect, such as
the proposed Survey of Regional English.¹²

2. Set up a Steering Committee to oversee the work, develop strategies
for access to and use of the corpus, seek funding, etc. Perhaps an inter-
institutional framework would best achieve these aims.

3. Devise strategies for the collation, copying, and preservation of
recordings on the register. Much of the material is in need of
conservation and/or copying. Digitisation may offer the most
appropriate means of copying.

4. Develop a centralised national corpus of the material on the register.
This could be held in a single location, or in a range of venues. It
should allow the possibility of subcategorisation by specified variety
(e.g. by online searching via the register).

5. Promote research into all aspects of linguistic variation, based on the
corpus. There are obvious opportunities here for postgraduate work,
preferably encouraged by the establishment of a fellowship/tutorship
scheme associated with the corpus.

6. Facilitate access to the corpus for more general use. This could be
phased or otherwise controlled, both to make some parts of the corpus
more generally available (perhaps online or on CD-ROM) and to take account of any possible restrictions on access which may be thought advisable, especially with regard to intellectual property issues.

The creation of such a research resource will be of benefit to all those working on varieties of spoken English. It will provide a baseline for comparison, and in the case of regional dialects, for example, where changes in the twentieth century have been dramatic and far-reaching, the corpus will be of particular importance. Among other things, it will offer vital clues which could help to shape the direction of new studies of variation, such as the proposed Survey of Regional English. These initial tentative suggestions on possible ways to develop a corpus of recorded speech are merely a starting point for discussion; there is of course ample scope for development and expansion of the proposal. The need for such an initiative is glaringly obvious, but as yet no-one has acted upon it. It had been on my mind for many years when I first raised the idea at the UK Language Variation Workshop in Reading in 1997. It offers an opportunity at least to test the water, first by seeking the responses of colleagues interested in spoken English, and second by inviting others to join in the crusade to preserve and capitalise on the hidden depths of our linguistic heritage.

Notes

1. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the First UK Language Variation Workshop at the University of Reading, April 3rd-5th, 1997.
2. The erosion of English regional dialects, and especially of lexis, has been a particular focus of research in the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition at the University of Sheffield for many years. See C. Upton, and J. D. A. Widdowson, Lexical Erosion in English Regional Dialects, Sheffield, The National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, 1999.

5. Note, for example, the efforts of QUALIDATA (the ESRC Qualitative Data Archival Resource Centre) at the University of Essex. The “History 2000” Millennium Project, which led to the creation of the Millennium Memory Bank (see R. Perks, “The Century Speaks: A Public History Partnership”, *Oral History*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Autumn, 2001), 95-105), is an excellent example of recent developments in this field.

6. The holistic approach to the study of language and tradition in English culture at NATCECT in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond has generated a unique corpus of interdisciplinary data, deposited in the Centre’s archives, which is available for individual and collaborative research.


10. For a listing of these, see Vierock, et al.

wealth of data captured in a mere dozen audiotapes; this indicates the enormous potential of unexploited data in other much more extensive field collections.


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“Death”: A male-specific concept in Igbo gender-naming

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Abstract: In the African naming tradition, preference is usually given to the male gender in names associated with certain significant concepts. Reasons for these observable deeply ingrained gender biases in naming are of great concern to scholars, especially linguists and anthropologists. This paper attempts to provide reasons for the male-specificity of the Igbo names associated with death (Ọnwụ).¹

1. Introduction

1.1. The concept of death in Igbo cosmology

A general conception of death is that it is the termination of the life of everything that is animate.² To the Igbo, death (Ọnwụ) occurs in all the spheres of existence – the visible sphere and the supernatural sphere. Death in this world is the dissolution of the flesh during which the spirit enters a separate existence, maintaining ndị (life) of the individual in another sphere or form of existence.³ It is also an Igbo belief that the spirit reincarnates to the world from the supernatural sphere. Death also occurs in the spirit world (ǎlà mmụọ) but only the bad/evil spirits die there.

An Igbo conception of death is that it is universal and inevitable, being necessary for reincarnation. The Igbo believe that death in this world is not total and that life is cyclical; therefore the death of one’s spirit in the spirit world means eternal extinction – the worst tragedy that can befall an Igbo. The Igbo value life and do everything to preserve it. For this reason no Igbo wishes to die and no one wishes anyone to die. To say to one, “Nwụọkwa” (“May you die”) is abhorred. It is the Igbo belief that people should be ripe for death. They thus mostly abhor premature death and attribute it to some evil spirits like Ekwensu (Satan) Ọgbańje (Vampire spirit) and ǎkàlà Ọgòlí (roving spirit of death).

2. “Death” (Ọnwụ) as a male-specific concept in Igbo naming

Igbo indigenous personal names, like most other African names, are rich in cultural content. “An indigenous African name on the whole personifies the individual, tells some story about the parents or the family of the bearer and in a more general sense, points to the values of the society into which the individual is born”.⁴ Igbo personal names usually reflect either the positive or the non-positive experiences of the parents or families of the bearers. As Achebe rightly points out:
"If you want to know how life has treated an Igbo man, a good place to look is the name his children bear. His hopes, his fears, his joys, and sorrows; his grievances against his fellows, or complaints about the way he has been used by fortune, even straight historical records are all there."5

For the Igbo, death is the society’s strongest foe. They therefore have given names6 in which they express their apprehension of its (death’s) awful activity. These names are referred to here as “Onwu-names”. Onwu-names thus constitute a class of Igbo non-positive names. Other non-positive experiences of the Igbo are expressed through the “innuendo names”.

A peculiarity of the Onwu-names is not merely that they constitute a class of the non-positive names in Igbo, but rather that they are male-specific. Onwu-names are borne only by the males in traditional Igbo society. In fact, an indication of male gender is the one bit of information that we can always get from hearing an Onwu-name. Our investigations in various culture areas of Igboland show that females do not bear Onwu-names (as given names). We observe that a very few Igbo (aged) females (especially in the old Owerri province areas) have names like Onwufo (“The one that remains after death had taken the others”); Onwuahigiahia (“Death is a reality”); Onwugbuele (“Rejected by Death”); Onwuamaghihe (“Death is ignorant”); Onyiri (“One who surpasses death’’); Ntichiriownu (“Death is deaf”). These are supernumerary names, or what may be referred to as nicknames, derived for various death-connected reasons. Because of various social factors, they have virtually dominated the given names of the bearers. These names are never given by the parents or families of female bearers. In other words, the bearers have their “given” names in addition to these “nicknames”.

2.1. A sample of Onwu-names

Onwu-names constitute a closed class; i.e. the number of personal names in this class of the Igbo non-positive names is fewer than that in most other socio-cultural classes of the Igbo names. Virtually all of these names are de-sentential (i.e derived from sentences), some of which are shortened by the bearers. Below are some of Onwu-names and, as already stated, they are all borne by males. Our glosses here attempt to capture the “Igboness” in the meaning of these names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Onwu</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onwuhiariri (O)</td>
<td>“Death is contemptuous” (Death brings contempt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onwuegbulem</td>
<td>“Death should not kill me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onuharariam</td>
<td>“Death should leave me alone”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onwusoye</td>
<td>“Death avoids who?” (Who does death avoid?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We should point out that the influence of Christianity in contemporary Igbo society has reduced the popularity of the Onwu-names. These names are now much displaced by Chi/Chuwkwu (Christian God)-names.

3. Explanations of the male-specificity of the Onwu-names

The Igbo believe in the inevitability of death as a necessity for reincarnation, yet they have an innate fear of death. According to Obilo: "Death to the Igbo man ushers in a period of crises ... It is unpredictable as it is inescapable ... death is abjured for it is a state of danger, uncertainty and a point of no return. Although it is the ultimate end of every living organism, the thought of it terrifies every living thing."

The Igbo consider death as an elusive, mysterious, dreadful, very powerful, and unstoppable phenomenon. They are almost tempted to consider it as being more powerful than their Chi ("a portioned-out-life-principle") and Ekè ("agency of destiny"), especially when death strikes in spite of all the people’s spiritual and physical efforts, and irrespective of the
age, status or wealth, etc., of the victims. As a result of the said innate fear of
death, the Igbo very rarely mention Onwụ (death) in their discussions. They
rather use some euphemistic expressions like: A chọọ m mà a hụghị m ("If I
am looked for but I am not found"), Mà m ọtụghị n'ụra (If I don’t wake up
from sleep"), O sọwele nị nwa ya ọchie hà, ("He has followed/joined his
ancestors"). Obilo believes that the use of euphemistic expressions of death
results from a combination of dread of and reverence for it (death).9

The awe that emanates from the abstract, mysterious, complex, and
inconceivable activities and powers of death is so tremendous that the Igbo
associate death only with the male in naming. In this kind of patriarchal
society, the males are considered to be stronger in mind and body than the
females and therefore would be able to absorb (to a considerable extent) the
unpredictable and extremely painful phenomenon. Indeed, the Igbo conceive
of death (Onwụ) as masculine. The mute belief is that such a very powerful,
elusive and all-conquering concept must be patriarchal. Some Igbo males
bear just Onwụ (death) as personal (given) name (not a short form of an
Onwụ-name). In this case the bearer is considered a symbol of the
"enormous powers" which are an attribute of death.

Another reason for the male specificity of Onwụ-names is the
inheritance factor in the Igbo culture. The Igbo are most concerned with the
inheritance of their property and the perpetuation of their names, and
traditionally only males have a right to these. For this, the Igbo feel most
bitter and disappointed at the death of their male children. Since the Onwụ-
names have some “appealing connotations”, the Igbo use them to appeal to
death (Onwụ) to save those who bear the names — the ones who are to inherit
their property. We observe that those who bear Onwụ-names are usually the
first male siblings of families (Ndị Ọparọ) — they are either the only
surviving males or the first males to survive in their respective families.

4. Alternative names to Onwụ-names in Igbo: the female gender

Traditionally, Igbo females do not bear Onwụ-names. Females are
usually associated with dainty and more positive phenomena even in naming,
and not with complex, mysterious and awful concepts such as death (Onwụ).
However, there are situations where the only surviving child or the first child
to survive in a family is a female. In such cases, alternative names to “death
names” are given. These names do not constitute a class as such but rather
some of them are semantically “consolatory” to the family while others are
“appealing” to their Chi (personal god) for benevolence in respect of the
harmful activities of death. Some of these names are gender-neutral (i.e they
are borne by both males and females), and when given to a female the
primary intention is to avoid an Onwụ-name. Such names include the
following.
5. On the socio-semantics of Qnwu-names

A socio-semantic study of the Qnwu-names shows that each of them expresses an aspect of (or aspects of) the Igbo cosmological belief in the concept of death. This fact, and also the extent (degree), the frequency, or how directly a family has been hit by death, determines the Qnwu-name which a family chooses for their son. We attempt a classification of these Qnwu-names based on this socio-semantic factor, as follows.

5.1. “Death” (Qnwu) as a mysterious and universal phenomenon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qnwu</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qnwudiégwu</td>
<td>“Death is dreadful”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qnwuzîrîgô</td>
<td>“Death is universal”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qnwukanũchê</td>
<td>“I can not understand death”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qnwüagbâámà</td>
<td>“Death does not give notice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qnwüteâkâ (ON)</td>
<td>“Death is quite distant (beyond human imagination)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qnwueiyîonu (C)</td>
<td>“Death does not give appointments”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qnwueiyâgbâ</td>
<td>“One does not know death (when it would strike)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amâonwu</td>
<td>“Death is the worst (of all the things I dread)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qnwukanjo</td>
<td>“Death is enormous”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qnwüebûka (ON)</td>
<td>“Who knows death (when it would strike)”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2. “Death” (Qnwu) as a fearless and incorruptible enemy of Man

| Qnwüatüegwu | “Death is fearless”                          |
| Qnwüemênyi | “Death has no friend”                      |
| Qnwüamâezê | “Death has no consideration for a king”    |
“Death has no consideration for an Nze (title holder)”
“Death does not take a bribe”
“Death does not accept a pledge”
“Death does not accept wealth”
“Death does not have regard for anyone”
“Who does death avoid?”
“Who does death leave?”
“Death does not avoid a crowd”

5.3. “Death” (Ọnwụ) as a painful and irrational phenomenon

“Death does not know how to kill (Death is irrational)”
“Death does not accept arbitration”
“Death injures the heart”
“Death torments the world”
“Death did bad (its activity was bad)”
“Death has done bad (its activity is bad)”
“Death is bad/wicked”
“Death blocks the road (to prosperity)”
“Death please (leave me alone)”
“Death brings contempt”
“Death is contemptuous”
“Contempt from death”
“Death is not merciful (death is heartless)”
“But for death (my troubles would have been minimised)”
“Death is never merciful”.

5.4. “Death” (Ọnwụ) as a very powerful enemy of Man

“Death is all powerful”
“Death is stronger than any strength”
“Death is stronger than me”
“Death is more powerful than the public”
“Death should kill and reserve some (Death should not kill all)”
“If death would allow me”
6. Summary

We have observed that Igbo personal names associated with the concept of death (Onwul) are borne only by the males, and have stated a number of reasons for this, based on the Igbo cosmological consideration of death. The Igbo primarily dread death and only appeal (through the Onwul-names) that it should do less harm to them. They believe that only the males can manage to cope with the awe that goes with any issue associated with death, even names. The Igbo also consider death as masculine – a gender classification that associated the all-conquering power of death with the immense power of males.

Igbo females do not bear names associated with death. They rather bear more positive names, which play down death’s malevolence. There are also Igbo culture areas where the awe of death is so severe that nobody bears an Onwul-name. A socio-semantic study of these names shows that each of them expresses aspects of the Igbo philosophy of death. This and some other family-based factors determine the very Onwul-name a male child bears. Based on these we have classified the names into the four categories presented above.

Notes

1. I am very grateful to Professor Afam Ebeogu for his contributions. In this paper low tones (') and down step tones (-) are overtly represented. High tones are left unmarked.
6. Apart from “given names”, the Igbo also have two other classes of names, “pet names”, and “unique-names” – a name one acquires by virtue of peculiar circumstances of birth.
7. Some of the Onwul-names are dialect-specific. We have used some conventions to indicate this: (C) – Central dialect – a cover term for dialects spoken in the former Owerri
province; (ON) – Onitsha dialects – here used as a cover term for Onitsha related dialects. Where there is no such indication the name is used generally. We should point out that in some Igbo culture areas (e.g. Afikpo) nobody traditionally bears an Onwu-name. Afikpo, like other parts of Igboland, was full of superstition in the olden days. Consequently, seers or chief priests advised parents to resort to names of animals, trees and inanimate objects in order to escape infantile mortality or incessant deaths usually associated with evil spirits”. See J. B. Oko, “The Etymology of Ehugbo (Afikpo) Names”, Afikpo Today, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1994), 64. The following are some Afikpo names, which cosmologically replace Onwu-names:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Agbii} & \quad \text{“Pity} \quad \text{(a name given to indicate constant losses in childbirth).} \\
\text{Akànelele} & \quad \text{“Be on the lookout and see what the future will be”} \quad \text{(This name is given when there is a frequent loss of offspring in infancy).} \\
\text{Obiala} & \quad \text{“Coming and Going”} \quad \text{(child misfortune).} \\
\text{Uro} & \quad \text{“Wickedness of death”.} \quad \text{(Death is wicked due to infantile mortality).} \\
\text{Umenwa} & \quad \text{“Misfortune”} \quad \text{(Infantile mortality)}
\end{align*}
\]

(Culled from Oko, 64). I am grateful to Dr. A. Chukwu (a native of Afikpo) for drawing my attention to this fact and also for providing me with the 1994 edition of Afikpo Today magazine.

8. Obilo, 2.

**References**


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Pulareeje or Haal Pulaar proverbs

DJIBRL THIAM

The core of this study is a sample of Haal Pulaar proverbs (pulareeje). The Haal Pulaar-en (singular: Haal Pulaar) are a subgroup of the larger Fulani nation present in all West Africa and in some other East and North African states. They live in Fuuta Tooro, that northern region stretching along the River Valley of Senegal under the jurisdiction of Senegal (left bank) and Mauritania (right bank). Traditionally, the caste, at vertical level, and the age-group at horizontal level are the two paradigms of social organisation. These are still very strong in the rural areas despite substantial modification in the economic pattern of the region, accruing from the impact of modern states integrated into the world market.

The entirety of the following proverbs (by no means an exhaustive listing) is retrieved from the writer’s own memory. This fact may not be so exceptional, for I have no doubt that some of my village age-group may possess a good number of them still at their command. Indeed, the transmission of cultural heritage and social values operates in Haal Pulaar culture, not only through practice, as in every society, but also very much by word of mouth. It is therefore understandable that members of the society, those held to be the guardians of its wisdom and values in particular, should appeal to the proverb, the handiest form of verbal modes of expression, to regulate social behaviour and educate by transmitting the mores of the community.

In this respect I was particularly privileged, for two main reasons: firstly, I was brought up by my grandparents in the small village of Cas-Cas, in the heart of Fuuta Tooro, nearly 600 kilometres from the capital city of Dakar; secondly, my grandfather, Belly Kuno, was a village sage whose original wit, knowledge and wisdom were often quoted as reference points in village palavers. His dynamism and dedication to hard work made him partial to me (among other cousins) as he recognised those same qualities in both my mother and myself. Our close relationships shaped and informed my young mind in such a way that I was labelled “an old man’s son” while my peers said mockingly, “You like talking old people’s talk”. Part of this “talk” was the proverbs which my grandparents used to employ a great deal.

The handiness of the proverb resides in its pithiness, the aura it confers on the user, and the effectiveness it gives to his speech. Indeed, the descriptive definition by Roger D. Abrahams that “Proverbs are short and witty traditional expressions that arise as part of everyday discourse” and his more analytical statements that “Each proverb is a full statement of an approach to a recurrent problem”, and that “Proverbs take a
personal circumstance and embody it in impersonal and witty form”,
certainly apply to the Haal Pulaar proverb.

The proverb moderates conflict through a general and impersonal
statement of opinion, avoiding a direct emotional confrontation. It
provides shelter to the speaker, who draws upon the age-old repository of
the whole community to point to what he presents as incontestable
evidence of his stated opinion and the wisdom of the course of action he
is advocating. Instead of directly addressing his interlocutor and telling
him there is nothing he can do to intimidate him, the speaker may just
state a fact. For example, Kook! dognataa jullaare, “Kook! does not
cause a stump to run away”. Kook is an onomatopoeic word that imitates
the sound the Haal Pulaar usually utter to frighten children and cause
them to run away. Naturally a stump cannot be affected by this sound in
any way. In the same way, the conflicting or different views about a
person’s generosity can find some kind of resolution in Mojifo ko
mojifoma, “A generous person is he who is generous to you”. In a
perhaps rather different way, one may avoid clashing with someone
through the euphemistic Mi jabaani, mi yeddaani, “I neither agree nor
disagree”.

The proverb as a whole encourages prudence (toning down a
conflict can be seen as an instance), linking wisdom to a middle-of-the­
road attitude and behaviour, condemning exaggeration as unwise. Even in
love and affection one should stick to this policy: Ko neddo yidi neddo jof
yoo heddu ko ainciri dum, “Whatever the strength of your love for a
person, leave room for some hatred”. From another point of view, one is
also reminded that Baanoowo dojjataa, “The hunter should not cough” (If
you want something, you must take all precautions).

Through warning or advice, the proverb also suggests a course of
action, a strategy or attitude in the face of a tricky situation. A man
gloating over a person’s misfortune may be reminded that Mo suwaa
lummbi hoto jal jooliid, “A man who has not crossed the river should
not laugh at a drowning man”. And sometimes this river may be our
whole lifespan, strewn with traps, for Mo suwaa maay tagdaaka, “He
who is not dead is not through the creation process yet”. When a man is
at a crossroads he may be prescribed this wisdom-cure: Ko manat maa,
ko nafat maa: subo ko nafat maa, “Glory and wealth choose wealth”.

As we have seen, it is quite clear that the proverb verbalises social
values, and processes them, so to speak, into tablets to be administered
either as treatment, or as prevention. Thus the young are made to believe
that taking care of their parents equates with many blessings: Duwaaw
yonee bernde buubnde, “A contented heart serves instead of blessings”
(i.e. there is no need for a parent to voice his blessings: the son who
satisfies the needs of his forebears is automatically blessed). Likewise, to
stress that faithfulness in friendship is sacred the proverb urges: *Saa anndidaama e weendu, so ndu beeblind, yoo koynal maa tawe doon*, “If you are associated with a pond, your footprint ought to be found there when it dries up”.

At a rhetorical level, the proverb gives flavour and spiciness to speech. A man who is full of *pulareeje* (proverbs) is a man who can talk, a man whose company is most sought for and whose advice weighs heavily in the balance of argumentation and discussion, for the imagery of the proverb edifies, guides and relieves.

In parallel with these internal functions of the proverb one might observe that there is a closely related point pertaining to the user. Within the culture there are proverbs mainly used by children, others that apply to them, and yet others mainly used by men rather than women. The first category comprises the openly challenging or rude, which can be easily understood. Since the elders must set examples as reference points for wisdom, it would be most unsuitable for them to part with the wisdom and the middle-of-the-road attitude which are both ruled out in the face of challenge, whether or not the challenge is disguised, and also in the case of verbal abuse. The proverbs most often used by children belong to these categories. As for proverbs applicable to children, they are those whose message would be very incongruous if targeted at adults. In the same way, the proverbs which are never, or very rarely, heard among women are those reflecting the patriarchal aspect of the society – in other words, those conveying an anti-feminine ideology.

From the foregoing examples, easily corroborated by empirical observation, it is clear that the significance of the proverb resides in its multifunctional and meaningful character. That is why a functional classification is adopted here, rather than a topical/thematic or formal one. A topical classification would prove highly arbitrary, since the same proverb often spills over into various topics, as is illustrated by *Cukalelhulaani Allah, huli ko loocol*, “A child is not afraid of God, but of the rod”. At least three topics, “child”, “fear”, and “rod”, vie with each other here. The formal classification on the basis of the most important word comes to grief over the same problem. By employing a functional approach one is able to bear in mind the users of the proverbs, and their feelings and attitudes when they express themselves – in other words, the function(s) they assign to their expression of them. In this context, the above-mentioned proverb makes sense only as an invitation to the use of the rod on a rude child. In the same way, *Kook! dognataa jullaare*, “Kook! does not make a stump run away”, comes from the mouth of a person who is challenging someone; and *Ko ridduno goral so dartaaki hoto goral daro*, “If what was running after the man has not stopped, he should not stop”, is clearly an encouragement for *goral* (the man) to
pursue the course of action he has taken so far. From this empirical observation one can identify a certain number of functions and classify the proverbs accordingly.

The eight functional categories adopted here are: Advice; Challenge; Encouragement; Accommodation (or Adjustment); Self-assertion; Blame (or Rebuке), Group-cementation; and Warning. These categories may lend themselves to further subdivision so as to identify more specific functions. This again illustrates the difficulty of classifying proverbs which sometimes exhibit a functional ambiguity. In this case it is the knowledge of the context of occurrence which is most helpful, since it determines which use is being made of a two-dimensional or multi-dimensional proverb. That is why the context(s) of use are explained for each proverb listed below. Another difficulty, perhaps inherent in all attempts to reduce a complex reality into taxonomic tables, is the great variety and diversity of proverbs, which are those of life itself. Many of them escape the categories identified in this study and they can only be grouped together under such a general umbrella as “Comment on various situations”. Finally, a problem arises pertaining to translation. The criteria of meaningfulness, and authenticity (the preservation of the Haal Pulaar flavour) underpin the latter. Where it has been felt necessary, explanations have been provided so as to make sense of the references and allusions embedded in the proverb which the native speaker would easily recognise but which may be puzzling or inaccessible to an outsider.

It is the writer’s hope and wish that the relevance of bringing this collection to the light of day will be perceived both by Haal Pulaar readers and by those from other cultures. Haal Pulaar studies undertaken by the Haal Pulaaren themselves are comparatively limited in number if one considers the importance of their geographical distribution in Africa and of their role in spreading Islam in West Africa and opposing colonial penetration. The MA and PhD theses undertaken by the students of the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar since the 1970s have primarily focused on narratives such as legends, and on musical genres, chants and poetry. Furthermore, these have usually been written either in French or Pulaar/French, rather than English. And yet the importance of the proverb is unique in that it cuts across age-groups, caste barriers and subgroup boundaries in a way that other such genres do not. Another consideration that makes for some urgency in presenting the collection is the importance of the proverb as part of the Haal Pulaar traditions themselves. It is a repository of the people’s experience and their philosophical outlook, and a good indicator of their cultural beliefs and attitudes. It is therefore very important to secure the contribution of the older generations still deeply rooted in the essence of their culture, for Amadou Hampathé Ba’s statement that in Africa the death of an elder is
like the burning down of a library is still valid, despite the progress of literacy. This cultural retrieval should not be nostalgic but part of a wider concern for cultural rehabilitation and self-assertiveness that would put Africa in a position to channel and shape her evolution according to her truly felt needs in the face of numerous odds. If the present paper stimulates a deeper and wider interest in the Pulaar culture and the collection of its traditions, then it will achieve its objective. The sample of proverbs is presented below.

**Category 1: Advice**

*Ko manat maa, ko nafat maa, subo ko nafat maa*

“Glory and wealth [come], choose wealth”

This advice is given to a person hesitating between two courses of action: a controversial one that safeguards his material interests or a laudable one that impoverishes him.

*Cukolel hulaani Allah, huli ko loocol*

“A child is not afraid of God; he is afraid of the rod”

This is an invitation to an adult to use corporal punishment to bring a child into line with accepted behavioural norms, since he will not be convinced by arguments nor persuaded by any other means.

*Neddo so sukundu lamminiidum, hoto welsindo nebam*

“If a man is elected for his hair, he should not neglect cream”

Traditionally the Fulani used butter or milk cream for hairdressing and hair conditioning. The proverb advises a person to be careful about those things that have given him luck and fortune, however trivial they are.

*Woyko mawdo sooynotoo tawa ina joodii, suka so dartiima sooynotaako*

“An old man sitting down will catch a glimpse of things where a standing young man fails”

Contrary to a child who sees and understands only something immediate, an old man can see farther; he foresees consequences and possible developments of present attitudes or behaviour. Used (a) to express sympathy and acknowledgement to another adult complaining about the stubbornness or shortsightedness of a child, and (b) to exhort a young person to follow his parents’ or another relative’s advice.

*Mawdo ina jari woppude e wuro*

“An old man is worth leaving in the village”
This proverb alludes to a story of which it is the moral. It is a piece of advice and a warning to the young that they should take care of their parents and keep close to them so they can make the most of their parents' wisdom.

*Peree ndarjon*
"Exile yourselves and be famous"

This is ascribed to Aladji Omar, the most prestigious religious leader of the Haal Pulaaren. He migrated from Fuuta, followed by many disciples. He had problems in imposing himself in his native region, hence his migration. This proverb provides a comment on someone who is successful abroad. It also serves as a prompter to someone to go outside his boundaries when, for various reasons in whatever field, he does not succeed among his own people. A prophet is often rejected or contested by his own people.

*Fuunti laami buri felli laamii*
"Ascending the throne through guile is better than through fire"

In other words, using craft and trickery to achieve one's ends is better than using force. Here we have the advice that a man should use soft and smooth manners to win through, since the use of force is often uncertain in its effects.

*Wallu hoore maa Allah wallu maa*
"Help yourself and God will help you"

This invites a person to rely on his own efforts before enlisting other people's help.

*Hade maa gaajuade mawdo a weddoto dum leggel taw*
"Before kidding with an old man, throw him a small stick first"

In other words, before teasing someone for fun one must try and detect if he is in the mood to accept jokes. By "throwing a small stick at him" one can judge his reaction and act accordingly. Used as a comment following a violent reaction by someone against a joke; thus the joker is reminded of the precaution to be taken on such occasions.

*Yaadu no way fof buri jonnde*
"Travelling, whatever the outcome, is better than staying in one place"

This advice is often given to young men who cannot succeed at home. They are encouraged to go abroad or simply out of the village to seek
their fortune; also applied in approval of a young man’s travel to seek his fortune.

*Njooñaari bonnaaa laawol*
“Provisions do not spoil the journey”

When people going on a journey are rather reluctant to take provisions, they are reminded through this proverb that only good can result from taking provisions.

*Ko múñal rokkáani, héñaare rokkataa*
“What patience has not given, precipitateness won’t”

When a man gets impatient and wants to yield to despair by, say, abandoning a job or an activity judged fruitless, people may advise him to persevere, since he does not know what lies in store for him.

*Náwndorgál hadáataa máayde kono ina hádá koyeera*
“Amulets do not prevent death, but they prevent dishonour”

This proverb recurs often in a conflict situation between parents and their western-educated children who are often reluctant to put on amulets, regarding them as something shameful or useless. Then the old people, women in particular, will resort to the proverb to demonstrate the validity of their advice.

*So seeda wattinto yoo ado*
“Let the modicum come first if it is to come last”

This is quoted as advice to someone who is wasting his food or whatever. Indeed, when he realises, for example, that only a little money/food is left, he will start spending in small quantities, but this will not save him from hunger, since most of the food has already been squandered. Therefore it is better to be thrifty from the beginning.

*Wonáa kódó waklata leydi, ko leydi waklata kodo*
“It is not the stranger that changes the country, it is the country that changes him”

This advice is given to someone who is behaving in a strange way in a place, under the pretext that he is following the custom of his native village/land.

*Ko kesi ndeeni kiiddi*
“It is the old garments that watch over the new”
Often applies to young people or children who tend to put aside their old clothes once they have new ones. The parents may then tell them that the new clothes will remain new only insofar as they wear the old clothes now and then. Instead of the parents having to use long arguments, the proverb immediately makes the point.

\[\text{Mo suwaa lummbo hoto jal jooliddo} \]
\[\text{"He who has not yet swum across the river should not laugh at the drowning man"}\]

This can be considered as a warning as well. As advice, it invites people to be less severe towards others in their misfortunes, since the same can happen to them when they find themselves in the same situations.

**Category 2: Challenge**

In every living community conflicting interests and opinions exist, giving rise to clashes and oppositions. Where lengthy arguments and palavers are sometimes a sign of hesitation, the proverb can convey the speaker's challenge or unco-operativeness in a more forceful way.

\[\text{Mi ja\textit{baani}, mi yed\textit{daani}} \]
\[\text{"I neither agree nor disagree"}\]

Formally the speaker is assuming a neutral stance whereas in fact he is contesting and belying the statement of his interlocutor. This is all the more irritating as it triggers off the laughter of the audience to the detriment of the addressee. This formal way of toning down opposition is highly ironical, and damaging to the opponent. In fact it subverts the very purpose it rhetorically states. The proverb is mostly heard among children, and sounds somehow misplaced in an elder's mouth.

\[\text{Kook! do\textit{nataa} jull\textit{aare}!} \]
\[\text{"Kook! does not cause a stump to run away!"}\]

This is another children's proverb. An old man never uses it except when he is speaking to a child. It is heard in instances where an older boy tries to frighten a younger one. The threat may be real, physical. To take up the challenge the addressee may then fling the proverb in his adversary's face.

\[\text{Nde Bojel y\textit{yif} ndee fay ko ladde} \]
\[\text{"When Hare became intelligent, he went into the bush"}\]

This is again a children's proverb, since it would be ludicrous in an elder's mouth. A child quotes it to inform his fellow that he has seen what
he is driving at, that there is no use trying to cheat him. Cheats, tricksters and the like have their place in the bush, just like Hare. So it is a way of saying “Go away!” However, it obviously refers to a tale or anecdote explaining why Hare, who previously lived in the village with people, had to go away into the bush, probably because men would no longer tolerate his tricks.

*So wopko Hammadi Gwoowel waaawi, daŋgga yummum yooliima*

“If Hammadi Gwoowel has any capability, its mother’s purse has dropped into the water”

This is likely to be heard from an adult. It challenges a boaster to show his prowess, if he has any, because the situation now warrants it. Hammadi Gwoowel is a fish-eating bird that dives into the water to catch fish, so people should expect him to dive as well to rescue his father’s/mother’s purse.

**Category 3: Encouragement**

This category covers not only encouragement proper, but also what might be termed hope, and praise.

*Ko riddunoo goral so dartaaki hoto goral darto*

“If what was running after the man has not stopped, he should not stop”

An encouragement to someone to go on doing well since his objective is not reached yet, although he has done well so far.

*Ko cakkudi ŋiklata defoowo*

“It is the (meat or fish) stock that tickles the cook”

This encourages people to give incentives to those working for them. It also provides a comment on someone working devotedly and enthusiastically, to hint at the good reasons for doing so.

*Baawo muñal ko Alahamdullilaahi*

“Next to patience is ‘thank God’ ”

People may acknowledge and praise someone working hard by quoting this, to exhort him to persevere, as he will taste the sweet fruit of his labour sooner or later.

*Jonnde ko boon tan naﬁ*

“Sitting benefits only a basket”

A similar proverb was listed above in the category devoted to Advice. It either exhorts a man, a young man in particular, to leave his home to
search for a job or fortune, or it comments approvingly on his departure to seek his fortune.

*Mo suusa bone laamotaako*
*“He who dares not beard difficulties will not be a king”*

When a man trying to attain a social or a political position, or whatever it may be, meets difficulties, people may encourage him to keep on fighting, since difficulties are inherent in the process or the goal.

*Ko muusi banndu sof muusa banndu!*
*“Whatever hurts a body does hurt a body indeed!”*

Used by an elder to exhort an offspring to hit back at his opponents, for the latter will feel the impact of his blows just as he is feeling theirs.

*Mo munaani cuurki dañataa yulbe*
*“He who does not endure smoke will not have charcoal”*

A reference to the process of obtaining charcoal by people burning stumps and dry wood. In this burning operation, of course, there is a lot of smoke, which the man must suffer if he wants to have the charcoal; there is no other alternative. This is an exhortation to fortitude and endurance in the face of challenging difficulties, since hardly anything can be obtained without them.

*Mo naamndotaako maayata ko majjudo*
*“He who does not ask will die ignorant”*

This proverb is straightforward. Asking for information is particularly important in a society based on orality rather than literacy.

*Jom hunoko majjataa*
*“He who has a mouth never gets lost”*

This again exhorts someone to try to get to a place he does not know. Since he can ask his way he is likely to find the place. It is particularly worth remembering when one finds oneself in a big city.

*Ko ekkaaka e cukaagu waawetaake e mayugu*
*“What is not learned in childhood will not be known in adulthood”*

The elders are often very highly appreciative of children and adolescents keen on learning skills. Today’s trials will be tomorrow’s experience and wisdom.
Laawol jam woddatala
“The road to safety is never long”

This is a straightforward encouragement to someone who is hesitating to undertake a journey that is or may be rewarding.

Ekkaare addi waawre
“Trying makes way for learning”

A statement that reminds or teaches us that knowledge is acquired through learning and trial.

Alaa jibinaado ina waawi; huunde foof maa ekke
“Nobody is born with skills; everything has to be learned”

Synonymous with the preceding.

Wonaa nawde woni maayde
“Falling ill is not dying”

This incites people not to lose hope in the face of a serious illness. It also provides a comment on somebody who has pulled through after a serious illness.

Ko Allah jogi famdaani
“What God has got is not little”

This proverb, that echoes Islamic religious faith, is quoted to encourage someone to remain hopeful, as Allah, the Ultimate Owner of all things, never abandons those who believe in Him.

Ko Allah jogi!
“It is in God’s hands!”

A slight variant of the previous proverb, it consoles, and encourages optimism.

**Category 4: Accommodation**

In the face of adversity people sometimes feel powerless, but they still find some strategy to cope with the course of things, for life must continue. Hence the need for adjustment and accommodation in the face of their powerlessness to alter things.

Yidde jam e maleede ciim
“If you hanker after peace, wish that you are predestined to it”
The proverb applies to a man when, despite his efforts towards peace or understanding, he faces the refusal or incomprehension of others. The man himself may pronounce the proverb in self-pity or resignation.

*Sada doga bone yaataw fesaaka e tiindemaa*  
“If you run away from misfortune, wish that you are not doomed to it”

Another formulation of the proverb above, this is a comment on the irony of fate when a man seems always somehow to be a victim of a higher power, despite his efforts to escape ill-luck.

*Neddlo so waawaa daade kural yoo teddin beece (mum ngal yana heen)*  
“If a man cannot avoid a bullet he had better receive it in the chest”

Here a man is told to face the realities with a bold face since he cannot ward off their effect.

*Dadi kaadataa leikki wela*  
“The tree cannot be sweet when the roots are bitter”

When a child behaves badly or has a bad character, elders may refer to his parents’ own characteristics to explain the facts. There is a strong belief that one is bound to inherit character from one’s progenitors.

*Gosi jibintako nguufa*  
“Porridge will give birth to froth”

This proverb has the same meaning as the one above. Literally it refers to the porridge of millet. When it boils in the pot you can see the froth.

*Kaaye maheteeko gila ko kecce*  
“Stones should be shaped when they are ‘fresh’”

Although people here have never seen “fresh” stones, they firmly believe that at a certain time they were “fresh”, i.e. soft. The proverb insists on the necessity of educating children when they are still young. There is no use trying to correct their behaviour later. At the same time it is a disapproving comment on those having the duty of the child’s education.

*Leggal joorngal Buccotaako*  
“A dry stick cannot be straightened”

Synonymous in meaning and application with the previous one, this notes that any attempt to straighten a dry stick is bound to fail, as the stick will break. In the same way, a child must be moulded while still very young.
Yidde hadataa maayde
“Love/affection cannot prevent death”

The intensity of our love for someone cannot prevent that person from dying when his/her moment has come. This emphasises man’s powerlessness and helplessness when death comes, and is quoted when someone greatly loved is dead. The speakers seem to be saying, “If it depended on me, he/she would not die”.

Ngatu ko kod'o puuydo: (alaa do jippotaako)
“Wealth is a crazy stranger: (he may put up at any house)”

A disapproving or envious comment on someone’s wealth; the person is viewed as rather stupid, or lacking the qualities that should allow him to amass fortune. A mad stranger may enter anybody’s house, unlike a sensible one who knows whose house he must put up at.

Saati noddii!
“Fate summoned!”

When someone meets death where he had no valid reason or inclination to go, people may hint at the agency of a supernatural power believed to have organised everything.

Ko nagge duri ko dum biyum muynata
“What mother cow has grazed, that is what baby calf suckles”

Like some of the proverbs already mentioned, this one also emphasises the shared belief that children will inherit from their parents. However, it is always used in a negative context: the genetic law is formulated by adults to account for a child’s misbehaviour.

“Sinno … ” hannoo boy laamaade
“‘If … ’ prevented jackal from being a king”

Here a man is called back to the reality he is trying to ignore.

Mboddi e leydi koingal e leydi
“Snake on ground, foot on ground”

The innuendo of this statement implies that the snake and the foot will end up by meeting, to the great dissatisfaction of the foot. It can validly be classified under the Challenge category, since the person using it
voices his/her bitterness about the present situation and warns the interlocutor that next time things will take a completely different course.

**Category 5: Self-assertion**

*Ko min jey buri ko minen ndenndi*

“It is mine is better than it is ours”

People quote this proverb to advise and warn someone that it is safer to have something of one’s own rather than in association with other parties. There is often a hint that the person’s associates are not fully trustworthy.

*Moni fofo kokom modi wuuri*

“Everybody lives on what he swallows”

Here a person claims his part of some common property, making the point that others cannot fill his belly by filling theirs.

*Mo nokki fofo wada e hunukomum*

“Whoever picks up a handful of food puts it into his mouth”

This refers to the “table” manners of the Haal Pulaaren. People sit around a big bowl, each eating out of the bowl with his/her hand. Of course, whoever picks up a handful of food destines it to himself/herself, hence the proverb.

*Mo lañi fofo tekkina bapjie mum*

“Whoever spreads the meal (inside the bowl) thickens his place”

Once again we have a reference to the eating manners of the people. When the meal is taken out of the cooking pot, it is hot, so it has to be spread all over inside the bowl, from the centre upwards. The person spreading the meal is expected to do it in an even way. Then, through the proverb, people acknowledge, somewhat bitterly, that the sharer has abused his position to grant himself the biggest share.

*So dene mbadaama e jeeygol wootere fofo woyata ko hoore mum*

“If melons are put on the fire, each will weep over himself”

Here people express their understanding, with some bitterness, of a man’s drive to save himself or his interests without taking other people into account, however closely related to him they are. In crucial moments, the instinct of self-preservation prevails over all the virtues man may have at more serene moments.
Category 6: Blame

_Dimo woyata ko meeaani, wonaa haaraani_
“A noble heart complains that he has not tasted, but not that he has not eaten his fill”

In this way people object to what they consider to be greediness on the part of a complaining person arguing over his/her share. What is considered important is the sharing, not the size of the portion received.

_So kodo fiyaama koy nyaatige mum woni; kono so kodo fiyaama, daasaama, koy mum woni_
“If the guest is beaten, the blame lies with the host; but if the guest is beaten and dragged, the blame lies with him”

The stranger (guest) enjoys a special status among the Haal Pulaaren. Whatever problems may arise between him and some villager(s), the latter should not raise a hand to him. If a villager were to raise his hand, it is not simply the stranger he is attacking, but also the host. The stranger is in a weak position, given the reserve he is expected to display. Nevertheless, when the attack goes even beyond the beating (a smack, for example) and comes to a harsher treatment, symbolised in the proverb by “drag”, then the stranger is no longer justified in remaining passive. He must defend himself. In the milder form of attack, however, his host is supposed to defend him. People use the proverb either to blame someone for not having given adequate protection to someone he is in charge of or to reproach the victim for his passiveness, by rejecting the scruples he may put forward to justify himself.

_Sagata gorko so jaabaani remde maa yah ko buri casal mum_
“If a young man refuses to till he will walk longer than his furrow”

An elder blames a young man for his laziness, either to exhort him to set to work or to explain the young man’s departure to look for food or clothes.

_Mo annnda goro judat_
“He who does not know kola nut roasts it”

The ripe kola nut still looks unripe, and its appearance may prompt an uninformed man to roast it, which is very funny and strange, since kola nuts are never roasted. People quote the proverb in a condescending way to make the point that the addressee is misusing something valuable.

_Puydoo so wiyaama yo ndoro booroto_
“If a foolish man is told to roll up his sleeves, he gets rid of his clothes”
Often applied to young people, this rebukes a young man for carrying out instructions in an exaggerated way. Just like the foolish man, he does not know when to stop.

*Keedudo faaydata pettal koy baayaango*

“A hungry man will take a kick (from a horse/donkey) for an invitation (to eat)”

A kick from a horse is particularly painful, but hunger is still harder to bear. A starving man will see in all signs and gestures an invitation to come and eat. The emphasis is on the contrast between *pettal*, a kick, and *baayaango*, a secret invitation, as indicated by a slight nod of the head or a beckoning finger. This comments on a man’s tendency to misinterpret everything according to his present preoccupations.

*Neddo ko yimbe*

“Man is men”

In other words, man is nothing without other men. Whatever his intelligence or wealth, none of these can exist without the community. Thus we have a warning against selfishness and individualism, commenting on the pitiful downfall of someone who has been deserted by people for whatever reason.

*Molaa ko salotoo wonaa neddo*

“He is not a man, he who rejects nothing”

The proverb blames a man for being too tolerant and clement. There are situations where one must say “No!”, otherwise one will lose all dignity.

*Woorde wuro buri woorde njaatige mum*

“Moving away from a village is better than moving away from one’s host”

This is said with reference to a stranger. It is considered inconvenient to change hosts, because you have found a wealthier person in the village, for example. The stranger should rather avoid coming into the village, otherwise it will be very embarrassing if he meets his original host. Advice is thus given to someone to stay with his former host, despite the latter’s limited wealth; alternatively a man guilty of such behaviour is reproached.

*Arsuko naataaa e gada dahaniido*

“Luck never enters a sleeping man’s anus”
This is a reproof to a lazy man who is reminded that he must do something to help his luck. Elders tend not to use this proverb because it is felt to be coarse. They prefer the following one:

\[ \text{Neddø maa dillina sabaabu} \]
“A man must ‘shake’ the cause”

That is, a man must do something to get things moving in the way he wants them to.

\[ \text{Neddø ko koyggol mum} \]
“Man is his word”

This is quoted to reproach a man who fails to keep his promise.

\[ \text{Anndi fof haali fof kam bonni haala} \]
“He who knows all and reveals all is responsible for the mess”

When a conflict arises, it is not always wise to reveal all we know about one or all the parties concerned, since this may make the whole situation worse. One of the parties may feel cornered and act desperately. This mild reproach is therefore directed at a person who unreservedly reveals all the secrets he knows, thus deepening the existing conflict.

\[ \text{Laamu Saada Dikel Saada} \]
“The kingship of Saada Dikel Saada”

Here we have an allusion to the legend of Saada Dikel Saada. For some reason, Saada, who was rather simple-minded, was called to ascend the throne while he was in the toilet. He seized the opportunity to become a dictator. When somebody becomes too demanding, always finding fault with those serving him, he may be blamed for this behaviour through this allusion. Women often use it against their husbands. A variant runs as follows:

\[ \text{Laamu Gundo} \]
“The kingship of Lizard”

Lizard is a demanding king because if you walk ahead of him he blames you for driving crickets away; if you walk behind him he complains that you are stepping on his tail, and if you walk by his side he accuses you of envying him.

\[ \text{Biddø so nafaani lorlat} \]
“If a son does not help (you) he gets you into trouble”
A reproachful comment on the behaviour of a child who gets his parents into trouble. A child is expected to help and support his parents. If this is not the case it means that he is bad and quite understandably he will get his progenitors into trouble.

*Sadda nula yontamnde nei gila ada waawi*  
“If you send off a youth, do it while you can run the errands yourself”

The innuendo is that the youth is bad and may refuse; then you can do your own errands. The proverb is heard when an adult complains to another about a child who has refused to run errands. The addressee may then express his sympathy for the speaker and also his concern about “the modern world” by quoting the proverb.

*Yuubbe nihat, fuyube nantina*  
“The wise whisper, the foolish shout out”

When a person speaks out about an embarrassing matter that everybody knows but avoids mentioning in public, his/her relatives may call him/her to order in this way.

*Wona ko anndaa fof haalee*  
“Not all that is known should be told”

The proverb blames a person accused of indiscretion. One should always have some reserve.

*Ilam so doagaan yoo ruttti*  
“If the flood no longer advances, let it retreat”

People express here their impatience at following someone who no longer fulfils their expectations, or simply a person who is becoming an obstacle to their desires and aspirations. The innuendo is that the waters should retreat so that people can cultivate: a man should give way if he can no longer lead people.

*Ese sone wuri a fandinaani debbomaa taw*  
“As long as your (mother)-in-law is alive, you have not definitively appropriated your wife”

The ogre-figure played in real life, to some extent, by the mother-in-law is often blamed for domestic conflicts taking place in her daughter’s house. This is a proverbial response to allegations that a couple’s problems arise from her interference.

*Ko biggelo capaato haali fofyetti koy teheende*
“Whatever the little Moor says, he has picked up from the tent”

When children say something embarrassing about a person, the blame is put on their parents as the children would never know the facts without a parental source. The reference to the Moor has a historical and geographical explanation: the Moors (from Mauritania) are the Haal Pulaaren’s neighbours and relations between them have often been tense, so that the Haal Pulaaren tend to accuse their neighbours of all evils.

\[Ko\ faayaa\ e\ jamma\ fof\ ko\ y mum\ woni\]
“Night is responsible for whatever it is accused of”

When someone complains about accusations, people may hint that he is partly responsible because of his ambiguous or suspicious behaviour, hence the reference to night, a time when things are not clearly seen.

\[Hulde\ reedu\ hadataa\ maayde\]
“Cowardice does not prevent death”

When a man behaves in a cowardly way and fails to fulfil his duties, he is blamed by his neighbours and is thus reminded that there is no use being a coward since this will not prevent him from dying, nor even save him from trouble.

\[Mallol\ so\ sañci\ jubbol,\ tayii\ sukundu,\ burtii\]
“An allusion that undoes a plait and cuts hair off is certainly exaggerated”

Among the Haal Pulaaren the figurative use of language provides a particular genre called \textit{mallol}, an allusion. People use it to attack their opponents. The users are mainly women who covertly attack their sisters-in-law, for example. As long as the allusion is general enough, the person attacked, although understanding it all, may not answer back. But when some precise and clearly identifiable details are included in the allusion, the person attacked often responds angrily, since there is now a good reason for reaction. The proverb is quoted to blame a person guilty of such specific use of \textit{mallol}.

\[Hoto\ yidd\ hade\ yiide\]
“Do not let love prevent you from seeing”

This is a way of drawing a person’s attention to the faults of a friend or a partner, particularly when the addressee, against all evidence, goes on defending him. It has a more or less literal meaning.

\[Niiri\ mbanndi\ gite\ ńamotaako\]
“A meal with eyes cannot be eaten”

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Looking into someone’s eyes is perceived as a sign of bad manners. Consequently if a meal had eyes, just like a person, people would avoid it. A man who wants to ignore considerations to take harsh measures against someone else is rebuked in this way.

_Haala welataa golle mbela_
“The deeds cannot be great when the words are nice”

When a person who has been boasting or talking with a sweet tongue is reported to have failed to match up to people’s expectations, they may express their disapproval and criticism in these words. This echoes the following proverb:

_Wadde yiyyee buri haalde nanee_
“It is better to be seen in action than to be heard talking”

_Ko naamde wuuraa, kono ina hersiree_
“One lives on food but it is still the object of scruples”

It has already been pointed out that cupidity and greed are violently condemned in this society, and here we have confirmation of it. Whatever the importance of food, one should not put away all sense of reserve and dignity to have it.

**Category 7: Group cementation**

_GumdO jiynganta ko dowoowomum_
“The blind man will side with his guide”

The proverb aims at depreciating a person’s evidence in a conflict. He is thus accused of giving biased evidence in favour of a party because his interests lie with that party. Another synonymous proverb runs as follows:

_Ginal e keynum ngawdata_
“Ginal [a fish-eating bird] will fish with his brother-in-law”

_Juud’e maa coodondira nde laaba_
“Hands get clean by washing each other”

An invitation to people to co-operate so as to get the best results possible, this can also be quoted to point out that their comparative failure is due to lack of co-operation.

_Saa annidaama e weendu yoo koynjgal maa tawe doon so ndu beeBii_
“If you are associated with a pond, let your footprint be found there when it dries up”

A man thus expresses his fidelity to another, despite the difficult circumstances prevailing. It also encourages loyalty on the part of an associate.

_Cehilaagal ko huunde mawnde_
“Friendship is something great!”

The literal sense here is simply that great things are done in the name of friendship.

_Alaa mo juumataa_
“There is none who does not err”

When someone has made a mistake for which he/she is very sorry, people comfort him/her and express their understanding in this way.

_Neddō alaa do jeyaa; kodō dañi jam tan_
“A man is from nowhere but where he finds happiness”

When a person establishes himself somewhere far from his native land, his people may express their understanding of his motives in these words. Indeed, it is often said of a person who has gone away from home for good.

_Neddō ina yida mo anndaa, kono yeewnataa mo anndaa_
“A man may like someone he has never seen, but he does not miss someone he has never seen”

When someone expresses his feelings of nostalgia for a person, the latter’s relatives may use this saying to thank him.

_Hannde a dañat tan, jaŋgo mbasaa_
“Today you are wealthy, and tomorrow poor”

This is an expression of commiseration with a man who has lost his fortune.

_Piyaadō ko ñuri cuusal mum fof wulla_
“Whoever is beaten beyond his courage shouts out”

In other words, there is a limit beyond which one cannot bear suffering. Here we see the sympathy and understanding of an elder when a child cries after having bravely resisted some pain.
The belief held by the people is that God grants the parents' prayers for their children only insofar as the latter look after the former as they should. Then to express his satisfaction at a son's behaviour, a parent may quote this proverb.

"A satisfied heart is a lot of blessings"

When a man feels alone, he becomes vulnerable and may yield more easily to unwished-for pressures and temptations. Here people may express their sympathy and understanding for a man who has yielded to things he did not like, or tell of their determination to stand by him in difficult circumstances.

"The soul cannot bear loneliness"

When a husband quarrels with his wife, other men express their understanding and calm him down by consoling him with these words.

"All women are alike: only the one that is not yours is good"

People here express their solidarity with a man who has been unfairly treated. At the same time they urge him to forget about the whole affair. In so doing he will show that he is far better than his opponent.

"Walking slowly does not prevent one from arriving"

When for various reasons a man cannot work as fast or as hard as he would wish, people feel for him and quote these consoling words.

"An incurable disease kills"

This proverb means what it says. It is said after the death of someone following a very long period of illness during which the patient has undergone various treatments, but in vain. Thus people commiserate with the dead man's relatives.

"Kelbol does not kill a goat's kid"
People say this in a joking way, although feeling some sympathy for the victim. It is heard when a young man courting a girl receives some harsh treatment from her but bears it stoically. It is part of the process. The harsh treatment is symbolised by kelbol, i.e. a piece of stick placed across the kid's mouth and maintained by threads attached to the head, so as to prevent it from suckling its mother when it is old enough to be weaned. A variant is

*Petta ngaorba muusataa njarla*
“’The she-donkey’s kick does not hurt the he-donkey’”

*Saak meho darotaako*
“An empty sack cannot stand up”

When a man is working too hard and for a long time, people sympathetically urge him to stop and have something to eat to gain new strength. The saying is also used when a man stops working because of hunger.

*Ko bii yummaa tan wiyatmaa hunuko ma a ina luu bua*
“Only your mother’s child tells you that your mouth stinks”

In a polygamous society such as the Haal Pulaar society, there is a special emotional attachment between uterine children as opposed to their half-brothers on their father’s side, who are generally their rivals. When a man gets into an embarrassing situation or acts in a way that displeases his circle, it is often a close friend, a uterine brother, or someone similar, whose purity of feelings and intentions cannot be questioned, who draws the man’s attention to the facts and invites him to amend his ways. Here the proverb supports the giving of advice to someone by a friend or the like.

*Nedd u ko jogii, ko duum nawata jeere*
“What a man has, he takes to the market”

When a man is criticised for a low offer in a bargain he, or other people, may quote this proverb. One should not be blamed for not being rich, and all people cannot be wealthy.

*Ko yiyya fo f bennii*
“Whatever is seen belongs to the past”

A person who has undergone a lot of mental suffering is often comforted by his entourage in these terms, and urged to put up with things by considering them to be virtually over.
When a child is beaten or rebuked by parents and relatives, people comfort him and urge him not to bear any grudge against them. This treatment is often an expression of love for the victim, part of the process of teaching the child how to behave acceptably.

When a tricky situation arises one may tell a friend or a close acquaintance to come and help him find the best way of sorting things out. The proverb conveys the trickiness both of the situation and of the invitation.

This is a reminder to a relation that one still thinks of him in spite of distance or failure to visit or give him any material help.

**Category 8: Warning**

In other words one may choose to hit first but one cannot control the reaction of the adversary. The proverb is most often heard among young children and adolescents. It is voiced either to justify harsher revenge after an injury, or to deter a child from doing any harm to another, for he may trigger off a reaction quite out of proportion to his action.

The quotations in the proverb are ascribed to a woman. In Haal Pulaar society it is unusual for a girl or woman to ask a man to marry her. Marriages arranged after such unusual procedures – the woman making the advances – are believed to be of short duration. The words warn a man against a very enterprising woman.
Although reserve and scruples are well appreciated in the society, there are times when one should restrain them, particularly when dealing with people who are not likely to have any such scruples. This is therefore a warning against being overscrupulous when one is facing cynical or unpleasant people.

Memh waa!
"He who touches, shits"

This is said of someone who does not tolerate anything unfair from the others, and also, more generally, of very quarrelsome people. It warns against embarking on a conflict involving someone reputed to be a quarreler.

Sus ngandaa!
"Whoever sniffs will know"

This is a slight variant of the above. It comes from the story of Hyena, Scorpion and Goat. One day, when Hyena met Scorpion he asked him, in a very provocative way, what his name was. Scorpion said, "My name is Sniff-and-you’ll-know". Hyena laughed and sniffed Scorpion. As a result he got a fierce sting. He ran away, shouting with pain. Later on he met Goat and again asked what his name was. Goat answered but Hyena suspiciously said, laughing: "I know, you must be the big Sniff-and-you’ll-know!" and he ran away.

Yummaa so defaniima ṕaanam; kono so fewjanima sālo
"If your mother cooks you a meal, eat; but if she gives you advice do not follow"

The people believe in charms, and these are often put into the preferred dish of the victim-to-be. A mother is trusted always to love her child; consequently it is ruled out that she will ever cast a spell to endanger her child. Nevertheless, men think that whatever she suggests is shortsighted, hence the warning to young men against lending an attentive ear to women’s advice, even if it is their mother’s.

Wonmona wiima yaa wuurtu dooygal maa yiilotoo ko anndude ko ndoordida
"A man may tell you to adjust your load just to know what you are carrying"

When a load one is carrying is not poised in equilibrium on one’s head, people may come and help to adjust it. Naturally, a person coming so near will know what one is carrying. Now people can be just curious and want to know about the load one is carrying. Then they may use the
pretext of helping to adjust the load so they can approach the person carrying it. This is therefore a warning against suspicious men offering friendly advice or help. They simply want to know what we are up to.

_**Laamdo alaa sehil**_
“A king has no friend”

Whatever the friendly feelings a king may have for someone, he may still sacrifice that person for reasons of state and to safeguard his kingship. This is a warning against people getting too close to chiefs or powerful people. It is also quoted when a powerful man sacrifices a friend for his own interests.

_**Njutteen wonaa biddo**_
“A stepson is no son”

When a man trusts and loves his stepson very much, people may warn him against the danger he is heading for. A stepson may always bear a grudge against a stepfather for replacing his real father. This comment is also made when a stepson’s behaviour falls short of his father’s expectations.

_**Ko neddo yidi neddo fof yoo heddu ko ańciri dum**_
“Whatever the strength of your love for a person, spare room for some hatred”

As strong and exaggerated feelings and behaviour are not particularly appreciated within the community, people may express their fear of the final outcome by warning against the intensity of such feelings. Things may turn sour, or the friend or wife may betray or disappoint. This would be a hard blow if we filled all our hearts with love for others. The proverb offers a final comment in cases of the betrayal of friendship.

_**Koyngal so ńallinaani wallinaani anndaa ko artirta**_
“If the foot rests neither by day nor night, it does not know what it will bring back”

The innuendo here is that the foot will tread on faeces. When parents think that their child is wandering too much, they warn against the result of such behaviour.

_**Kele jeedidi keyataa e hoore ngori**_
“A cock’s head cannot stand seven breaks”

In other words, enough is enough! Elders often warn a youth against the dangers he is facing and with which he may not be able to cope.
The hint is that all these actions are done at the same time. This proverb, although somewhat crude, is nevertheless used by elders. When a person wants to do too many things at the same time, this is a way of telling him/her to face reality.

Debbo alaa hoolaare
“A woman is not to be trusted”

When a man is thought to trust his wife too much by allowing her too much liberty, people may warn him against the dangers of his attitude.

Baañoowo dojjetaa
“A hunter should not cough”

The picture conveyed, of course, is that of birds or any other quarry running away if the hunter coughs. The warning is against actions that may thwart a person in achieving his objectives. He is reminded that he must be tolerant and patient.

Fuuntude boorninoowo mum buri fuuntude moooroowo mum
“Better cheat one’s circumciser than one’s hairdresser”

Since the circumcision happens only once in a person’s life, one only needs the circumciser once. Therefore cheating him will be of no consequence since he cannot take reprisals. But things are quite different when it comes to the hairdresser or haircutter, whom one needs many times. The proverb is quoted when a man is considering breaking a promise made to someone he is likely to need again.

Kaangaado ina anndi galle baddo dawaadi
“The madman knows which house has got dogs”

As dogs can be very aggressive and attack any intruder in their masters’ houses, even a madman avoids entering these houses. The proverb is heard when a man warns someone against offending him, but more generally it comments on the attitude of an offender or cheat who avoids tough people.

Neddo yoo maay do woyete
“One should die where one has mourners”
When a man interferes in a dispute between two people closely related, people remind him that his interference is ill-placed and may create problems for him later. The idea is that, if he is hurt, he will not be cared for by any of the quarrellers.

*Neddo so hooyiima asamaan tuuti, maa tuute mum njante mum*
“If you look up at the sky and spit, the spittle will fall down on you”

This warns a person against any action or behaviour that is likely to do him much harm. If a man refuses to heed the advice, people may thrust this proverb in his face.

*Ganndomaa kam woni gañomaa*
“You real enemy is the one who knows all about you”

The innuendo here is that the one who knows a great deal about you is potentially far more dangerous than an actual enemy who has little information about you. It is a warning against people who open their hearts to others without reserve.

*Ko hoore roondotoo, kono gite ina nganndi ko hoore waawi nawde*
“The head carries, but the eyes know what it can carry”

The reference here is the possibility we have to size up things at a glance. The proverb is often quoted by elders who want to dissuade a youth from carrying something too heavy for him; in a figurative sense they warn someone against embarking on something beyond his aptitudes, however willing the person is.

*Neddo yoo leloto do hoydata*
“You should lie down where you will have dreams”

Having dreams supposes that the person is sleeping soundly. And very often children like lying down on adults’ mats. To warn them against sleeping there or to ask them to get up, the adults quote the proverb.

*Neddo yoo feryu ko waawi roonnaade*
“One should fell a faggot he can carry”

For domestic purposes, men often go into the bush to fell trees and bring home loads of logs. Since they may be far from the village, they will suffer if the load is too heavy. Now very often adults warn children against assertions and accusations which they might not be able to substantiate with evidence or dare to maintain in front of the persons accused.
"Hul ko haalaa!
"Take heed of what people say"

The suggestion here is that “There’s no smoke without fire”.

"Mo maayaani tagdaaka
“He who is still alive is not yet through the creation process”

In other words, as long as you live you are not safe from accidents and diseases, so neither physically nor mentally is a person shaped or created once and for all. One hears the proverb in two situations: after something – an accident, madness – has happened to someone, and as a warning against people mocking others with regard to their handicaps.

"Dogdu dow hubeere juutataa
“A race on the roof cannot last"

Since the roof is obviously limited in size, this is understandable. People thus warn others against actions or behaviour which are likely to result in a painful end very soon.

"Wonaa ko ranwi fof muude
“Not all that is white is eaten”

The white things hinted at here are flour, sugar and the like which are edible. This is a warning against people who are hasty in drawing conclusions from analogies.

"So holii maa luub!
“If it rots it stinks”

When a person refuses to tell his circle about his problems they may tell him that sooner or later they will find out if the problems become greater. So it is a warning that one should not try to shut oneself away when facing problems, since things are bound to leak out. A variant of this is:

"Ko wonee lahal fof maa juude njitu
“Whatever is in the bowl, hands will find out”

The eating manners referred to here have already been explained above.

"Jaambaraagal hentinaangal ko hello ittata dum
“Feigned courage is revealed by a smack”

A smack is relatively soft in comparison with other blows from more dangerous instruments. A coward pretending to be brave will run away at
the first smack received. What is not genuine and real cannot last, and so people are warned against conceitedness.

*Yoyre meere jagyggataa leeteer*
*Mere intelligence cannot read a letter*

Here again one has to bear in mind that one is dealing with an “oral” society, i.e. one without the use of writing and where illiteracy is still very high. Since not everybody can read or write a letter, this proverb, in a half mocking way, warns against trying to do things about which they have no knowledge or information. To read a letter you need to be educated, whatever your degree of intelligence.

*Doole mehe ngoocataa haako*
*Mere force cannot pick off foliage*

This is similar to the above, with the difference that it lays emphasis on technical ability and know-how as opposed to mere physical force. People often cook haricot leaves as part of their evening meals. One must pick off the leaves so as not to kill the plant, which may happen if a person exerts all his/her strength.

*Jamma ko debbo mawdo*
*“Night is an old woman”*

An old woman is often accused of many evils, contrary to an old man, who is regarded as a symbol of wisdom. She is believed to have many negative things hidden in her head. In the same way, night or darkness hides many things: even familiar objects may have a different appearance, and this sometimes frightens people travelling or walking in the dark. The proverb dissuades people from travelling or walking in the dark of the night.

*Saa yii teew wonko maayi*
*“If you see flesh there is something dead”*

A similar proverb, about the rumours that should be heeded, has already been explained above. There are no effects without causes; everything must have an explanation. So when some people try to defend an accused person, others may warn them that there must be a reason for the accusation.

*Seedu ina bonne ko heewi*
*“Little may spoil much”*
When a person attaches too much importance to a detail, people may warn him/her against the possible consequence.

*Mawdo so wumii wumtii anndi ko gite nafata*

“The old man who has gone blind and recovered his sight knows the usefulness of eyes”

This proverb warns someone to heed the bitter experience he has gone through and to avoid past errors. It also comments on the person’s amended behaviour after some harsh experience.

* * *

**Postscript**

Revisiting this collection of proverbs and my own village after more than ten years, I cannot help feeling a tinge of sadness as I fully realise that something that had shaped my childhood and adolescence is being lost, perhaps forever. While there are still some people much older than me in the village, they have become a rare sight. People of my age-group (mid-fifties) are now among the elders of the village. This brought home to me the significance of this collection, as I find myself struggling to command these proverbs as readily as I was able to do two decades ago, when the above paper was originally written. I felt more than ever before that I really belong to the transitional generation which knows what African traditional life has been, while still being fully at home with modern times.

The valiant efforts being made by the educated youth coming back to the village during the summer holidays from the big cities of Senegal, Europe, and America, remind me of the Negritude poets of the 1950s—Senghor and others—exalting traditional African values which they had all but lost in their day to day life and conduct. It is significant that only the oldest of my six children may perhaps be able to quote some of these proverbs or understand their full meanings.

The socio-economic and cultural realities that provided the material and intellectual base of these proverbs have all but disappeared, as the ever increasing globalisation of our conditions of existence leads to a more and more one-sided uniformity decided by the West, sometimes at a terrible cost. This sample of Haal Pulaar proverbs is therefore a testimony to what has been in that region, an indication of how much the rain has beaten us, and a glimpse of what could have been.
Notes

1. This paper was originally written as part of the coursework for the MA in Literature and Oral Culture at the University of Sheffield in 1987.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Onomatopoeia, imitating the cry uttered by Fulani to frighten children.

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Children’s games are still alive: A study of children’s games in a suburb west of Copenhagen

ERIK KAAS NIELSEN

The background for the study, undertaken in 1992, is the assertion often put forward that today’s children have no games, or at best know very few, which they seldom play. The cause of this state of things is said to be the small family of today, which typically has only one or two children, who are supervised most of the day in nurseries, schools and recreation centres. The children’s leisure time is spent on organised sports such as football, and hobbies, or on different kinds of entertainment like television, video, computer games, etc. However, there is no doubt that children still have their games, practised above all in school, but also in the open near their homes, especially if there are enough playmates in the neighbourhood. Of course, fine weather in Denmark promotes outdoor game activity. In nurseries a certain amount of instruction in games takes place, but children in these institutions also play the games they like in the open, although often under some supervision.

The information on the games discussed in this paper was obtained in schools by means of questionnaires filled in by the children, with more or less help from their teachers. Letters, drawings and descriptions from the pupils were also helpful, though most of the children found it too difficult to describe a game. Information about popular games was given by most pupils, and likewise how often they played: daily, several times a week, rarely, or perhaps never. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Ten classes from the first to the sixth grade and from four schools in the municipality took part, comprising 200 children in total. They gave information about the kind of games they played in the breaks at school and near their homes in the open: in playgrounds, streets or courtyards, and possibly in recreation centres or after-school centres. Group interviews were undertaken in the nine classes. The results revealed that most of the children played daily, many of them in every break, some of them a few times a week, and this especially applies to fifth and sixth grades. Although game activity definitely declines in the sixth grade, it seems as if boys at this age prefer to play in school breaks, while girls do so in their spare time.

On starting a game

In the municipality counting-out rhymes/dips are no longer or rarely used to decide who takes a particular role in a game, but many children still know such rhymes and seem to like them. Instead, they use
a short race to a goal agreed upon (a pole, a wall, etc.). The child who arrives last will "be" (local term for "be it"). The explanation of this procedure may be that the children want to start the game as rapidly as possible. The same procedure is also known and used in Norway. Drawing lots with a small twig is also sometimes used in the municipality.

**Singing games**

It seems as if singing games in our suburb are declining. In the 1960s at least twenty seven examples of such games were known and played at local schools. In the 1992 study the girls could only mention six singing games they had played during school breaks. Only the youngest ones in the first and second grades now played and sang during school breaks, but very seldom in their home playgrounds. The girls of fourth and fifth grades considered singing games too childish, perhaps owing to the use of that genre with preschool children in nurseries and on television. Singing games seem to be used seldom during school lessons, perhaps because the boys dislike them, and often refuse to participate, or to join in singing games arranged by their teachers. Some girls said they would like to know more singing games.

**Clapping games (Klappelege)**

In the 1960s some clapping games with songs could be observed among girls in the school yards, but during the 1970s this kind of game became very popular, especially after 1975. Today in the 1990s no doubt hundreds of songs with variants and combinations exist all over the country. When a video was taken in some classes at a school in the municipality in 1990, a single class had a repertoire of twenty six clapping game songs. Some of them had very complicated clapping patterns, almost exclusively demonstrated by girls. Yet some of the boys had made up their own songs, which were a kind of parody of some of the girls’ songs. Also, examples of “rap-talk” in Danish were found. Many of the texts were in a kind of English, a mixture of Danish and English – Pidgin-Danish or “Danglish” as it is sometimes called. Some Danish texts, or at least a few of them, are surprisingly witty.

The chapter on clapping games in the 1993 report on the results of the study gives only a few examples of this popular genre, since videos were taken at some of the schools. An important part of the standard repertory turns out to be international, e.g. the song “Anna Di-ana” seems to be known in most countries in Europe and on other continents too.
Hopscotch (Hinkeruder)

The chapter on hopscotch in the report refers to a study from 1971, when seventy three respondents (sixty six girls and seven boys) from various parts of Denmark wrote to a children’s magazine to tell about how they played hopscotch, and gave 134 examples of hopscotch diagrams. The most popular were the square diagrams with smaller beds, numbered from 1 to 9. They had names like The Beaten Track (Lige ud ad landevejen), The Swedish One (Den svenske), apparently believed to have come from Sweden, and The Drunkard (Fuld mand), because of the movements of the player. No. 3 was called The Norwegian One (Den norske) or The Sausage (Pølsen). The name of No. 4 was The Danish One (Den danske) or The Star (Stjernen). Another type (No. 5) was called Man (Mand) in Jutland, but on Seeland it was known as The Aeroplane (Flyveren) or Paradise (Paradis). This last name was also used on similar figures with 4, 5 or 6 “arms”. The Snail (Sneglen, No. 6) is a spiral-like figure with a varying number of beds. The name of No. 7 is The Sun (Solen); the hopscotch stone is not used with this figure.

The hopscotch diagrams in the 1993 report show some similarities with the material from 1971, but also some differences. The names of the figures include The Danish One, The Swedish One, The Norwegian One, and The Sun. The square figures with nine beds are apparently not used as often as in the past. One figure had no name and one of the square figures was called Paradise. One figure is still called The Aeroplane, and another is called The Triangle (Trekanten). Perhaps the popularity of hopscotch has declined during the last few decades because the children may now stay inside the school building during breaks if they prefer. This arrangement at least applies to the winter term. Indoors, however, such traditional activities as clapping games and elastics flourish.

Skipping games (Sjipning)

Before 1960 it was rare to see boys skipping with girls in the school yards, but during the past two or three decades it has been more and more common to see boys and girls skipping together in long ropes – called Skipping in a Bow (Sjippe i bue). The individual skipping in small ropes (Små sjippetove) is above all a girls’ practice. The girls skip both at school and in leisure time, but the boys do so generally only at school. When skipping in small ropes the girls speak of “lightning and thunder” when the rope is swinging twice for one jump, “cross” if the arms are crossed, “backward” if the rope is swinging that way, “hopscotch jump” if you only jump on one foot.

With long ropes there are many ways of jumping. If the rope swings from side to side like a pendulum, they call it The Cradle (Vuggen). If the rope is moved vertically in waves, the name is The Sea
If the waves are horizontal, the name is The Snake (Slangen). In all these forms the player has to jump over the rope without touching it. Normally the rope will be swung by two participants, who also ensure that the skipping is correctly performed. If not, the jumper must take over the swinging rope from one of the two participants.

The girls were familiar with the different ways of skipping, and in many cases they have no doubt given names to the varied forms, the names of which often differed from one school to another. The names and forms were as follows:

Round the World (Jorden rundt): the jumping child turns around while jumping, in four jumps.

Five and Five Between (Fem og fem imellem): the first skipper jumps five times while counting, then out, and the rope swings five times without any skipper. The next one jumps five times, then five times without any skipper, and so on.

Five and Just After (Fem og lige efter): the skippers jump successively five times without any pause.

The Trial (Generaleprøven) is an exercise with jumps of increasing difficulty; if all jumps are completed without a pause, it is called Trial with Examination (Generaleprøve med eksamen). At another school they had a similar form called Student Examination (GCE A-level). When the examination or test has been passed, the skipper gets five or ten “red roses” by jumping five or ten times over “the cradle”.

Some rhymes were also noted, e.g. “Teddy Bear” (Bamse): “Teddy bear jump in, take a stone, throw the stone, spread your arms, legs – and out”. Oracle rhymes (Orakelremser) tell about the skipper’s future. They seem to be rare now; only one girl knew such rhymes (about the skipper’s possible marriage, partner’s name, number of children, etc.).

Elastic skipping (Elastikhop)

This kind of game started in this country about 1961. In the beginning it was called “Chinese skipping” (Kinasjip) because perhaps children considered it so exotic that it could only have come from China. Now it is called “Elastic skipping” or just “Elastic”, and the game has gradually become an important part of schoolchildren’s repertoire. In 1962 a short film was made in one school in the community, and here two girls demonstrated a few forms of this new game.

Today there are many forms of elastic skipping, each with its own special procedure and name. From the four schools the following names and forms were noted:

The Danish One (Den danske): usually a simple and easy form of jumps but not necessarily the same form in all schools, as is also true of the following names and forms: The Norwegian One (Den norske), The
Norwegian Fourie (*Den norske firer*), The Norwegian Sixie (*Den norske seksker*), The Swedish One (*Den svenske*), The Swedish Fiveie (*Den svenske femmer*), The Yugoslavian One (*Den jugoslaviske*), The German One (*Den tyske*), The Star (*Stjernen*), The Oneie (*Eneren*), The Park (*Parken*), The Triangle (*Trekanten*), with three to hold the elastic, The Square (*Firkanten*) with four holders of the elastic, The Ballerina or Ballet (*Ballerina* and *Ballet*), Mixed Sweets (*Blandede bolsjer*), Nadja (at one school and introduced by a girl with that name), Grandmother (*Bedstemor*), Grandfather (*Bedstefar*), The Threerunner (*Treløberen*) and The Figure of Eight (*Ottetallet*). All these jumps range from the simple to the most artistic, the latter demanding high leaps, handstands, etc. A full description in words would have required days and weeks of work. However, a few examples of the many forms have been videotaped, and this seems to be a perfect way to document elastic skipping.

There can be no doubt that it is the girls who have developed this kind of game, sometimes inspired by girls from other countries, perhaps refugees or immigrants more or less naturalised, or maybe from children they have met who have been travelling with their parents in Denmark or in other countries. Boys often participate in this game, especially in school breaks, but it is the girls who are the experts and know the names and details of the different forms.

**Tig games**

In Denmark this kind of game has a great number of names, depending on locality and dialect. Sometimes the names are so curious that it is not possible to give any etymology. In the suburb in which the study was undertaken the name is *pint*, perhaps derived from the verb *pine* (pain, hurt) though the pronunciation is different from that of the verb. The chaser is called *pinter*, and the action is to *pint*. The shout when someone is touched is *pint, you are*, not *you are it* as in Copenhagen itself, where the game is called Take Hold (*Tagfat*).

The basic form is that one chaser is succeeded by the one he/she touches. Another form is Chain Pint (*Kaedepint*), where normally several children who are holding hands to form a chain chase others who will then be new links in the chain. In school yards the chain is limited to two because of the risk when the chain is swinging. This type of game is sometimes called Two Men’s Pint (*Tomandspint*). At times the chain consists of a girl and a boy, if the participants have agreed on that. Other kinds of *pint* are Chinese Pint (*Kineserpint*) where the person touched must keep his/her hand on the place where he/she has been touched, and Shadow Pint (*Skyggepint*), where the chaser has to touch the shadow of the one he/she chases. Pint on the Logs (*Pint på traestammerne*) is played in schools where logs are placed in the school yards. King’s Runner
(Kongelober – like the English Wall to Wall) with or without help (hjaælper), i.e. the participants touched must help the chaser. There are local forms like Pole (Stolpe), where the “home” is a post, and the participants change posts after eye contact, and Crocodile (Krokodille-pint), which has been played in the suburb for more than twenty years. The chaser is the “crocodile”, and the “homes” are benches, or the edges of an empty sandpit. The Ground is Poisonous (Jorden er giftig) is played almost like Crocodile, but here the person chased is allowed to touch the ground as long as this is not observed by the chaser. If the chaser sees it and shouts “The ground is poisonous!”, he/she is relieved by the breaker of the rules.

Girls after Boys/Kiss, Hug or Both (Pigerne efter drengene) is very popular, and far more so than Boys after Girls (Drengene efter pigerne). The reason is that: “If we play boys after girls, the game is soon finished, because boys are better at running than girls are.” In Girls after Boys, the boys who are caught are placed on a bench and guarded by two or more girls, as they can be liberated by “free” boys. The game is spoken about with a certain amount of bashfulness, because the captured boys are often kissed by the girls. Sometimes the boys are allowed to choose the girls who may kiss them. In Boys after Girls, boys are not expected to kiss the girls. When asked if kissing was part of the game, the boys indignantly denied that kissing of girls went on.

More chasing games could be mentioned, but I shall confine myself to just one more. It is a game that was invented by the boys of a class at one school; they were rather proud of it and named it Milk Carton (Mælkekarton). A quarter-litre milk carton is used, half-filled with sand from the sandpit in the schoolyard. “It is best to be more than four – seven or eight is best. It is not allowed to throw hard. If someone is hit, he will be (it). The game is over when you no longer care to play”.

Hide and seek games and the like

Kick the Can/Tin Can Tommy (Dåseskjul) is still a popular game, but in school yards it is played without a noisy tin can. Instead, a small twig, a milk carton, or a circle drawn with chalk is used. Actually this tame form is also used at home in the open. Some children have never even known or played the original form, but still they call the game something which refers to the word can. I think the original game has been changed, partly through friendly persuasion from grown-ups, partly because it is sometimes difficult to get hold of a suitable tin can.

Other hide and seek games are Wave Hiding (Vinkeskjul) and Arrow Chase (Pileskjul) in which arrows are drawn on the ground with chalk by those who are being chased, until they have found a good place to hide. Near this place arrows like this:
are drawn. Generally this game is played outside school during leisure time, but also at one school where there are good opportunities for hiding.

1-2-3, 3-2-1, First One (En to tre, tre to en, første): This game is known and highly appreciated by all children studied in the community. It is played at school above all. The children stand in a circle and shout “1-2-3, 3-2-1, First One!” The first one to raise his/her hand starts and tries to step on somebody’s foot. The game is a rapid one, with a lot of noise and some quarrelling, but is immensely popular. The child who is stepped on is “dead” until the “stepper’s” own foot is stepped on. Then the first one comes to “life” again.

The two games 1-2-3, Red Light, Stop (En to tre rodt lys, stop) and A Letter Came (Der kom et brev) are much alike. One child stands with his/her face against a wall, and the rest stand at some distance, side by side. After a dialogue between the person at the wall and those in the row, the one at the wall decides on the kind of step to be taken (“mouse steps”, “elephant steps”, “monkey jumps”, etc.). He/she then shouts “Stop!” and turns round. If anybody is still moving, he/she has to return to the starting line. The others try to get near the wall and touch it. If one of them succeeds, he/she is the next one to stand at the wall.

Piv: The game is often played in school breaks, but is not usually among the popular games. It was also played at one school in 1970, but then it was called Fingerprint (Fingeraftryk). Participants C, D, E, and F stand at the wall facing A and B. A stands with hands behind his/her back, and B presses one of his/her fingers (or thumb). A then stretches his/her joined hands in front of him/her, and the children at the wall try to guess which finger B has pressed. If E, for instance, is the first one to guess right, A then cries “piv” (the word is an interjection signifying whimpering) and runs away, chased by E, who tries to catch him/her. If E succeeds, he/she takes A’s position, and A takes that of B, and now it is his/her turn to press E’s finger or thumb, from B’s old position. The original B then goes to the wall. Sometimes the rules are slightly different when the game is played by other groups of children.

I Declare War Against X (Jeg erklærer krig mod X): X stands for the name of some country. This is a modernisation of an old game performed on a patch of earth or sand and with pocket knives, which was common at the beginning of the twentieth century. Today it is played on asphalt and with pieces of chalk with which to conquer the land of the opponents, according to the rules. After a declaration of war from your side, the others are allowed to run until you shout “Stop!” If you can touch the nearest one after three steps and the length of your spitting, you may conquer a part of his/her “country” with the help of your piece of chalk, from the middle of the circle, where the countries of the
participants meet. If you cannot touch him/her, he/she is allowed to conquer a part of your country under the same conditions. This game has been played at least since 1960.

The King’s Successor (Kongens efterfølger): The King’s Successor is the local name for the game known in the United Kingdom and perhaps the USA as Follow The/My Leader. The idea is to imitate the leader’s actions and movements. When girls play this game, they do it just to have fun, while boys often tend to make it a daring game. It seems to have different names depending on the locality. In Copenhagen it was once called Rolf og hans kaemper (Rolf and his Warriors), named after a figure from the legendary age of Scandinavia, the idol of many boys. In a district of Copenhagen the game is today called Kommandoleg (Commando Game).

Fighting Games and Duels (Kamplege og dueller)

Water fights (vandkampe) suddenly break out on hot summer days, both in school and in playgrounds near homes. Water pistols, plastic bottles and – outside school – buckets, garden hoses etc. are generally used. The only purpose is to make the opposite party soaking wet – sometimes even participants from your own party. Teachers on playground duty have a hard time on such days, as the game is almost impossible to stop. If the teacher smiles or laughs, the game is considered as accepted, and the teacher may just as well give up trying to stop it. The game is also popular even among fourteen to fifteen-year-old pupils – whole gangs of boys and girls try to make each other sopping wet, until the “disturbances” are stopped by teachers.

Pushing games (Skubbeleg)

Such games are reported from schools where a number of large logs or treetrunks are placed permanently in the school yard. There may be one or more “masters” or “kings” on the logs, and they try to prevent others from climbing up on the logs. The game is often stopped when it becomes too wild.

War games (Krigslege)

These games are mostly played by boys and outside school, especially if toy guns are used, as these are not allowed in schools. Children know from television that wars are very bloody and that medical treatment is needed. Therefore, some of them – often girls – are doctors who revive the “dead” soldiers with midis (medicine). The two sides in the wars often take hostages and try to conquer the enemy’s bases. Their imitation of the sound of machine guns, hand grenades etc. is amazingly realistic.
Cops and Robbers etc. (*Politi og rovere m.m.*)

This old game has been supplanted by Bank Robbery, Drug Smuggling and the like. Smuggling is often played with bicycles, the drug is e.g. a piece of cardboard, which is hidden on the bicycle or on the smuggler. If it is found, he/she must go to “jail”.

Some fighting games have rather extravagant names. Bloodsport (*Blodsport*) is not so bloody or gory as the name may suggest. It is rather a kind of hardening exercise, played above all in the local playgrounds outside school, often inspired by action films and television. Boys from one class wrote in a letter to me that the cause of fighting among them often might be boredom. If only they knew some more exciting games, fights among them would be very rare.

Ball games (*Boldlege*)

In the end, no game can compete with the boys’ interest in football. Many boys play football almost every day in the school yard, but they prefer to play it in their own way and with rules adapted to the circumstances. Actually, they make their own games with balls of different kinds. The ball games may have names like Life and Death (*Liv og død*), Pig and Star (*Gris og stjerne*), Pole (*Stolpe*), etc. Boys who have played in football clubs have often left them because they find it tedious to train and play like professionals. “They take it too seriously – and if we don’t score, we are scolded.” Girls sometimes participate in boys’ football games in breaks, but most girls prefer to play with a small ball. Popular is a game called Jump Over Ball (*Hop over bold*). The participants stand in a row, and the first girl throws the ball against the wall. When the ball hits the ground the girl has to jump over it with her legs spread. If she touches the ball, she is “dead” and steps aside. However, she is allowed to pick out another girl in the row, and if this girl misses, the “dead” girl comes to “life” again. The game has several forms or variants, and in 1992 it was very popular among girls, but boys also participated.

Ball Against Wall (*Bold op ad mur*) is still played by girls, but using only one ball, and the many rhymes and formulas which were normally recited or sung in this kind of play have apparently disappeared, been forgotten, or given up, at least locally.

Ball of Death (*Dødbold*) is a chasing and touching game with a ball – a parallel to Ball Tag and Ball He in England. Other names for it were *Boldpint* or *Boldfnat* (Ball Itch). *Halli hallo* and *Smørklat* (Butter Lump) are names of other ball games.

More organised ball games include Rounders (*Rundbold*) and *Langbold*. These games are played both at school in gym lessons, where the rules are strictly adhered to, and also during breaks in school yards.
and outside school. One player is “in”, and the rest are in the field. If a ball is caught by a player in the field, or if a player who is “in” is hit on his/her run to a base, the two sides have to change positions.

Other games

Acting games (Dramalege): A few acting games with fixed or traditional dialogues such as The Witch is in Town (Heksen er i byen) were mentioned in one school. This game is played outside school in the evening. The witch sits in her place, and another girl announces “The witch is in town!” The participants walk up to her and ask what time it is. If the witch answers “It is twelve o’clock!” it is time for them to run to their “homes”. The one who is caught will be the next witch. A similar old form called Witch Mother with the Yellow Green Hair (Heksemor med det gulgronne hår) seems to be rare in the community nowadays. It was mentioned in a list of games a few years ago at one school, but is known in other places in Denmark and in parts of Germany too.

A game called Ghost (Spøgelse) was reported from one school. It is played in breaks, on a staircase leading to a dark basement. A boy – the ghost – hides in the basement, while the rest of the participants wait and count to ten. Then they go down the staircase and the ghost tries to catch one of them by surprise: the person caught will be the next one to be the ghost. The rest run up the staircase, shouting “The ghost is coming!” If a teacher comes to drive them out, the same shout is used. Then they all try to escape or to hide, and the game is over. “But sometimes we can play till the school bell sounds. It is a rather exciting game.” In this case the teacher is part of the game, perhaps without knowing it.

Other games with vampires, ghosts, monsters etc. were mentioned as examples from domestic playgrounds. They were named in the questionnaires together with games like Circus, and Rag Pickers, and fairy tale games like The Little Mermaid. Also, popular children’s books such as those by Astrid Lindgren had inspired girls to devise new games.

Old games, including pretending games such as Father, Mother and Children (Far, mor, born) and School (Skole) were reported. Girls from one fourth grade class (about ten years old) said that they preferred to play with younger children. They were better as “children” than girls of their own age. Sometimes they succeed in making a boy from their class act as “father”, and “Then we scold him when he reads the newspaper and does not help in the kitchen”. Girls at another school, also from a fourth grade class, played two kinds of School – Old Fashioned School (Gammeldags skole) and Usual School (Almindelig skole). Popular among girls in all schools are new horse games, where skipping ropes are used as reins. Marble games are popular again, after having been almost forgotten for several years. Years ago boys used cheap marbles of baked
clay. Nowadays they use marbles of coloured glass and plastic. When the children were asked what they did when they did not play games in the break they gave answers like “We just walk around talking”, “I just talk with my classmates”, “We just have fun”, “We watch the games of the others”, or “We tell jokes and stories to each other.” As to leisure time, the children mentioned a number of organised activities in clubs and children’s organisations. Family excursions and activities were also mentioned. Play outside in the streets, backyards, courts, and domestic playgrounds took place primarily in fine weather. Jokes, talk, chat, and fun are evidently as important as the games and play when children get together both inside and outside school.

Some tentative conclusions

It is clear from the study that children’s traditional games and play still continue. Some of the traditions are old, others rather new. Games and game genres change, new ones come into being and establish themselves, but innovations need not always be entirely new. Generally there are elements of older traditions in them, often from a bygone era, or from local or national traditions, or from foreign cultures. Recent Danish game traditions are marked by international influence, often of American (or perhaps English) origin, but other cultures are perceptible too. Danish songs, rhymes, jingles etc., judging from local reports and observations, are apparently on the decline in favour of American/English or “Danglish” examples.

As to games and play, the school playground is an important arena for tradition and innovation. In many districts which have only a low number of children, the playground is undoubtedly the most important venue for the practice and transmission of games and play. Generally the children in a class play with their classmates, and in games where both boys and girls participate the girls often or usually take the initiative in starting the common games. In their leisure time boys tend to prefer games with other boys – not always in the nearest neighbourhood or local playground. Games with mixed neighbour groups of different ages also occur, although perhaps less often than in the 1960s, 1970s, or earlier.

A personal point of view, based on my own experience

Interest in children’s games and play from grown-ups – parents, teachers, etc. – encourages the children’s interest in and regard for their own games. To some extent adults can influence children’s games. They can warn and dissuade children, especially boys, from playing games that are violent or dangerous to themselves or others. Also, brutal games can be reduced, but of course one cannot be sure that new ones will not arise and spread.
It is often possible to teach children new – or old – games, but the effect will be limited locally and usually also temporarily. In my opinion the encouragement of traditional games should concentrate on children’s own games and performances and on what they can learn from other children. Teaching children games by means of television and video programmes is also reported to have positive effects, according to experience in Australia. One should not forget that children are often inspired by stories, fairy tales and novels which have been read to them, or they have read themselves. Also events, shows, films and incidents on television have an influence, though not always a good one. Sports and organised games, above all football, have an enormous prestige, and schools support the importance of sport by arranging matches within and between schools. In the past, such activities were viewed with great seriousness, and combined with solemn ceremonies. As a supplement to sports days and other activities arranged by schools, no doubt they could give traditional games and play prestige and popularity by organising local festivals and days where children’s present repertoire of games – and perhaps some good old ones – are the theme. However, it is most important that such events provide a memorable and happy experience, with lots of fun and laughter for all concerned.

Notes

1. Erik Kaas Nielsen, *Legen Lever: Leg i Brøndby* 1992, Hvidovre, PPR Brøndby, 1993. This publication was funded by the Brøndby municipality, the Egmont H. Petersen’s Fund, and the Danish Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The project included the arrangement of “game days” at schools in Brøndby, in which children up to the age of eleven or twelve participated, along with instructors, teachers, and parents. I am especially indebted to two consultants at the PPR (Pedagogical-Psychological Guidance), Lis Hjortso and Kirsten Ærø, for all their assistance with the practical arrangements, including applications to the authorities, and the production of handwritten and typewritten accounts of the play and games. I am also grateful to Hanne Thorup for the typesetting of the manuscript.

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The strange story of how a hopscotch stone was standardised

ERIK KAAS NIELSEN

The story about the standardisation of the Danish hopscotch stone according to a directive from the European Union is rather long and complicated, and even now is not finished. Originally the hopscotch stone was a natural flat stone suitable for this kind of game. The hopscotch stone is called a hinkesten in Danish, where the verb hinke generally stands for “hopping”, which is usual in that kind of game, and the noun sten means “stone”. From the beginning of the twentieth century the hinkesten was made of glass with different kinds of pattern on the surface, and especially from the 1920s and the 1930s this kind of hopscotch stone became very popular. However, many children still used their usual stone, especially when those made of glass were not obtainable, or they used hopscotch stones made of other materials. If children had no money, they used the bottom of a bottle, preferably a green or brown one, or they used a piece of broken glass, also coloured.

In the spring of 1996 Gustav Henningsen, an experienced folklorist at the Danish Folklore Archives, encouraged me to write on Danish children’s hopscotch games, a subject which had not been treated since H. F. Feilberg wrote the article “The game of hopscotch as played in Denmark” in the English journal Folk-Lore (1895). From local studies of children’s games in 1970 and 1992 and from an analysis of a nationwide collection of hopscotch games, I had some knowledge of this kind of game. During my research in 1996 I found out that the popular glass stone had been banned according to a departmental announcement based on a European Union directive on toys. I therefore wrote to the National Consumers’ Agency responsible for this departmental announcement and asked for further information. I also asked the Agency to state how many children had been injured by broken glass stones in Denmark. They confirmed that, in conformity with the announcement, it was forbidden to produce and sell hinkesten made of glass in all European Union states. At the same time the Agency informed me that, according to the EHLASS (European Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System) file, which was based on statistics from a number of casualty departments at Danish hospitals, the Agency knew of no accidents “where glass stones were involved” (letter to me from the Agency, April 24th, 1996). They were also so kind as to send me the announcement (No. 329, from May 23rd, 1995) which came into force from June 1st, 1995. This decision was a so-called “implementation” of a European Union directive (EU 88/378) on the
safety of toys. Furthermore, the Agency referred to the information in EN 71-1, according to which, toys should be in conformity with harmonised European standards.

Thinking that many more accidents might have happened in other European Union countries, I wrote to a number of offices in Brussels. I wrote first to BEUC, who referred me to ANEC (European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardisation) (sic!). The ANEC referred to a certain official in the European Commission, DGXXIV at another office in Brussels. From his name I thought he might be British, so I wrote a letter in English (August 5th, 1996), about the curious ban on a plaything in Denmark that seemed to be rather harmless. I also asked him to give further information about hopscotch accidents in other European countries. He did not answer, and I wrote another letter on August 20th, 1996 with the word “Urgent” on the envelope. As the whole affair seemed somewhat ridiculous, I decided to speed up matters a little, so I wrote an open letter (rather ironic I must confess) which was published in two Copenhagen newspapers. I told of my interest in children’s hopscotch games and about the ban, which had no background in accidents in Denmark. The announcement says that toys can be made of glass only “if it is necessary for the function of the toy, e.g. optical toys”. I mentioned that it was not unusual to see little girls looking through their new glass hopscotch stones to see the sky and the sun in a new way. I understood that the official identified was responsible for the standardisation of all European stones made for hopscotch but, thinking he might be British, I thought that he was perhaps unaware of Danish hopscotch habits. I even offered to send him a beautiful Danish glass stone for comparison with hopscotch stones of perhaps poorer quality from other European countries. Perhaps this could be interpreted as a kind of bribery, but as a correct official he could of course refuse my offer.

The hopscotch stone becomes warm

My letter aroused great interest, I must say. I was interviewed by two Copenhagen radio stations and by a local television station, which also asked children in a neighbouring school to demonstrate hopscotch for the cameraman, using a customary glass stone and one made of plastic. The children declared openly that they preferred the glass one, as it was prettier and easier to push along the ground than the plastic one. A few days later I received what I would call an anonymous letter. (The signature was unreadable, and there was no address in the letter or on the envelope). The letter stated that the silent official was not British at all, but Danish through and through. In fact he was even employed in the above mentioned National Consumers’ Agency, but for the time being
was "lent out" to the European Union Commission. Of course I could not use this letter in my polemics, so I telephoned the Agency and asked if they had an official by that name in the European Union, which they confirmed.

At the same time, in response to my public letter, a "Folk Movement for the Preservation of the Glass Hinkesten" was established by Jørn Møller at the Danish Sport High School of Gerlev near Slagelse in Western Zealand. Of course it was only a practical joke, but it had great political effect as it reached other circles, especially in Denmark, and newspapers outside Copenhagen wrote about the movement and the ban. Jørn Møller's message was also published in English via the internet, and he received several protest letters and enquiries. He also "threatened" a "hopscotch relay race" to the "Hopscotch Stone Department" in Brussels, where "the agitated hopscotchers would possibly throw glass stones against the panes"—(a pun, since the compartments in the Danish hopscotch game are called panes). On September 11th, 1996 our Prime Minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, who had himself played hopscotch as a boy, ridiculed the ban at the Social Democratic Congress. "That won’t do!" he repeated twice, and the audience laughed and applauded.

What is going on in the European Union?

Since I had not heard from the official concerned, and I felt that the "case" had some sympathy from the public, I wrote a new open letter in which I thanked the Prime Minister for his clear statement. I also raised the question of what was going on in the European Union offices, where the momentous decisions on hopscotch stones were taken. Perhaps they were planning new attacks on children's toys as, for example, skipping ropes, marbles, elastics, hard rubber balls, etc. Or maybe the officials were just busy hopscotching in the courtyards of the European Union buildings, testing a great assortment of glass stones from different countries. I also sent my open letter to the Prime Minister, and some days later I received a greeting from him through his secretary, who informed me that "the case" had now been sent to our Foreign Minister, to whom European Union questions are addressed. Believe it or not, I received a personal letter from him informing me that neither the European Union nor the National Consumers' Agency had prohibited the traditional glass stone, but the importers and dealers had apparently judged that "glass stones shall not be brought into trade" (sic!). That was what the director of the Agency had informed him!

From the secretary of the political opposition (the Liberals) I was informed by telephone that their Danish member of the European Parliament had reported that the official would soon answer me, no
doubt urged by this member. Finally, I received a letter from the official to the effect that the European Union Commission had never prohibited the glass stone, but the directive 88/378 EØF was drafted according to standard EN-71, drawn up by the independent CEN, where European national standard organisations are represented. This standard was not based on statistics on accidents, but “made from common sense saying that children should not play with objects so dangerous as glass stones”. He further informed me that hopscotch stones made of glass were above all a Danish phenomenon. Though there was no code word in the EHLASS system for hopscotch stones, it was found, after a careful scrutiny of half a million pieces of information on children’s accidents, that there were two cases where hopscotch stones had been involved. In one case a two-year-old child had swallowed a piece of a hopscotch stone, from which one may conclude that the stone was broken. In the other case the child (another child, I suppose) was hit on the forehead by a hinkesten. Neither of these cases resulted in hospital admission.

The hopscotch stone is liberated!

I sent this letter to the Danish member of the European Parliament, and no doubt politicians from the Liberals and the Social Democrats discussed the matter. In October 1996, at a press meeting and through a press release, the Minister of Justice declared that the Danish Glass Stone was legal again, and the whole affair was due to a misinterpretation of the European Union Directive by the National Danish Agency. The benevolent minister even demonstrated hopscotch with a glass stone for television cameramen. The Folk Movement could be dissolved, he declared, and children could again use their popular glass stones with a clear conscience. He added that perhaps the officials in the Agency needed a course in expressing themselves more precisely. The minister further declared that a “statement” would be issued from the Ministry of Business and Industry, under which the Agency operated. It looked like a complete victory, and of course Jørn Møller and I rejoiced. Even before the Minister of Justice proclaimed the liberation of the “glashinkesten”, some of our respectable museums had taken the matter into their own hands and were selling glass stones as before.

But things were not quite that simple. I wrote to the Minister of Justice and asked him for the statement. My letter was forwarded to the Minister of Business and Industry, from whom I received the statement, which was issued by the Director of the Agency! It had the headline, apparently addressed to children: “Just play hopscotch as usual!” The statement also said that glass stones had never been banned in Denmark. From now on they should only be marked with a CE (Communauté Européen) label and be type-approved! The minister admitted that the
first answer I had been given was not correct, because the announcement or departmental order had not taken glass stones into account. Glass stones could be sold all over the European Union under the above conditions.

**The hardships of a hopscotch stone**

From correspondence with other authorities I learned that the approval of hopscotch stones took place at a department of the Danish Technological Institute in Århus. This was after a telephone call and a letter in which I explained that I should be glad to receive information on how they tested glass stones, since I was preparing an article on the history of Danish hopscotch games. That happened in the early spring of 1997, and with some difficulty I got a remarkable and peculiar letter dated April 30th, 1997. The test, I was informed, was done by so-called “reproducible tests by vertical drops” on to a concrete floor and from different heights, that is to say from 0.50m – 0.75m – 1.00m – 1.25m, and so on. Four tests are performed with each stone, twice on the flat surface and twice on the round edge of the stone. If a glass stone breaks or cracks one or more times in the four tests from 0.50m the stone will not be approved. From 0.75m with one breakage or crack out of four drops the stone is only approved for children over six years old, and likewise for 1.00m etc. and then it is stressed: “No glass stone will be approved for children under 3 years of age” (which I think they will live with). Furthermore it is emphasised that: “The glass stone shall be provided with a warning/information that the game must be supervised by adults. If the glass stone is broken it shall immediately be wrapped up and removed, as very sharp edges may arise”. The technician further emphasised that glass stones tested in this way are not approved in conformity with the common European standards EN 71, part 1-6. The approval and the use of the stones apparently only concern the Kingdom of Denmark (my interpretation). Perhaps it is even an offence to export or send them to other European countries, which I must confess I have done many times.

The approval of some of the glass stones has involved some absurdities. I have two blue stones – one approved and with a CE-label so that children over six years old can use it. The other stone of the same kind and with the same motif is for collectors or for decorative purposes, but not approved for hopscotch. The H. C. Andersen motifs on the stones are rather modern designs, and the thick and more robust stones with cockle, trilobite, ammonite and plesienius motifs are also from about 1990. The old ones with flowers, seagulls, stars etc. are seldom found now, and if they are deep red, blue or green, as the popular ones once were, they are now rather expensive and sold as antiquities.
The new decision regarding adult supervision was in my opinion so curious that I found it difficult to take it seriously. I searched the shops in inner Copenhagen to find glass stones with the new warning/information and the demand for adult supervision and the immediate removal of possible broken stones. I found none, and neither did some of my female acquaintances. However, some new stones were being sold with the label “Warning! Glass can be broken and cause sharp edges!” And the label further asked the buyer to write down the name of the shop and its address. I asked the producers of the glass stone by telephone if it meant that the customer could be given a new one if the first one was broken. No, they answered, but the label was statutory.

Proposal for a Great Hopscotch Day

I began to find the whole affair completely absurd! So I decided to write an article and propose that children all over the country should have their own Great Hopscotch Day and decide which stone was to be preferred: the plastic or the glass one. However, my manuscript disappeared after I sent it to the first newspaper, and a new shorter copy of it was declared too long and complicated. Finally, I let the interested journalist treat my long story according to her own taste. In June 1997 she informed her readers about the new demand for adult supervision of hopscotch games and about the proposed Hopscotch Day. Through repeated appeals she called on the readers to tell how they played or had played hopscotch, and she even persuaded our National Museum to offer five real glass stones for the best descriptions received. The official behind the decision on supervision etc. was too busy to be interviewed by the journalist, and even to respond to a telephone call from the Danish member of the European Parliament. But a representative of the National Consumers’ Agency confirmed to the journalist that the decision on supervision was still in force! The article by the journalist resulted in seventeen fine letters on hopscotch from women of all ages, from young girls to grandmothers. As to the proposed Great Hopscotch Day only two letters (from institutions) told how they arranged such events. Though it seems difficult to mobilise children through a newspaper, the seventeen letters will stand as valuable and excellent evidence of or testimony on the value of a game often looked down upon.

Final efforts

During the last few months of 1997 I informed Alasdair Roberts (author of a fine book on children’s games, who is interested in the games of Danish children) about the hinkesten affair. He spoke about the matter at the international conference on “The State of Play” hosted by
the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition in association with the Folklore Society at the University of Sheffield, April 14-17, 1998, and also informed Mrs Iona Opie, who was a guest of honour at the conference.

To have the matter cleared up, I wrote a polite letter (November 4, 1997) to the Hon. Director of the National Consumers’ Agency and explained the background to my interest in children’s hopscotch. I mentioned that when children from the beginning of the twentieth century had no glass stone they often used the bottom of a bottle or even a piece of coloured glass when they played hopscotch. I asked why it was necessary for the stones to have a CE-label and type-approval, if there was no demand or wish for it from the European Union and it was entirely a Danish decision. The new demand for the supervision of children playing hopscotch with glashinkesten and the immediate removal of broken stones had resulted in a number of indignant and nostalgic letters from grandmothers, mothers and young girls and – not to be forgotten – had aroused a great deal of mirth. On November 20th I received a short letter – not from the director to whom I had written, but from the vice-director. It noted that the requirements for toys, including hinkesten, were in accordance with Announcement No. 328, etc., etc. – the usual mantra. Toys must always be marked with a CE-label and in conformity with the rules, outlined in the Departmental Order paragraph 5, and so on, but not a word on the supervision of children and removal of dangerous glass pieces! – a small but significant retreat.

Following this answer I decided to write about the case before the vote on the Amsterdam Treaty in May 1998. In a new open letter I mentioned the answer from the Agency, and I stressed that the demands for the supervision of children and the removal of broken stones were not mentioned in the Agency’s letter, from which one must conclude that these demands were no longer to be taken seriously. As glass stones without European Union labels and information on type-approval are still sold in many shops and museums, why not let the sale be completely free like the exceptions enumerated in the departmental announcement on toys? (These exceptions are, for example, slings (for stones), darts with metal points, airguns, accurate copies of real firearms, etc.)

Because of a labour dispute and a strike for several days my letter was published too late and the editorial staff at the newspaper shortened it rather severely. The answer from the new Minister of Business and Trade was not published, though I had invited her to do so. I received the letter from her on the day of the vote on the Amsterdam Treaty, May 28th, to the effect that it was not possible to change the decision about the hopscotch stones because the exceptions came from a directive from the European Union on toys. If the list was to be changed it would be
necessary to change the directive. She was glad that it was possible to buy hopscotch stones of both glass and plastic. Such a change would also be after the Vote on the Amsterdam Treaty. A Yes or No vote should not depend on the problem of a hopscotch stone – something I had not maintained and never would dare to assert.

So here we are, almost as we started, with the illustrious EU 88/378 directive! But after all children can get their glashinkesten if they are stubborn and lucky enough, even though such glass stones are not always sold in the big shops, which seem to prefer plastic ones. And they can play hopscotch without supervision. However, I must admit that, even if bureaucracy is hard to defeat, it has at least been a good fight and great fun too! We shall see what happens in the spring of 1999!

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Written and spoken comments on glass stones

In June 1997 the paper Politiken mentioned in an article the decision that children in the future should be supervised if they played hopscotch with stones made of glass. The glass material was too “dangerous”, though thousands of children had learned to deal with glass stones from the beginning of the twentieth century. The reaction to the article was a number of letters – altogether sixty one pages – from indignant and nostalgic young girls, mothers and grandmothers, with careful descriptions and drawings of how they had played hopscotch in their childhood. Some of the letters were whole treatises or fine essays about the joy of hopscotch and stones of glass. Even small poems in praise of the hopscotch stone appeared. Below are quotations from these letters, together with two examples of what has been written on “the affair” in other countries.

1. The joy of the glass stone was also in the selection – its colour, pattern, and as smooth as possible – without nicks from other items that had been scrabbled around in the box with the glass stones.

   I have tried hopscotch stones of glass, wood, plastic etc., and glass was indeed preferable. None of the other materials would slide so well on the asphalt. If just by accident I once dropped my hopscotch stone and a little chip was made in it, then I polished the sharp edge on the flags and the kerb till it was smooth. In that way it was usable a little longer, until I could buy a new one with my pocket money. (Vivi Olsen, Glostrup)

2. The hopscotch stone should be smooth and therefore made of glass. The thickness of it depended on how good you were. The big girls could handle the thin and light stones, while the little ones needed
a heavy stone. If the stone lasted, it finally was worn thin in time with your own skill. (Mri Dyrhagen, Copenhagen N.)

3. I remember the sound of the hopscotch stone and its speed when it shot beyond the chalked-off squares. I remember the grating sound on the granular surface of the asphalt when the stone slid over the roughness of the ground. And there was a difference between using the glass stone when it was new and glossy and shining at the bottom, and using it when it was worn and crystallised and white at the bottom. Then it was easier to control.

Play is an immensely important part of one’s life, which most people forget in their bustle and hurry. The hopscotch stone, for us who know it, is also a symbol of movement and spirit. (Lone Plaetner, Charlottenlund).

4. Hopscotch stones of plastic are without soul. (Elise Johansen, Tåsinge)

5. My hopscotch stone was the most important thing I owned as a child. I remember there were two kinds. One had a flower as a pattern and the other one had some wavy lines with a seagull flying above. They were made of glass and transparent or solid like a polished stone. Once I had been to the dentist’s, and perhaps it had been rather unpleasant, for my mother gave me a light green transparent one with the waves and the seagull – to my eyes the most beautiful one. (Solveig Andersen, Copenhagen K)

6. On the face of it I think that plastic is completely unsuited! The surface is wrong, the weight is wrong, and the material lacks spirit and attractiveness. Even if I had never seen a hopscotch stone made of plastic, I would have no hesitation in saying that the material is repulsive, dead, and uninspiring. (Britta Simonsen, Birkerød).

7. The hopscotch stone was of glass – at a pinch a proper piece of broken glass or stone would do, second best was the bottom of a bottle...

Chalk was the biggest problem. It was soon worn out. We also used it for other games and for graffiti, so often we used a potato cut through when drawing the hopscotch diagram. It was almost as good, but it made thicker and “woolly” lines. (Gurli Thuneby, Væløse)

8. About the danger of glass stones: it sounds like the European Union taking the piss out of us! (literally: like an EU-fart in a pair of canvas trousers). When I think that we even collected fine pieces of broken coloured glass if we were lucky to find them – and without cutting ourselves! (Sussi S. G., Copenhagen S.)
9. A girl I asked to test a plastic stone exclaimed spontaneously: “It goes like a bomb if you just touch it!”

Sweden

10. A hopscotch stone is not just a thing to push along the ground. A new hopscotch stone with a beautiful pattern is something to be delighted by, to show to your friends from the class, to hold up towards the sun looking through it, to sniff at, and notice the sulphurous smell that arises when glass scrapes against asphalt.

The hopscotch stone is in short a way to experience the world — a sparkling gem in Danish children’s culture. (From the article, “Danish children’s culture in danger” by Tore Persson in Schoolworld, September 19th, 1996)

England

Together with her husband, the late Peter Opie (1918-82), Iona Opie has written with scholarship, commitment and humour a number of highly acclaimed books on British children’s games and their oral traditions. In 1997 she published a beautiful book, Children’s Games With Things, a copy of which she kindly sent to me with a very friendly dedication. After having sent her a couple of glass stones, I received a kind letter, which I now quote with her permission:

11. “The glass peevers have arrived safely — helping to prove that they are not very breakable.

I am completely entranced by them. They are the most delightful objects I have seen for many a long day (even eclipsing some of my best marbles). How amazing that I never knew such things existed. They will be much-displayed treasures in my games collection.

I have reached that enjoyable stage in life when I can be the complete curmudgeon — deploring the follies of the world, and regretting the “good old days”. Though I suspect the world always was considerably mad — which is why I live according to Alice Through the Looking Glass (surely the EC should suppress that book, which encourages children to try climbing through the looking glasses). This is why I especially relish the paragraph in your letter describing those solemn tests being made at the Danish Technological Institute — it had me hiccupping with laughter …… All good wishes and many thanks indeed, Iona Opie.”
References


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The Witches’ Sabbat in legend and literature

JAMES BRENT MUSGRAVE and JAMES HOURAN

Abstract: Using the tools provided by theoretical work on the fantastic, we examine some of the legends and prose texts surrounding the Witches’ Sabbat beginning with seventeenth century burlesque through to contemporary prose. Contemporary examples of the Witches’ Sabbat theme are derived from literary and/or historical texts (“literature”) or from contemporary psychological experiences (contemporary local legends) that mimic or parallel the Witches’ Sabbat (“abduction by aliens”). Although the psychological processes that gave/ give rise to these local legends (the Witches’ Sabbat and abductions by aliens) are in themselves fantastic escapes from the everyday world and consciousness, the legends themselves have not been used in a fantastic way in literature.

Key words: Witches’ Sabbat, UFOs, myth, folklore, local legends, fantastic

Introduction

Lovecraft (1973:18) pointed out that much of the power of horror-lore in Western culture was due to the hidden but suspected presence of a hideous cult of worshippers who practised archaic demonic rites, typically in the middle of the night in secluded and mysterious places. The “Witches’ Sabbat” practised by these alleged cults became the source of innumerable local legends, and it has been argued by some cultural historians that the Witches’ Sabbat – that is, the periodic gathering of Satan and his disciples, witches and warlocks, for the ceremonial renewal of their pacts, sacrifices and carnal knowledge—is central to the history of European witchcraft. As early as the beginning of the tenth century, some isolated elements of the Sabbat, such as the idea of nocturnal flight, sexual debauchery, and pacts with the Devil, became significant in local legends (Zacharias, 1980: 52). But the formal ritual of the Sabbat only took shape in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and it was not until the sixteenth century that the Sabbat became a permanent feature of witchcraft. The concept of the Sabbat was central to many legends surrounding witchcraft, and many historians have argued that without its existence and its attendant ceremonies, the evidence against witches was not very strong. For this reason, the Inquisition placed particular importance on extracting admission of attendance at the Sabbat. Without such an admission it was difficult to get a conviction.

In spite of the cultural and historical significance of the Sabbat, it is only during the age of enlightenment that the Sabbat begins to appear
in literature. References to Satan and to witches are of course ancient, but references to the Sabbat only occur at a time when witchcraft was assumed to be on the decline. This paper will examine some of the legends and prose texts concerning the Witches’ Sabbat and look at a sample of the use of these legends in literary texts, beginning with seventeenth century burlesques and ending with contemporary prose and “para”-literary texts. We suggest that there are two kinds of contemporary examples of the theme of the Witches’ Sabbat: those that are derived from literary or historical texts and are included in the authorised canon of literature, and those that are derived from contemporary psychological experiences that mimic the Witches’ Sabbat (particularly abduction to Sabbat/abduction to UFO parallels) and which are documented by contemporary folklorists, and mirrored in non-fiction texts and grade-b science fiction. These texts will be examined in the light of theoretical work on the fantastic.

Nature of local legends

Legends surrounding the Witches’ Sabbat, like other local legends, were originally told as local “history”, that is, presumably the original teller of the legend believed in the legitimacy of the tale. Unlike the legends surrounding the lives of the saints that were promoted by the Church, the local legends frequently reported an uncanny event intended to shock or confuse (Lüthi, 1970:44). According to Lüthi (1970:45-46), the local legend revolves around a world that cannot be comprehended by the intellect, but similar to the saint’s legend, it is relatively realistic in style, and the miracle it contains astounds us and is at the heart of the entire tale.

Lüthi (1970:86-90, 142) contrasts local legends with fairy tales and points to many fundamental differences: a. the local legend forces us to view events realistically, while the fairy tale removes the realistic elements; b. the plot of the local legend withdraws into itself and does not move, i.e. is local and concrete, whereas the fairy tale has no locality and is universal; c. the local legend contains intense feelings that are both religious and erotic; the fairy tale generally minimises or completely lacks these themes; d. supernatural powers recounted in local legend remain indistinct and mysterious, but in the fairy tale they are obvious and taken for granted; e. local legends originated among the common folk half-spontaneously and half under the influence of simple traditions, while fairy tales originated from great poets; f. local legends ask anxious questions and fairy tales in a sense provide answers; and g. in local legend ordinary man confronts an uncanny world that threatens him with death, but in the fairy tale the gifted hero overcomes his or her world.
It seems clear that local legends, which are a report of an anomalous and frightful event, are closer to the world of the fantastic as defined by Todorov (1980) and Jackson (1981) than are fairy tales. If this is the case, the absence of local legends in most discussions of the fantastic, Todorov and Jackson included, could be argued to be a serious omission. In any case, fairy tales cannot be equated with local legends. And if local legends can be considered as primitive narrative forms as Lüthi (1970:85) argued, they share the instability of narratives which Jackson (1981:34) proposed is the centre of the fantastic mode. That is, both local legends and fantastic narratives confound elements of both the marvellous and the mimetic, to use Jackson’s terminology. They are in the form of a “history” and claim to be realistic either by actually asserting that they are real accounts, or by using all the conventions of realistic fiction to create a “real” world. Once this realistic world is established, both local legends and fantastic narratives then break the assumption of realism by introducing “unreal” elements.

While it can be argued that for the teller of the original local legend no such instability existed since he or she accepted a different “reality” that included flights to the Sabbat, witches’ ointments, and the like, in fact the ambiguity of interpretation of the fantastic was just as much a part of the earlier interpretations of local legends. There were epistemological problems associated with local legends, just as there are today with contemporary accounts of paranormal and mystical experiences (Hay and Morisey, 1978). It is in the development of fantastic narrative that we see these epistemological ambiguities mirrored in narrative structures that generate the “hesitation” that Todorov (1980:31) identified as the defining feature of the fantastic. In the fantastic, ambiguous literary effects enact thematic uncertainties and hesitations of interpretation. These thematic uncertainties often originated in local legends such as those surrounding the Witches’ Sabbath.

Nature of the Sabbath

The ritual of the classical Sabbath contained five distinguishable features: 1. the assembly by foot, beast, or flight; 2. homage to Satan; 3. a banquet; 4. dancing and cavorting; and 5. sexual intercourse. While many others scholars (e.g., Murray, 1971; Thompson, 1929) have emphasised the pagan roots of the Sabbath rites that included the tradition of wearing masks of primitive gods and animal spirits, there can be no doubt that the classical Sabbath also became an inversion or parody of the Christian Mass (Rudwin, 1931:125-126). As such, it was a political statement—a subversive activity with powerful sexual and theoretical affronts to Church and State.
Rudwin (1931:125-126) further noted that the “flying ointment” that the witches allegedly rubbed over themselves to prepare for flight to the Sabbat is a perversion of the seventh century Christian Sacrament; the stick used for flight (flight could also take place on other objects such as the goat) is the diabolical counterpart of the rod of Moses; the Black Mass is an inversion of the Holy Mass, with the Devil assuming the role of the Lord who is present at the Holy Eucharist; and the carnal kisses extracted by Satan are in imitation of the kiss of charity with which the early Christians greeted one another.

Although local legends surrounding witchcraft and the Witches’ Sabbat were widespread and always contained overt or covert religious elements, there was no agreement among Church elders or educated laymen as to the true nature of such reports. To borrow Todorov’s terminology, the arguments focused on whether to place such accounts into the uncanny, marvellous, or somehow in-between. Given our prejudices about the Middle Ages, it is perhaps surprising that the “uncanny” explanation expressed in the Canon Episcopi (c. 906 A.D.) was the one most accepted by early Church fathers, namely that the Sabbats are rituals presided over by a pagan divinity, that it is a reversion to paganism, and that reports of flight to the Sabbat are merely the reports of deluded women who believe their dreams to be real. The “marvellous” explanation, which became more popular in the period of the Inquisition, was that the Sabbat is quite real, with Satan in attendance, and that the pacts, flights, sexual debauchery, and the like were not inventions but acts of rebellion. A second “uncanny” explanation, with a modern flavour, was that the Sabbat is the result of either prejudicial procedure or torture, the result of imagination brought on by drugs such as those used in the flying ointment, or the result of mental deficiency. Some argued that while many of the essentials of the Sabbat, such as flights, did not occur in the physical world, they in fact occurred in a psychological world that was just as real, and as such, witches unfortunate enough to be caught should be punished, since their transgression was no less real than if it had occurred in a physical world (Baroja, 1965:111 f).

To confound matters, and to add to the ambiguity of textual interpretation, it was not uncommon for classical texts, such as the Malleus Maleficarum, to argue that some flights to Sabbat, for example, are bodily, and some are imaginary. Each report is subject to interpretation. Without an accepted standard, each legend potentially has either an uncanny or a marvellous explanation, and the final placement—if one is possible, and not all reports were easy to classify—depends in no small degree on the bias of each interpreter.
The Sabbat in legend

Those local legends that describe aspects of the Witches' Sabbat share many similar characteristics, no matter from which country they allegedly originated. Many of these local legends are summarised by Henry Charles Lea (1957) in his *Materials Toward a History of Witchcraft*, and are based primarily on fifteenth through seventeenth century works on demonomania:

1. Gianfrancesco Pico Della Mirandola, in his *Strix, sive de Ludificatione Daemonum* (1523), tells a story of a priest of the Grisons who encountered a stranger as he was riding on horseback. The stranger asked the priest if he would like to see something wonderful, and when the priest dismounted, he found himself suddenly carried through the air to a vast plain on the summit of a lofty mountain where a multitude were dancing and feasting. His guide asked him if he would dare adore “la Signora” like the rest, and offer her a gift. The priest, thinking her to be the Virgin Mary, kneeled before her. All at once the spectacle disappeared, and he found himself alone. Climbing down from the mountain, he found himself to be hundreds of miles from home (Lea, 1957: 384-385).

2. Paulus Grillandi, in his *Tractatus de Sortilegiis* written in 1525, tells a story that allegedly occurred about twenty years earlier to a peasant living in a village near Rome. He suspected that his wife was flying to the Sabbat. One night he saw her use the flying ointment and fly from the house. After beating her the next day, she confessed that she had gone to the Sabbat, and agreed to teach him how to go to the Sabbat as well. On the next night they anointed themselves and were carried on goats to the Sabbat. She warned him while there, and in going and returning, not to make the sign of the cross or to utter the name of God or of Christ. On arriving, she left him to pay homage to Satan, while he gaped in wonder at the multitude of men and women cavorting about. At the feast he found the food tasteless and continually asked for salt. When it finally was brought to him he uttered thanks to God. Upon making his utterance, the whole assemblage instantly disappeared and he found himself naked and shivering a hundred miles from home. It took him twelve days to return home. When he returned he denounced his wife, as well as several other women from the village that he recognised as being at the Sabbat. All of the women confessed, and were burned at the stake; the man lived happily ever after (Lea, 1957: 403-404).

3. Reginald Scot (1964: 60) quotes from Jean Bodin, the French demonologist who believed in the authenticity of the legends he
collected, citing the alleged flight that occurred in Lyons. A noble Gentlewoman being in bed with a lover arose in the middle of the night, anointed herself with the flying ointment, and then flew off. Her companion witnessed this, and anointed himself as well with the same ointment. He then found himself instantly conveyed to Lorreine in the midst of an assembly of witches. When he uttered the name of God, the whole assembly vanished and he found himself naked and lone. When he arrived back at Lyons he denounced his lover as a witch. She was properly burnt at the stake; he apparently got off free. Unlike Bodin, Scot does not believe such tales to be based in truth.

**Continental burlesques**

Witchcraft and devil-lore had, of course, been subjects treated by literature since medieval times. However, references to the Sabbat only seem to appear in literature in the seventeenth century, and then only obliquely. The marginal intrusion of the Sabbat-lore into literature occurred at a time when ideas about the universe were undergoing profound changes leading to the enlightenment and to the scientific revolution, and at a time when interest in antiquarian lore and the bizarre was on the rise. The rather late arrival of the Sabbat legends into literature is a phenomenon remarked on by many historians. It has been suggested, for instance, that such a topic was far too subversive and controversial to be dealt with. This would be particularly true in those regions where the Inquisition was more than a name.

Baroja (1965: 219-220) noted that Cervantes and Quevedo made comical and satirical references to witches and sorceresses in some of their short stories and novels, but they do not treat the themes seriously at a time when the Sabbats of the Basque Provinces were a byword throughout Spain, and a large number of women were tried and condemned as witches.

The fame of the Basque witches was on the increase during the seventeenth century, and some references are to be found in Luiz Vélez de Guevara’s (1641) *El diablo Cojuelo*. Vélez was considered to be a fluent poet, and a clever satirist on the life and manners of his times. He was a prolific playwright and is reported to have written over 400 pieces for the theatre. He was apparently one of the most successful authors of his time (Tickner, 1891: Vol. 2, 362-363). One of his plays “The Lawsuit of the Devil against the Curate of Madrilejos”, gives an account of a poor mad girl who was treated as a witch and escaped death only by confessing that she was full of demons, who are driven out of her on stage, before the audience, by conjurations and exorcisms (Tickner, 1891: Vol. 2, 366-367).
However, it is for his “Limping Devil” that Vélez is best known today. The short story is based on many legends, including the Moorish legend of the imprisoned genie (Rudwin, 1931:139). The story is based on the idea that a young student releases a demon from his confinement, and the genie/devil then carries his liberator through the air and shows him the inner secrets that are taking place in the houses below. Vélez’s devil is not very wicked and not at all powerful, and it is obvious that what allusions to the Sabbat can be found, such as references to someone anointing himself with the witches’ ointment in preparation for flight to the Sabbat, are only incidental to the allegorical or satirical vision of El diablo Cojuelo. It would be fair to state that anyone reading this work would come out of it with a sceptical view of society, including witchcraft and the Sabbat. The references to flight and to the Sabbat are only incidental and part of the social commentary.

Vélez’s work was expanded and modified by Le Sage who acknowledged his debt to Vélez in his Diable Boiteux, which first appeared in 1707, and was enlarged nineteen years later by the addition of more Spanish stories from Santos and others, and more Parisian scandal (Tickner, 1891: Vol. 2, 170). As with Vélez’s original treatment, the devil and the references to the Sabbat are, at best, devices useful for advancing the plot, but the works are not fantastic stories. Le Sage’s novel, in particular, is primarily a romantic love story interwoven with satirical social commentary. The marvellous images of flight in both works are no more than tricks to get things moving and to add an exotic flavour.

Elizabethan drama

The outstanding witchcraft plays of the late Elizabethan period in England are well known. Among the most notable are Shakespeare’s Macbeth, Middleton’s Witch, Johnson’s Marque of Queens and Sad Shepherd, Dekker, Ford and Rowley’s Witch of Edmonton, Heywood and Brome’s The Late Lancashire Witches, and Shadwell’s Lancashire Witches (Herrington, 1919: 447). The appearance of witchcraft, especially with respect to the Sabbat-lore, as in Spanish drama and narrative, came relatively late, when witchcraft was already under attack by the wave of rationalism and scepticism. While fairy and witchcraft themes were incorporated into Elizabethan drama, their role was normally episodic and comical, and not central to the main thrust of the play.

At least two plays were based on the 1633-1634 witch trials in Lancashire and contain references to the Sabbat and to flights to the Sabbat. The Late Lancashire Witches by Heywood and Brome was produced in the summer of 1634, and was written to capitalise on the
popular excitement created by this sensational and widely publicised case that aroused the interest of King James I (Barber, 1979:1). In a sense this play, like its numerous cousins, was the equivalent of today's yellow journalism — a method of popularising and making money from the scandalous side of contemporary life. *The Late Lancashire Witches* contains witches’ revels and Sabbats: the apparently honest wife of a gentleman rides on a boy whom she has transformed into a horse; but she herself is ridden back from the Sabbat by the boy who learned her charm. Incidents such as this were taken almost literally from evidence and testament presented at the Lancashire witch trials. However, in the play, these episodes are transformed from their solemn origin into slapstick comedy. The slapstick characterisation of the Devil on the Elizabethan stage was transformed into a comical/satirical characterisation of witches and the Sabbat (Barber, 1979:22-23). The play is a satirical commentary on contemporary society, but the witchcraft and Sabbat images are introduced as exotic thematic devices (and erotic as well), and not as elements of a fantastic world.

Thomas Shadwell revived the Lancashire witch story in his play *The Lancashire Witches* (1681). It appears that the idea for the play came from a reading of *The Late Lancashire Witches* by Heywood and Brome (Borgman, 1928:193), rather than from reading of the trial records or a knowledge of folklore. As in the original play by Heywood and Brome, witchcraft is introduced as something that upsets authority and order in the family and in society; and the melodramatic resolution that comes at the end restores social and moral order. Again, the rites and ceremonies of the Sabbat are borrowed from books on demonology, as well as from court records. In this play, more intimate details of the rawer side of the Sabbat are made explicit, such that Summers (1956:297-299) considers the portrayal of details like the cutting off of hands on stage to be uncommonly loathsome. In the final analysis, the play was a ribald variety show complete with weird music and dancing scenes (the Witches’ Sabbat), and even elaborate mechanical devices to enable “flying witches” to be carried above the stage. Apparently, the latter were a particular attraction to audiences. Needless to say, the approach of the Elizabethan theatre to the Sabbat was slapstick comedy at its basest. No sense of the mysterious or fantastic is to be found here.

**The Romantic movement**

Many authors suggest that supernaturalism was an important element of the Romantic movement. It was an essential part of the Romantic reaction to the rationalism of the enlightenment, and gave rise to an increased interest in folk traditions and the Christian Middle Ages, as well as to a blurring of the distinction between mind and matter so
central to theology and philosophy. The intellectual and political revolution that was taking place—where societies were literally being turned upside down—also focused attention on the nature of evil, expressed in its most extreme form by de Sade. It has been argued that Satan was the patron saint of the Romantic movement (Rudwin, 1931:277), and there is little question that during this period the demonic not only gained a new intellectual ascendency but was changed from a supernatural meaning within the bounds of Christian theology to something more ambiguous, less definable, and therefore more disturbing (Jackson, 1981:56). The demonic, as well as the supernatural in general, was changing from the “knowable” (whether that “knowable” had uncanny or marvellous roots) to the unknowable world; it was changing into a “felt” world where there no longer was control. It was becoming less concrete and more powerful.

The combination of an interest in the “folk” and an interest in medieval practices, along with a rise in a fantastic perception of evil, is reflected in the kinds of sources used to introduce the Sabbat-lore into nineteenth century poetry and narrative. Victor Hugo used themes from the Sabbat in a number of his poems and novels. However, the sources and motives of these examples lie more in the revived interest in medievalism and diabolicism than in contemporary folk tales of the Witches’ Sabbat. Hugo’s first published novel, Han d’Islande (1832) takes place in Norway in 1699. Hugo claims to have studied the Eddas and historical writings of the period as part of his preparation (Cailliet, 1980:18). The atmosphere of the story is filled with spectres and macabre funeral visions. It has been suggested that Hugo had Shelley’s Frankenstein and Maurin’s Melmoth in mind when he wrote Han d’Islande (Milner, 1960:316-317), and the tone of the work is similarly gothic. But the principal source of the ideas for the work is the Soirees de Saint-Petersbourg of Joseph de Maistre (O’Connor, 1942:31), and the compositional style, as well as the source for the references to the Sabbat, was taken from Walter Scott (O’Connor, 1942:40). O’Connor (1942:59) suggested that the recurring references to witches and sorceresses riding on broomsticks to the Sabbat may have been modelled on Scott’s Heart of Midlothian, while Black Dwarf and Kenilworth may have provided other elements of the Sabbat-lore that are scattered throughout Han d’Islande. Han d’Islande combined the historical and gothic to provide a chilling horror tale, but the use of Sabbat-lore only contributes to creating the mood of the story.

Hugo’s Notre-Dame de Paris (1831) continues his fascination with medievalism; it is permeated with the medieval belief in sorcery, alchemy, the Devil compact, and the Witches’ Sabbat. Much of the interest in the work centres on Claude Frollo who was consumed by the
desire to acquire and hoard scientific knowledge. Like the magician and alchemist, he believes the goal of life is knowledge, but his desire is contaminated by his desire for Esmeralda. His quest for knowledge is corrupted, and the source of this corruption is his desire for the sexual/concrete. Much of the sombre mood of the novel is generated by mystical and occult allusions, among them being references to witchcraft and the Sabbat. Esmeralda, it is suggested, was the product of such a Sabbat, and is associated with outcasts, the gypsies; she has nightmares of the Sabbat, but the details of the Sabbat are never recounted. The symbols of witchcraft and the Sabbat are employed to create a tone—for example her magical goat (the symbol of the Devil)—but the Sabbat, like alchemy and the study of the kabala, is brought in to create a sombre tone and not to confront the fantastic.

Théophile Gautier was a fervent supporter of the Romantic movement, and a lifelong admirer of Victor Hugo. Although Hugo used elements of the supernatural in his works, Lovecraft (1973:47) argued that in Gautier we see an authentic sense of the unreal world. Gautier’s (1832) youthful poem Albertus has been described as a kind of sardonic burlesque upon Faust, as well as upon Romantic works that were tinged with medievalism (Rudwin, 1931:206). In the series of stanzas, Albertus, a young Italian painter, sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for the possession of Veronica. Veronica appears to be a beautiful young maiden, but appearances can be deceptive and deadly. In reality she is an old hag of a witch. While she is in his arms, Albertus gradually begins to see her for what she really is. But it is already too late, and he is forced to accompany Veronica to a Witches’ Sabbat. The couple then mount two broomsticks that carry them off to the Sabbat. In the morning his mangled body is discovered in a clearing.

The demonic world portrayed in Albertus is presented in a half-comic, half-frightening manner. Its treatment of the boundary between appearance and reality in particular was likely inspired by Hoffman (Milner 1960:524), and on this level shares something of the fantastic world. But the reader is unable to be completely caught up in the story, as the narrator constantly intrudes into the story with digressions that distance the reader from the immediate experience. Humour and narrative digression make it impossible to really become part of the spell. Albertus has been described as a delightful parody of Romantic literature, especially of tales of the macabre and the supernatural (Grant, 1975:23-24). It plays with the fantastic, but never really jumps into it.

George Sand also made use of the Witches’ Sabbat ritual in her Château des Déserts (1847). But, like the other French writers who made use of the Sabbat-lore, her Sabbat is a clear imitation of the Walpurgis
Night in Faust. The work itself appears to have been inspired by Anne Radcliffe (Cailliet, 1980:20).

The Ingoldsby Legends

The Ingoldsby Legends were the creation of Richard H. Barham, an English priest and humorist. The legends originally appeared in Bentley’s Miscellany, beginning in 1837. They are straightforward parodies and most are satirical, with comic rhymes. Although comical in tone, the medieval tradition they portray was based on solid antiquarian research.

In “The Witches’ Frolic”, a grandfather tells his grandson, Ned, who is sitting on his knee one night, of a terrible incident that occurred in May 1606 in the nearby Ruin, and was similarly told to him by his grandfather many years before. The story alternates between commentary on the events and direct narrative, and centres on the misadventures of a local dandy, Robin. One dark and stormy night Rob goes to the Ruin expecting to meet up with his latest love, but instead encounters three hags – Madge Gray, Goody Price, and Goody Jones. After dancing around to the sound of uncanny music, the women mount their broomsticks and fly about the Ruin; Rob then mounts a broomstick himself and joins in their antics. They leave the Ruin and enter the locked house of the local vicar through the chimney pots. They then gorge themselves on the best foods of the house and many toasts are made. But when Rob suggests a toast to old Noah who planted the vine, it is as if the spell is broken. Everyone in the vicarage wakes up and rushes downstairs to investigate the source of the loud commotion. They enter the cellar just in time to see the witches escape through the chimney on their broomsticks. Poor Rob is left behind and must suffer the consequences. He is beaten and brought to trial the next day. At the trial Madge Gray appears and Rob mounts the broomstick and they escape. The next day Rob awakes in the Ruin, and flees home. He, of course, learns his lesson, marries his girlfriend, and lives happily ever after.

Pelino Viera’s confessions

The British novelist W. H. Hudson was born in Argentina and until he moved to England in 1874 apparently spent much of his early adulthood as a collector of artifacts and specimens for natural history museums throughout the world (Frederick, 1972:13-14). While he never returned to Argentina, many of his narratives refer to his homeland. Included in this is “Pelino Viera’s Confessions”, a prose narrative first published in 1883. The “Confessions” blend European traditions of the witches’ flight to the Sabbat with Argentine native legends.
The narrative is presented in the first person, as the actual confessions of a man who was tried and executed for murdering his wife. The confession is a fantastic story of a young Argentine who falls in love with the beautiful Rosaura. After their marriage, he becomes suspicious of her nightly activities, and gradually he becomes aware that she is a witch who drugs him nightly and, after anointing herself with a magic ointment, grows feathers and wings and flies off to demonic meetings. After watching his wife’s transformation one night, Pelino anoints himself with the magic ointment and he too is covered with blue feathers and grows powerful wings. He flies to join the gathering of the evil religion, called by the Indians Trapalanda. When he reaches the gathering spot he finds a large crowd of people dancing and shouting like maniacs, and he is told by one of the men that he is now in Hell. In order to escape, he fights and wounds a number of people—all with feathers and wings like himself. He flies back to his room and waits for his wife. But when she returns she is mortally wounded, and dies before him—a victim, Pelino believes, of his own hand. The police, of course, do not believe his story, and he has written it as a final testament.

The Black Mass

In Lâ-Bas (1891) Joris-Karl Huysmans attempted to interweave a story of nineteenth century satanists with a life of the medieval satanist Gilles de Rais. The work is a strange blend of self-reflection, documentation of contemporary satanic practices, and historical scholarship. Although Huysmans attacks the principle of Naturalism in his foreword, in fact he appears to have gone about researching the novel much as Zola might have done if Zola had been similarly preoccupied with occultism and magic: that is, he immersed himself in studies of the occult. Not only did he hold spiritualist seances in his home, but he attended one or more Black Masses held in Paris (Zacharias 1980:133). Supplementary details for his description of the mass that forms the central episode of Lâ-Bas were obtained from manuals of the Inquisition and studies of the life of Vintras, a wonder-worker who was charged with the celebration of the Black Mass (Rudwin, 1931:165-166).

However, the Black Mass as described by Huysmans is primarily a literary creation. It is virtually a parody of a parody, and its roots lie in the vogue of occultism that swept through much of intellectual Europe before the turn of the century, and owes far more to works like de Sade’s Justine than to the real Witches’ Sabbat or to literary treatment of the Sabbat.
A modern fairy tale

The Irish poet and dramatist Oscar Wilde often used fairy tales as a radical mirror to comment on contemporary society (Zipes, 1983:99). In “The Fisherman and His Soul”, (1891) Wilde inverted the Andersen tale of “The Little Mermaid” (Zipes, 1983:119). Instead of having a mermaid mutilate and mortify herself to acquire a soul, Wilde has a fisherman fall in love with a mermaid and discard his soul in order to join her in the sea. The tale is told in rich and sensuous imagery, and the episodes are mysterious and arcane.

One of these episodes documents how the fisherman is finally able to sell or discard his soul. The priest will not help him, so the fisherman seeks the aid of a young red-haired witch. The witch agrees to help, but demands that the fisherman dance with her at the next Sabbat when the moon is full. That Sabbath midnight the witches come flying to the gathering – the last to arrive is the young witch who has agreed to help the fisherman. All the witches begin to dance, and while they dance they are joined by a man dressed in black. The witches then kneel and kiss the man’s hands. The fisherman makes the sign of the cross and calls upon the holy name. Immediately the witches all scream like hawks and fly away. But the fisherman is able to prevent the young witch from leaving and keeps her to her promise. He loses his soul in order to join the mermaid, and the tale continues with further adventures.

Paganism revisited

The Scottish author and statesman John Buchan achieved equal reputation in his time as a creative artist and a man of affairs (he was appointed Governor General of Canada in 1935). He was well read in Scottish history and many of his works were based on Scottish history and legends. Buchan’s favourite novel Witch Wood (1927) (Smith, 1965:274) takes place in Scotland in the 1640s, and interweaves history and legend to tell the story of a young minister, David Semphill, who struggles with his own theological and political conscience, and with a parish which on the surface is devoted to the church but, as it turns out, is just as devoted to pagan arts and rituals. In a sense, the Black Wood that is near the village is a main character in the story. It is the mysterious forbidden place where the young minister eventually discovers that many of his parishioners gather on the night of Rood-Mass in order to celebrate the pagan Sabbath. The traditional pagan Sabbath is described in a number of discovery scenes, complete with pagan dancing to “witch-music”, the wearing of masks, the sacrifice of fowl at the altar, and the kissing of the masked leader on all parts of his body. What is described is the pagan Sabbath at its most elemental level.
Children of the Sabbat

Anne Hebért is one of the best known contemporary writers from Quebec, Canada. In her celebrated work, the novel Kamouraska, the subject of witchcraft is mentioned (Russell, 1983:91). But it is with the publication of her third novel Les Enfants du Sabbat (1975) that the subjects of witchcraft and the Sabbat are explored in detail. In this novel the horror of the demonic world of witchcraft is set against contemporary Church and State in Quebec during the time of the Second World War. The novel has been interpreted as a profound condemnation of the religious and cultural climate in Quebec—a novel suggesting that in some way all of Quebec society finds itself in the position of being children of the Black Sabbat (Russell, 1983:105). It demonstrates how the convent in fact places emphasis on physical and sensual realities, although the Church asserts the spiritual worth of man. Everything inevitably becomes reduced to the physical. The blurring between reality and appearance is a major technique of the novel. The narrative voice changes from objective to subjective with little warning, and often with no distinct boundary to mark the change. The effect is that subjective and objective are not only counterposed to each other, but in some sense become merged. Counterposed to the “real” physical Church rituals that are “now” taking place before the “real” physical Julie are the Sabbat rituals that “were” taking place (i.e., actually occurred in a physical world in the past) in the past, or are only taking place in Julie’s distorted imagination. Appearance and reality, present and past, objective and subjective, demonic and the Church/State, are constantly put in such intermingling opposition. Although rational explanations are always presented for the bizarre rituals of the Sabbat or Church, and for uncanny “coincidences”, there still remains the possibility of ambiguity, of doubt.

In brief linear outline (in point of fact the work is not linear either with respect to time or space), Les Enfants is the story of a young woman in a convent who is at the point in time when she must decide whether to stay and become a nun or to leave for the secular world. We learn that she is in fact the daughter of a “witch” who lived with her Satan-like husband in a shanty located in a mysterious forest. As Julie matured she often witnessed and eventually participated in Sabbat-like revels that included most of the features of the classical Sabbat in a secular form. The gathering of outcasts (poor people who were opposing the strict Quebec laws against dancing and drinking) participated in dancing to strange music, feasting and drinking, the kissing of her father’s body who acted as the satanic leader, and finally carnal fornication, which included Julie’s own rape by her father and others at her initiation shortly before she fled and joined the convent.
The list of the works that Hebert consulted when preparing the novel included Baroja's *Les Sorcières et leur Monde*, Séquin's *La Sorcellerie au Québec du XVIIIe au XIXe siècle*, and the classic work by Michelet, *La Sorcière*. Judging from this list, her models for the Sabbat were taken entirely from scholarly works on the subject and not from purely literary works.

**UFO Sabbat-type legends**

Although satanic cults and a host of new religious movements continue to exist today, and in fact are quite popular (Ellwood and Partin, 1988), local legends about the Witches' Sabbat are a thing of the past. At least this is what scientific commonsense suggests. But it may be that the same kinds of psychological processes that gave rise to the Sabbat legends are still at work today. Myth- and legend-making are certainly not things of the past. Many of the UFO reports (and perhaps some narratives of out-of-body and near-death experiences) that are being collected today worldwide share most if not all of the characteristics that define the local legend. And some of these UFO reports, notably those that allege an abduction to a UFO, share the same structure and story line as the local legends surrounding the Witches' Sabbat (for a detailed analysis see Musgrave, Houran, and Lange, 1998). For example, contemporary abduction legends emphasise riding through the air, transportation to an exotic place, a ceremony on the altar, sexual undertones (often not so hidden, see e.g., Newman and Baumeister, 1996), and implicit rebellion against authority. Cases that mimic the Sabbat legend (e.g., Fuller, 1966; Lorenzen and Lorenzen, 1976) can be found in UFO and occult pulp journals. Some of the investigators are scientifically trained, and unquestionably many of these reports are being recorded almost verbatim; they are contemporary local legends. A number of the "abductees" have written their accounts, and a number of grade-b science fiction novels parallel the abduction legend. In fact, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between those accounts that are pure fabrication and those in which the author believed he or she was merely documenting his or her true experience. For those who care, the process of distinguishing the category to which a particular case history rightly belongs resembles the process of determining whether a literary text is uncanny or marvellous. And it is, of course, the same problem encountered by the Church fathers when they attempted to explain legends of the Witches' Sabbat (Eliade, 1976:90-91).

**Discussion**

While it can be argued that the psychological processes that give rise to local legends such as the Witches' Sabbat are in themselves
fantastic escapes from the everyday world and consciousness (cf. Newman and Baumeister, 1996), the legends themselves have rarely been used in literature in a fantastic mode. Our brief survey of some of the literary uses of the Sabbat theme/legend underscores the view that the fantastic is not a theme but a relationship to the text and to the world. Few of the literary texts we have scanned could be argued to even approach a fantastic world. Most view the Sabbat through the uncanny eyes and in fact use the Sabbat imagery merely to create a mood or in order to introduce overt sexual activity on the stage.

A common thread seems to be that all of the texts in one or another are themselves texts of subversive activities and rebellion. But this is hardly unexpected, given the nature of the Witches’ Sabbat legend itself. It is also not unexpected that the two texts which can most be argued to be literary texts with major fantastic elements, “Pelino Viera’s Confessions” and Les Enfants du Sabbat, are texts of first person narrative; and of course each purports to be recalling past true experiences that have occurred to the narrator.

Finally, it has been remarked elsewhere (Ziolkowski, 1977:254) that the literature of the supernatural is essentially self-contained. That is, the works of the supernatural derive their basic material more often than not from other literary works and not from “real life”. The relatively independent life of the Witches’ Sabbat and its legends (including its modern form in UFO abductions) and the use of Sabbat themes in literature would seem to support this position. In this case, life itself may be more fantastic than art.

Notes

1. This paper is based on research conducted by the first author while in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta in 1984.

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Meaning in narrative: an in-context interpretation of AT 313, *The girl as helper in the hero’s flight*

GERALD THOMAS

The first truly comprehensive attempt to provide a theoretical framework for the interpretation of Märchen was the late Bengt Holbek’s 1987 *Interpretation of Fairy Tales*.\(^1\) Although Stith Thompson noted in *The Folktale*\(^2\) that scholars had been concerned with the meaning of folktales for over a century, early theories proved unconvincing, and even major folk narrative scholars of the twentieth century such as Max Lüthi, Lutz Röhrich, and Linda Dégh, not to mention a galaxy of lesser lights, have rarely offered more than general comments on the question of meaning.\(^3\) Concerns have been with universals, with generalities, rather than with specifics.

The present article, based on one part of a much larger study of meaning in oral narrative, with specific reference to the repertoire of a single individual, takes its inspiration from Holbek’s *Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, firstly because of its insistence on the relationship of meaning to context, and secondly because it provides conceptual tools readily adaptable to the context, both human and socio-historical, out of which the version of AT 313 under examination emerged. It is not my intention to recapitulate the whole breadth of Holbek’s argument, but rather to highlight specific aspects of his thinking which seem most relevant to the interpretation of AT 313 which will form the substance of this article. Before that can be done, however, a few words are required on the narrator and his context.

“Uncle” Frank Woods (“Uncle” is, in Newfoundland, a common and usually affectionate term of respect addressed to an older male, not necessarily a relative) was born Francis Dubois on the French island of St. Pierre, off Newfoundland’s south coast, in 1893. His father Pierre, an inshore pilot completing his military service, did not wish to be repatriated, and instead fled the island with his Newfoundland-born wife and eldest children, eventually settling, several years later, on the Port-au-Port Peninsula on Newfoundland’s west coast, an area already populated by significant numbers of French speakers – deserters from the French fishery in the area, or refugees from the former French colony of Acadie.\(^4\)

Uncle Frank was a fisherman all his life, supplemented by seasonal work in the lumber woods. Like his fellow French Newfoundlanders, and like most other Newfoundlanders of the day, he was a member of the North American equivalent of the European maritime peasantry of the late nineteenth century. This meant, amongst other things, a life of unremitting toil and hardship where one survived through co-operation...
with one’s fellows, and in which the establishment of viable family units was essential to economic survival. Until Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, ordinary people had to rely on themselves; doctors were few and far between, education was minimal, and there was little money to spare for luxuries. Electricity was introduced to the Peninsula only in the 1960s. French Newfoundlanders lived, however, in an essentially classless society; everyone was equally poor. The few individuals on the Port-au-Port Peninsula in positions of power and authority were not French: the priests, the merchants, teachers, government officials – both groups separated by language, as well as by economics, and very often physically apart; one priest, for example, might serve several communities; merchants were linked to fishing communities by intermediaries. By the time I met Uncle Frank in 1974, he was in his early eighties, and though he lived to the ripe old age of ninety four, the best part of his life had been largely untouched by the mainstream of North American culture. His life had revolved, until his latter years, around his work, his family, his community.

This far from complete summary of Uncle Frank’s social context is meant only to suggest the broad outlines of his life; the reader will, I trust, assume, after some twenty five years of research activity amongst French Newfoundlanders, that I not only know a great deal more about Uncle Frank and his life than can be reported here, but also a great deal more about the general history and culture of French Newfoundlanders. Allusions will be made in the forthcoming interpretation which will not be substantiated here, but, if space permitted, could be. That, then, with an admitted absence of detail, is the broad context.

AT 313, The Girl As Helper in the Hero’s Flight, is a fairy tale as defined by Holbek. Specifically, a fairy tale is one categorised in The Types of the Folktale in the sequence AT 300-749, forming a sub-genre, the chief characteristic of which is that it includes

"... tales which end with a wedding or with the triumph of a couple married earlier under ignominious circumstances, after a series of events characterized by the occurrence of tale elements ... defined as symbolic."

By symbolic, Holbek means the so-called “marvellous” elements of tales, the magical motifs which have often been used as defining features of fairy tales. He bases his thesis on the premise that “symbolic elements refer to features of the real world as experienced by the storytellers and their audiences.” Indeed, he argues that his whole thesis can be characterised as his answer to the question: “... how does one get from
‘there’ (the real life in the storytelling community) to ‘here’ (the recorded tales)?” He expands:

“The symbolic elements of fairy tales convey emotional impressions of beings, phenomena and events in the real world, organized in the form of fictional narrative sequences which allow the narrator to speak of the problems, hopes and ideals of the community.”

The means by which emotional impressions are metamorphosed into symbolic expressions is a process governed by a number of rules, rules which underlie Olrik’s epic laws, Lüthi’s Stildendenzen, and which in some cases are virtually identical with the “mechanisms” for the formation of myths and dreams described by Freud and Rank. Holbek identifies seven such rules (which the reader is asked to bear in mind in the subsequent analysis of AT 313). They include the Split, in which conflicting aspects of a character are distributed upon different figures in the tale; Particularization, in which aspects of persons, phenomena and events appear as independent symbolic elements; Projection, in which feelings and reactions in the protagonist’s mind are presented as phenomena occurring in the surrounding world; Externalization, in which inner qualities are expressed by attributes or through action; Hyperbole, in which intensity of feeling is expressed by exaggeration of the phenomena eliciting the feeling; Quantification, in which quality is often expressed as quantity; and Contraction, in which developments extended in space or time are contracted so as to appear as instantaneous changes, often by three stages.

Also centrally important to Holbek’s thesis is the pattern of semantic oppositions which characterise fairy tales, a pattern most clearly articulated by Elli König as Maranda in 1971. The three primary oppositions include, firstly, the conflict between the generations; secondly, the meeting of the sexes, and thirdly, the social opposition between the “haves” and the “have-nots”. These oppositions can be represented, in their various combinations in tales, in different three-dimensional paradigmatic models, corresponding to masculine or feminine tale structures. The oppositions are presented by Holbek as High-Low, Male-Female, and Young-Adult. The models depict semantically defined tale-roles and are not therefore established on the basis of functions, like those of Propp.

The eight tale-roles identified by Holbek include LYM (Low Young Male), LYF (Low Young Female), LAM (Low Adult Male), LAF (Low Adult Female), HAM (High Adult Male), HAF (High Adult Female), HYF (High Young Female) and HYM (High Young Male). The distinction made by Holbek between masculine and feminine tales
(which he feels is reflected in the repertoire of male and female storytellers) is based on the status of the two main characters in a tale: LYM and HYF in a masculine tale, LYF and HYM in a feminine tale. My interpretation of AT 313 will focus chiefly on the LYM and HYF tale-roles, though not without some contextually generated modification of terminology.

Now according to Holbek, the three thematic oppositions characteristic of fairy tales represent and define three categories of crises which may occur in such tales. The crises can be characterised as follows: 1. "Those of the young in their parental home: incestuous attraction; the rebellion of the young against the tyranny and abuse of their parents; the desire of the young to obtain independence; or, conversely, their being sent away from home prematurely"; 2. "Those associated with the meeting of the sexes: learning to appreciate and love a person of the opposite sex; winning the other person's love; his/her liberation from attachment to the parent of the opposite sex"; and 3. "Those associated with establishing a secure basis for the married life of the new couple, which implies the recognition of the low-born partner by the high-born partner's family and the older generation's acceptance of the necessity of relinquishing its hold on the 'kingdom' to the younger generation."11

The description of these crises leads Holbek to the narrative context, the world of the nineteenth century Danish peasant: "All of these crises" he notes,

"are real or possible events in the storytelling community. At the same time, all of them are sensitive, even painful, subjects, which cannot easily be brought into the open. The potential conflicts with actual relatives and in-laws are only too obvious. The tales solve the problem of dealing with these matters by treating them as if they were events in a purely fictitious world and by disguising all the participants, whereas the nature of the conflicts is hardly disguised at all."

Holbek continues:

"It should be noted that the sequential order of these crises corresponds to what Danish storytellers knew from their own culture: a young man could not court a girl until he was well on his way to independence and he could not marry until he had won her acceptance and her parents' consent. This order is clearly reflected in the fairy tale pattern described above."

Thus far I have stressed Holbek's own emphasis on the rules he uncovers in fairy tales, on the merits of structural analysis, and on the reflection in fairy tales of significant social realities, i.e. the issue of context. There is one further perspective that requires mention. In his
discussion of the rules governing the metamorphosis of emotional impressions into symbolic expressions, Holbek notes the similarity of some with the "mechanisms" for the formation of myths and dreams described by Freud and Rank. His adaptation of König's Maranda's semantic oppositions stresses relationships between individuals, and these relationships are specified in his description of the crises discernible in folktales. There is specific reference to incestuous attraction, and liberation from attachment to the parent of the opposite sex.

Holbek is applying Freudian principles to his interpretation of folktales, in addition to his other analytic tools. Clearly, this is an approach eschewed by many folklorists (few of whom have been trained adequately in psychology and psychoanalysis), and I, too, have harboured serious doubts about the validity of much Freudian-inspired interpretation of folkloristic phenomena, Alan Dundes's perceptive and persuasive arguments notwithstanding, chiefly because so much interpretation has been made without adequate discussion of context. Holbek, however, is restrained in his application of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, and relates it carefully to context, as far as that is possible. In this regard I follow his lead, on the premise that, in context, the symbolic interpretations seem plausible.

A final word on context is necessary. Many changes, some great, some small, have taken place in Newfoundland since the 1960s, all of which have had their effect on the lives and culture of French Newfoundlanders. Uncle Frank Woods lived the most productive part of his life before the majority of these changes began to alter in any significant fashion the older, traditional lifestyle in which change had been slow and relatively unobtrusive. The interpretation I offer, then, relates more specifically to the first half of the twentieth century, a good deal less to the second half. It is an interpretation based on what Uncle Frank told me about that period of his life, and what I have learnt from many of his peers about the life and times of French Newfoundlanders in that period. The telling of Märchen, of fairy tales, is much less common now than it was before the coming of television in the 1960s. Old forms of social entertainment have given way to new ones, or have at the very least been much modified; so it is for older values.

Uncle Frank's narration of *The Girl As Helper in the Hero's Flight* is as full a version of the tale as one could wish for; in fact, I have three versions from him, each fuller than the one before, to complement another dozen or more collected from other French Newfoundlanders; it is without question the best loved Märchen in their narrative tradition.

Briefly, for readers without instant recall of any version of the tale, I provide a summary of Uncle Frank's. The hero, Jack, has become rich through success at gambling, to the point that no one will gamble with
him; to have a game of cards, he would play with the devil himself. A stranger appears, who wins all of Jack’s possessions and wealth, even to his parents’ crowns. To regain what he has lost, he must present himself, within a year and a day, at the stranger’s home, at the Seven Gold Mountains. The stranger departs, offering Jack no advice as to how he might reach his goal. His mother gives him some food, and he leaves on his quest.

After four months’ fruitless travel, Jack comes upon a tumbledown cabin in the woods, occupied by an ugly old woman a thousand years old. Almost overcome with fear, Jack nonetheless pulls himself together, and speaks politely to the old woman, who shelters and feeds him; in the morning, she directs him to her older sister, who is two thousand years old, giving him a gift of a sack which always provides whatever he wants in the way of food and drink. A similar situation arises with the second sister, who directs Jack to the oldest of the three, who is three thousand years old; she gives him a gift of seven-league boots. Similarly with the third sister, who provides Jack with an old eagle which will fly him to his destination, on the day his time expires. But he must feed the eagle with strips of his own flesh, which is healed by the application of a medicine the old woman gives Jack.

The eagle deposits Jack by a pond, and tells him to watch out for three sisters who will shortly arrive in the guise of birds to swim in the lake. They are the devil’s daughters. In order to attract the youngest daughter’s attention, Jack steals her clothes. Aware of his presence, she sends her two sisters home, and offers to help Jack in return for her clothes. She tells him how to behave when he encounters the devil, and departs. Jack is entertained by the devil, who tries to make away with him, but Jack prevails due to the daughter’s advice. In the morning, the devil sets Jack a task to perform: fell and stack a forest of trees with a paper axe. Jack is quite unable to perform the task and gives up in despair; the youngest daughter, however, who brings him his lunch, does the task for him: “By my power”, she says, and the trees are cut and stacked. On the following day, a second task, to empty a pond with a wicker basket and make it flower. Again Jack is unable to perform the task, and again the heroine does it for him. A third and final task is to scale a glass tower and retrieve an egg at its top. Again, Jack can do no more that bemoan his fate, until the heroine, who has again tricked her father into letting her bring Jack his lunch, tells him to boil her body in a vat, and with the fleshless bones, make a ladder to scale the tower. He protests, on account of his love for her, but she persuades him by adding that when he returns the bones to the vat, she will be restored. Jack succeeds, though not without forgetting the last bone of her little toe.
As a reward for accomplishing the tasks, the devil offers Jack the hand of one of his daughters, whom he must choose, however, blindfold. He chooses the youngest on account of the missing toe. Married, the young couple live with the heroine’s parents, but are not allowed to leave. When Jack decides he wants to leave, the heroine bakes three talking cakes and tells Jack to steal her father’s best horse. They make good their escape, but Jack’s mother-in-law, sensing that something is wrong, urges her husband to call out. Three times he calls, three times his daughter’s voice answers. Finally, there is no answer, and scorned by his wife, the devil begins his pursuit.

The devil draws close on three occasions, and on each occasion the heroine throws down an object which transforms the couple. Husband and wife are turned respectively into a woodcutter and a grove of trees; a priest outside a church; and a drake swimming in a pond. At each encounter, the devil fails to recognise them, and they escape.

They establish themselves in a cabin in the woods. Jack decides to visit his family, but is warned by his wife not to let anyone kiss him, lest he forget everything that has happened. After a big party, Jack goes to bed, where he is kissed by his grandmother who has come late. In the morning, Jack has forgotten everything. His parents arrange a marriage for him with a king’s daughter; Jack and two friends are sent to invite everyone to the wedding. They come upon a beautiful and apparently unattached woman in a cabin in the woods, and invite her to the wedding. Later, they agree that each should try to spend the night with her, and take turns visiting her. Apparently amenable, the heroine foils each would-be suitor by having them spend the night fruitlessly trying to close now the door to the chicken coop, now a downstairs window, now the stove door. They succeed only as the sun rises, when the heroine rises, too. Chagrined, they refuse to admit failure, boasting of the wonderful time each has had.

After the wedding, all the guests are invited to do a party-piece. The heroine, who is the last to be asked to perform, proposes to entertain the party with her talking hen and rooster. As they talk, Jack’s memory is restored. He tells the king the story of the gold and iron keys (a gold key, made for the golden castle and its golden door, is lost, and replaced by an iron key; when the gold key is found, Jack asks which is the right key for the door; the king replies, “the gold key”). Hero and heroine are reunited and, we must assume, live happily ever after.

In the light of the general contextual data provided earlier, it is clear that the tale-role definitions proposed by Holbek do not mesh readily with the characters in Uncle Frank Woods’s version. To begin with the hero and heroine: while the latter may be characterised as a HYF, the former does not slip so readily into the slot of the LYM. We
are told, after his confrontation with the HAM, that he loses not only his wealth, but also his parents’ crowns. This suggests that in terms of status, the hero is at least on a par with the heroine, who is of course the devil’s daughter. But, as noted earlier, there was next to no class distinction amongst French Newfoundlanders; status, therefore, may be inappropriate as a means of differentiation.

What does distinguish the hero both from the heroine and her father is his lack of power. He is unable to overcome a HAM when they are in conflict (he loses at cards); the heroine demonstrates immediately after she appears in the tale that she does have power; she knows what to tell the hero to allow him to successfully pass the first night at the devil’s castle (he has to eat what the devil eats, walk on the same steps of the stairs, choose an old book to read rather than a new one, be out of bed by nine o’clock, lest he “go up in smoke”); and it is by her power that the three tasks are completed. The hero is unable to do anything, then, without the heroine’s advice or help. He can be characterised as an UYM (Unempowered Young Male), the heroine as an EYF (Empowered Young Female), and the devil as an EAM (Empowered Adult Male).

The unfolding of the tale now traces the hero’s move from a state of being unempowered to a state of being empowered. On the other hand, it can be argued that the process of becoming empowered is expressed in the tale by the gradual maturation of the hero. In tracing this process, we can draw upon another conceptual perspective which was denied Holbek, and that is the question of the narrator’s performance. Holbek was not able to observe the actual telling of the tales which formed the basis of his analysis.¹⁵

I have elsewhere characterised the narrative tradition of French Newfoundlanders as having a public dimension, in which narrators gave dramatic, exuberant performances, and a private or family dimension, in which narrators were much restrained in their performance.¹⁶ Now Uncle Frank Woods was, when I recorded his tales, very much a narrator of the private or family tradition, and did not make significant use of dramatic gesture in his tale telling; but the late Emile Benoit, who was in the tradition of the public narrator, did add the use of gesture and mimicry to his representation of characters, and he did so to underline aspects of the characters portrayed. Uncle Frank Woods relied almost entirely on the description of behaviour to make the same kind of stress. I draw upon both styles (which were contemporaneous) to underline the performative dimension of interpretation.

To return to the question of the hero’s maturation. When we first encounter him, he is portrayed as an immature, strutting, self-confident braggart. He is a successful young man whose success has come, however, not from honest toil, but from gambling, which in the context of
Uncle Frank’s life was not a socially sanctioned way of earning an honest living. The hero is presented much as we might visualise a self-centred teenager today. In Uncle Frank’s day, it is well to remember that boys began fishing with their fathers at around the age of nine, and girls were usually immersed in household chores as early as age six or seven; I have vivid descriptions from now old women of having to kneel on a stool in order to reach the counter on which they would be kneading the dough necessary for the day’s bread. That is to say that by the time boys and girls reached puberty, they were already doing a man’s or a woman’s work, even though they might not be emotionally mature; but it was at that age that young people began attending the public veillées or storytelling evenings.

The hero is brought heavily down to earth by his first encounter with a mature male; he is reduced to his true state of being an immature male. The best he can do is set off in search of his goal, with only a loaf of bread provided by his mother. The first step forward in the hero’s maturation is taken in his encounters with the three old ladies. The storyteller stresses the hero’s fear at the ugliness of the old women; but he overcomes his initial fear, is courteous and polite to them, and is rewarded for his pains with food, drink, shelter, and help. In terms of maturation, the hero has learnt not to judge on appearances alone.

A number of points need to be stressed at this juncture. The first is, following Holbek’s thesis, that the gifts made to the hero are external representations of his internal potential; the second, that the gifts are made by females; and the third, that food figures prominently in the exchanges; indeed, food plays a role in a number of crucial moments in the hero’s maturation. Thus, the “magical” sack which provides food may be understood as symbolic of the hero’s potential to provide for himself; the seven-league boots as symbolic of his potential to move forward; the auto-mutilation performed to enable the eagle to carry him as the necessity of a sense of self-sacrifice, or unselfishness, as a mark of maturity.

The three old women, apart from being a triple representation of the same tale-role, can be seen as a “good” aspect of the EAF (the “bad” aspect being the devil's wife). But more pertinently, in the Franco-Newfoundland context, the EAF was an important aspect of the role of the female in general. Firstly, old women were generally thought of as wise, knowledgeable; in the tale, they not only offer help and advice, but one of them provides the medicine with which the hero restores his mutilated flesh. Older women were often the repositories of medical knowledge. The same old woman can converse with the eagles; that ability enables the hero to reach his goal.
Finally, the role of food needs examining. In terms of Lévi-Strassussian semantic oppositions, in real life the men provided food in its raw state (by fishing, hunting, farming); but women transformed it into its edible state. The opposition raw/cooked may be understood in two ways: the need for co-operation between the sexes, and the civilising influence of women upon men. The hero is, in the first section of the tale, essentially in a state of savagery until his encounter with the old women (he wanders alone in the forest, surviving as a hunter-gatherer). Food in its civilised form is thus the domain of the female, who prepares it, cooks it, serves it. Its presence elsewhere in the tale comes at crucial points in the hero’s development: when he leaves home and his mother gives him a loaf of bread; when the daughter brings him his lunch during the tasks; and when she bakes talking cakes prior to their escape. I shall comment further at the appropriate moment on the significance of food at these junctures, only noting here that the hero’s mother has no role to play in the first part of the tale, other than to provide some food for the hero’s journey.

The second stage of the hero’s maturation begins with his encounter with the heroine. This middle stage of the tale – which falls between events leading to his encounter with the heroine, and following their escape – is by far the most developed of the three stages, both in the actual telling of the tale by the narrator and in the interpretive potential it offers. It must be seen, then, as the most important part of the tale.

The encounter, in terms of Holbek’s crises, is that of coming to terms with the opposite sex and establishing a mature relationship, and though the stress may be on the role of the UYM, we must not ignore what is going on with the EYF. The three sisters are again a triple representation of the same tale-role, the EYF. The youngest and most beautiful (and most powerful) quickly dispatches her sisters once she is aware of the hero’s presence. He has drawn attention to himself, however, in a characteristically juvenile, immature way: by stealing her clothes.

Against this awkward attempt to institute the relationship, one can set the reasonable attitude of the heroine; she bargains with him. That we are dealing with the female in her sexual aspect is based on the acknowledged symbolism of water with the female principle, not to mention the fact that the heroine presents herself in a bird-costume which, removed, reveals her nakedness. Significantly, the advice she gives the hero, how to behave when he encounters her father, is the first step in her evolution in the father-daughter relationship. Her advice allows the hero to foil the devil’s attempts to do away with him on the very day of his arrival.
The three tasks the hero is successively asked to undertake are, symbolically, the most significant elements in the tale and, to be understood, must be interpreted with reference to the principals: the EAM, the EYF, and the UYM: father, daughter and suitor. Each task represents sexual aspects of the triple relationship, and each contributes both to the evolution and change in the relationships, and to the maturation of hero and heroine. The tasks appear to be impossible, and our assumption is that the devil does not expect the hero to perform them; but he also does not apparently suspect any possible involvement in them on the part of his daughter, whom the audience, however, knows to have fallen in love with the hero at the time of their meeting. The first task requires the hero to fell the devil’s trees with a paper axe. Symbolically, we can understand the task as a challenge issued by the devil to the hero to demonstrate his manhood; the trees may be understood as phallic symbols representing the devil’s proven virility; the paper axe is also a phallic symbol, but of the hero’s sexual immaturity; he is unable to cut down the trees with it. The heroine, who kindly volunteers to take the hero his lunch, thereby pleases and reassures her father, and then, by her power, performs the task for the hero, betraying her father’s trust. We may interpret the heroine’s action as her initiation of the hero into an awareness of his role vis-à-vis the father, of her willingness to replace her father with the hero as the dominant male in her life, and, perhaps, as a first step in a sexual relationship; she knows how to use the hero’s “axe”.

The second task involves the emptying of a pond with a wicker basket, and making the dry pond bloom with flowers. Again the heroine takes the hero his lunch, feigning, however, reluctance to do so, and obliging her father to coerce her into performing the chore. She manipulates him to her will. Water and female sexuality point us to the true nature of the task. The wicker basket is a yonic symbol, and the heroine’s power, which enables her to empty the pond and make it bloom, which the hero cannot do, suggests a further step in the hero’s sexual initiation. In the first task, she teaches him about male sexuality; in the second, about female sexuality. The flowers in bloom suggest an explanation of the relationship of female sexuality to fertility.

In the narration of the first two tasks, the hero is conspicuously passive. One failed attempt to cut the tree or empty the pond is enough to reduce him to tears and despair; but apart from eating his lunch and watching the heroine, he does not actually do anything. In the performance of this episode, the narrator, by tone of voice and gesture, stresses the hero’s pathetic inadequacy. The third task requires the hero to scale a glass tower and retrieve an egg from its pinnacle. He tries to scale it, more than once. In Emile Benoit’s version, he tries so hard that he wears away the fabric of his trousers and has bloodied thighs for his
pains. The task is completed, however, not by the heroine but by the hero. She persuades him to cast her into the yonic vat of boiling water, retrieve her bones, and use them as a ladder to the top of the glass tower, which he does successfully. We may interpret the episode as the hero’s initiation into sexual intercourse; the heroine tells him what to do, and he does it. It also demonstrates that he has attained an apparent level of maturity enough to prompt the devil to give him the hand of one of his daughters. By scaling the devil’s phallic glass tower and retrieving his egg, he has demonstrated an adequate degree of virility. The implication may be, when the episode is translated into the real world, that the father is aware that some kind of sexual behaviour is taking place between the hero and one of his daughters.

For the heroine’s part, the episode represents the replacement of her father in her affections by the hero, and is the final movement out of the electral phase of her development. It will also have stressed to the hero the bipartite nature of co-operation; the third task is the first in which he actually does anything, though not on his initiative alone. The episode as a whole corresponds thus clearly to the second of the three crises identified by Holbek. We must add that in the “real world”, pre-marital sex, and subsequent pregnancy, was far from unknown amongst French Newfoundlander (and by no means restricted to them, of course). Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that pregnancy was a justification for marriage; to marry a woman who could not have children was an economic disaster. Fathers needed sons to work together at the fishery, thus preserving for the family unit alone any economic benefits, rather than having to share such benefits with other family units.

Holbek’s definition of fairy tale includes the phrase “... a couple married earlier under ignominious circumstances”, and, as if to stress the EAM’s continuing power over his daughter and her suitor, he obliges the hero to choose a daughter blindfold. Further, he must choose her on his hands and knees; it is only the hero’s inability to restore all of the heroine’s bones to the vat, resulting in the disfigurement of her little toe, that allows him to make the right choice, when he touches the daughters’ feet. To conclude the ignominy, although hero and heroine are married by the devil, they are obliged to remain in loco parentis, thereby forcing the young couple to escape from the devil’s clutches.

This introduces the third of Holbek’s crises, specifically the conflict generated by the new couple’s attempts to assert its independence from parental authority. Uncle Frank’s version of the tale does not make the conflict explicit; he does not say the EAM forbids the couple to leave. In his life experience it might not have been necessary to do so; young couples often had to stay in the parental home until such time as the son or son-in-law was able to provide adequately for his new wife. But
clearly, two families sharing the same home will inevitably lead to conflict, if only over matters of privacy. Once the couple has agreed to escape, a hyperbolic representation of the couple’s needs, the escape is undertaken in a way which demonstrates the parental belief that daughter and husband are still children, and still dependent.

The heroine stresses her maturity through her power to produce “talking cakes”. Again, food intrudes at a crucial point and again it is the female who produces it. The heroine is smart enough to fool her father, though her mother, who only now appears in the tale, is not taken in. However, the mother has to provoke an argument with her husband in order to persuade him to keep calling out to their daughter, to be assured that she is still there. The hero simply does what he is told, but does it properly; he steals the right horse, the devil’s best, the only one able to take the two of them to safety.

The final stage of the couple’s casting off of parental authority is achieved through the sequence of transformations brought about by the heroine’s power. On each of the three occasions in which the devil draws near, the daughter casts down an object, usually a domestic item such as a comb or a brush, or a handful of straw. The transformations are of course symbolic. The first has the hero engaged in cutting a tree with his axe; the storyteller has the hero say, “The hardest wood ever I cut,” to the devil, who fails to recognise the transformed couple, and he returns to his wife. The point is that, if we interpret the tree and axe along the same lines as in the first task, the hero is now able to do the job; he has replaced the devil as the primary male in the heroine’s mind, although the devil is still unable to see this. The transformation may also symbolise a more overt sexual act; the “wood” he is “cutting” with his “axe” is the daughter; in not recognising this, the father has not yet accepted that his daughter’s sexuality is now fully and properly focused on her husband.

The second transformation reiterates the first, with the hero now in the guise of a priest standing before the entrance to his church, the heroine. The hero’s position may be interpreted as a way of saying “This is my church (my woman), and I am capable of looking after it (her)”. Still the devil does not recognise the couple nor, therefore, its symbolism. The hero’s words to the devil, dominus vobiscum, a blessing, suggests the hero’s understanding of his father-in-law’s predicament, and his growing maturity.

The third transformation has the hero, in the form of a drake, swimming in a pond (his wife). This suggests they are engaged in sexual intercourse, and it is significant that the devil, in his haste, charges right into the pond, before finally giving up his pursuit and disappearing from the tale. It is perhaps the clearest sign of the father’s continued assumption of authority: he blunders into the couple’s bedroom without
knocking, sees them in the act of sex, and finally has to accept their legitimate union. He wakes up to the reality he has for so long attempted to ignore.

In each of the three transformations, while it is the heroine who brings them about, it is the hero who now occupies the active role in the proceedings. He stands up to the devil, he asserts his independence. His wife, while still empowered, now stands behind him, metaphorically of course. In real life, this is how men and women behaved in Newfoundland. The women, the adult women, made decisions concerning family and community life in informal discussion. In the public arena, it was the men who spoke up, however, who presented to the outside world the appearance of male dominance; the womenfolk stood behind, to ensure that their point of view was properly presented to whichever figures of authority they were dealing with. Even in the home, the casual visitor might be led to believe that men dominated the scene; they spoke loudly, were served first, mother and daughters catered not only to the needs of husband and father, but also to male siblings. The men made decisions relative to their work, but in other matters the female voice was the most influential. What the transformations demonstrate is husband and wife working or behaving co-operatively, the only way in which a family could function efficiently.

The process of maturation, however, does not conclude with the transformations. The hero still has a final hurdle to jump before he can be considered fully mature and become an EYM. The hurdle is reached through another demonstration of female power. Living together in a cabin in the woods, the couple remains symbolically apart from the community as a whole. Today one might be tempted to think in terms of a honeymoon period, but in Uncle Frank Woods’s day, there were no honeymoons; couples could not afford them, nor afford the time away from home and work a honeymoon would imply.

Let us examine the tale again. The hero wishes to visit his family; the heroine agrees, but warns him not to let anyone kiss him, lest he forget all that has happened. He is kissed while sleeping, and not only forgets everything but, once again under the authority of his parents, relapses to a state of dependency. His parents arrange a marriage for him with a princess (which itself implies that his original status was high), and his role is to invite guests to the wedding.

We may assume that his two companions are simply extensions of the hero himself, and that the three unsuccessful attempts at seduction of the heroine have the same message. Understanding the symbolic elements of the failed seduction should permit understanding of the message. Each of the three would-be suitors succeeds in gaining access to the heroine’s bedroom, but each is sent to close some kind of window or door, which
keeps opening until the sun rises, by which time it is too late to go back to bed. Furthermore, each suitor is humiliated by being obliged to try to close the window or door while naked. Each subsequently claims to have had a wonderful night, so as not to lose face with the others.

We may understand the magically opening doors as symbols of the heroine’s sexuality; the suitors are unable to “close the door”, to initiate and complete the sexual act. The heroine has demonstrated her maturity in knowing how to handle unwanted suitors in the absence of her husband. Since men like Uncle Frank were often absent from home for long periods, such as when they were working in the woods, it might well have been a constant fear in the back of the minds of men that their wives become involved in illicit relationships during their absence. This episode might serve to remind the menfolk of the need to trust their wives during their absence.

The second wedding nonetheless takes place (though it is not consummated). The heroine, by means of a talking hen and rooster, restores the hero’s memory; and he, for the first time in the entire tale, acts solely on his own initiative when he tells the story of the gold and iron keys, and is sufficiently persuasive to convince his would-be father-in-law that he is in the right, and that his first wife is truly his legitimate wife. The hero is now on equal footing with an EAM, and has achieved this role through co-operation with his wife. They are reunited and assimilated into the community as empowered adults.

The validity of Holbek’s thesis is most apparent in its focus on the crises represented in the tale. We are able to follow, in a necessarily compressed and contracted framework, the process by which an UYM becomes an EAM. He undergoes two major crises: confronting and eventually achieving parity with EAMs; and meeting, then developing an adult, mature relationship with an EYF. But the tale does not simply chart the progress to maturity of young males, it does not simply provide, in the form of a kind of secular myth, the path a young man may expect to follow on the way to adult life. It also, though with a different stress, provides a blueprint for what a young woman may expect in early adult life. The heroine in the tale is already empowered, which we can understand to be her awareness of her sexuality and her role in society. She knows what to do already when she meets the hero; her role in the tale is the realisation of her knowledge. Thus it is she who initiates the hero into sexual experience, and she who breaks the pre-adult relationship with her father. In the process, she teaches the hero the need for co-operation, and is instrumental in guiding and governing the hero’s general maturation. Her father plays the part of the possessive parent who finally recognises his daughter’s achieving of adulthood. Incidentally, the audience will have been further alerted to male and female roles through
the symbolic presence of food at significant moments in the tale, stressing the dominant, civilising role of women in the community.

Less evidently valid for Franco-Newfoundland society is Holbek’s representation of tale-roles in versions of *The Girl As Helper in the Hero’s Flight*. According to Holbek, AT 313 is a masculine tale; but in the version under study, hero and heroine are, at least in terms of birth, of equal status, both are children of EAMs (even though the hero’s father does not have a role to play in the tale, we are told early on that he is a king). In the Franco-Newfoundland context, this complementarity of male and female roles is reflected in the tale by the initially empowered and dominant status of the heroine; but she too undergoes significant development. Given the generally flattering portrayal of women in the tale, and the generally unflattering portrayal of men, one might be led to expect that the majority of the fifteen or more versions of the tale recorded from French Newfoundlanders would be told by women; yet female narrators told only two versions of it.

Given the egalitarian and co-operative nature of Franco-Newfoundland society in Uncle Frank’s day, the tale may well have been told more frequently by men precisely because the older narrators recognised the dominant role of women. While the tale ostensibly recounts the path of the male, in reality its focus is as much, if not more, on the path of the female, and as such is perhaps more properly, in its Franco-Newfoundland manifestations, a feminine, rather than a masculine tale. This is not, of course, a criticism of Holbek, but rather an illustration of how context is crucial to the understanding of meaning. Holbek provided an analytic method whose application requires a necessary modification to suit the context, though not a modification of the underlying premises.

As was noted earlier, it is the middle section of the tale which is most developed by narrators in Newfoundland’s French tradition, and the middle section is most intensely focused on the role of the female. It is here where the heroine most fully occupies an active role, both in the way she manipulates her father and in the way she guides the hero through to sexual awakening, marriage, and, by the end of the section, a confident assertion of maturity. The Aarne-Thompson title of the tale rolls nicely off the tongue, but it might have been more appropriately titled *The Maiden as Mentor in the Young Man’s Maturation.*

If the proposed interpretation of AT 313 seems plausible in context, it should be stressed that the kinds of undoubtedly subconscious lessons to be learnt from the tale’s telling by young French Newfoundlanders were not the only such lessons contained in the Franco-Newfoundland Märchen repertoire. Other tales stress different conflicts, or similar conflicts may be resolved in different ways. The point is that
all such tales that were told were told not simply to entertain. But the lessons were reinforced by the art of the storytellers, who gave an important aesthetic dimension to the telling of Märchen. This is why it is so important to record and transcribe the tales accurately, the better to appreciate the nuances of character that emerge through careful analysis of performance features. Such information reinforces Holbek’s thesis, as Holbek himself knew only too well.

Notes

1. B. Holbek, *Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, FF Communications, No. 239, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1987. Subtitled *Danish Folklore in a European Perspective*, this 660 page magnum opus draws on Evald Tang Kristensen’s large collection of Jutland folktales made chiefly in the period 1870-1900. Holbek draws on a wide range of interpretive and methodological perspectives, retaining what he considers useful, rejecting what he does not, and carefully explaining the reasons for his choices. Incidentally, he stresses how fairy tales, as he prefers to call them, seem to have been, in the European tradition, the preserve of the rural peasantry; the most important lesson to be learnt is, however, that any interpretation must relate to the narrator and his or her culture. It was this insistence that appealed to me, given my own training, which stressed the importance of context and function in the study of folklore.


3. Max Lüthi certainly addresses the question of “The Fairy Tale as Representation of a Maturation Process”, (Chapter 8 in his Once Upon A Time. *On the Nature of Fairy Tales*, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1976 [first published in German in 1970]), and his *The European Folktale: Form and Nature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1986 [first published in German in 1947]) devotes a whole chapter (“Function and Significance of the Folktale”, Chapter 6) to issues of meaning. But Lüthi, as he indicates in his preface to the English translation, is searching for the lasting truths of the folktale, even though folktales “... speak to all kinds of people and to widely separated generations; they speak in terms that sometimes differ and yet in many ways remain the same” (p. xv).

Like Lüthi, Lutz Röhrich is also concerned with interpretation but, as Dan Ben-Amos says in his Foreword to Röhrich’s *Folktales and Reality* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1991 [first published in German in 1956]), “... Röhrich proposes a bold universal theory of folklore genres” (p. ix). Linda Dégéh’s *Folktales and Society: Story-telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community* (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1969 [first published in German in 1962]), one of the most influential works in folk narrative of the second half of the twentieth century, does not address meaning directly; her concerns were with the social role and cultural values of narration, the interaction of personality and community. Henry Glassie, in his remarkable *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), only occasionally focuses specifically on matters of meaning, and then does so in general terms.

4. For a detailed survey of the history of French settlement in this area of Newfoundland, see my *Les Deux Traditions: le conte populaire chez les Franco-Terre-neuviens*, Montreal, Bellarmin, 1983, or my translation of the same, *The Two

5. Holbek, p. 452.
7. Ibid.
10. See Holbek, p. 347, and particularly pp. 416-434, in which he discusses the system of tale-roles present in fairy tales, eight of which he identifies. He argues that “... all of the eight tale roles defined by the paradigmatic model may be found in fairy tales and that all principal characters may be unambiguously defined as the occupants of these roles. Each of the characters may be doubled, trebled or split into a ‘good’ and a ‘bad’ or a ‘strong’ and a ‘weak’ aspect, each aspect then appearing on the stage as an independent figure. A character may fill one role to begin with and later assume another — actually, the unit we call a ‘move’ may be described as the attempt of a character to leave one role to assume another — and a character may be dispossessed of any role in the tale; that character then dies or is of no further importance.” (p. 416).
12. Ibid.
13. See A. Dundes, ed., The Study of Folklore, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1965, in particular the section “Psychoanalysis and Folklore” (pp. 88-128), in which Dundes presents five essays on the subject which illuminate both the strengths and weaknesses of psychoanalytic applications in folklore, and more recently, his Interpreting Folklore (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1980), in which he offers a selection of his own essays on the subject with wit and persuasiveness.
14. Which should tell us something about its significance; indeed, the tale is known, from historic-geographic studies, to be one of the oldest, most widespread, and most complex of all internationally distributed folktales. Having told the story (or shown a video recording of one telling) to different classes in Memorial University’s Folklore Department, and in order to provoke discussion of the tale’s meaning, I often ask my students why they think such a tale could have such enduring appeal.
15. Holbek told me, not long before his untimely death, how he envied me the opportunity I had enjoyed to study a living Märchen tradition, and recognised that had he been able to do so, it might well have influenced his thinking. I owe it to him, therefore, to introduce this perspective into my analysis.
16. See Thomas, The Two Traditions, especially Chapters 2, 4 and 6.
17. In several versions of the tale, not only is the EAM presented as the devil, he is summoned in the traditional way, e.g. “I’d play with the devil himself, just to have a game of cards”, and soon after, a “stranger” appears. It is one among other ways in which a veneer of Christianity has been roughly brushed over the narrative, although in Newfoundland this method of summoning the devil is usually associated with legends.
18. For a good illustration of the role of women in Newfoundland society in the period 1900-1950, see H. C. Murray, More Than 50%, Canada’s Atlantic Folklore-Folklife Series, Vol. 3, St. John’s, Breakwater Books, 1979.
19. I am grateful to J. D. A. Widdowson for his thoughtful and helpful comments on an early version of this article, presented as a paper entitled "An Interpretation of Some Contemporary Newfoundland Versions of AT 313 from a Post-Holbekian Perspective", at the 1995 annual meeting of the American Folklore Society in Lafayette, Louisiana. I also thank Herbert Halpert who, in subsequent conversation, informed me that he and Widdowson had been following similar lines of interpretation with versions of the tale they had collected from the Newfoundland English language tradition. See H. Halpert, and J. D. A. Widdowson, Folktales of Newfoundland: The Resilience of the Oral Tradition, New York, Garland Publishing, 1996.

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An eye for a rune, a tooth for a regiment: the uses of deformity

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In the folktale, as in all works of literature, the chaotic contingency that characterises human existence is defined, ordered, refined and imbued with meaning. This is as true of an existential novel as it is of a surrealist tract where the laws of the subconscious exert their compelling sway. But the tale – and by extension all traditional narrative – strips images naked; no other genre is so carefully pruned, in no other literature is the heroine defined by a series of epithets or clichés: hair black as raven, lips rose-red, skin snow-white – or the topography so abstract and immutable: mountains of glass, leaves of copper in a realm that exists east of the sun and west of the moon. It is a world of stark contrasts, a polarised arena that shuns ambiguity. It is a world of empty ciphers which can be rearranged and replaced, as Propp, Meletinsky, Greimas and others have shown, but a world in which every act and word is meaningful, where taboos are violated and violations punished.

While Axel Olrik has identified certain “epic laws” of folk literature – the law of repetition, of two to a scene, of simplicity of plot and character, of the weak outwitting the strong, laws which are often more honoured in the breach than in the observance, and to which others may be added, notably the law of the efficacy of disguise – the structuralist Vladimir Propp distinguishes tale roles or functions which follow a fixed sequence and determine the dynamic progression of a narrative. A fellow structuralist, Lévi-Strauss, has assembled hundreds of variants of a single myth, isolated motifs or mythemes, and arranged them in a grid to be read not only synchronically but diachronically, to reveal the oppositions, mediations, inversions and reversals manifest in myth which ultimately, it is claimed, reflects the dialectical processes of human thought.

What becomes apparent, whether the search is for universal laws or the meaning of a single motif, is the ease with which the material can be classified and patterned, the deceptive ease with which a signifier fuses with that signified. Whether this deceptive ease should be a warning against theories or a hint at the special nature of folktales is an open question. In this paper I want to focus on one aspect of folk narrative, an aspect that has never been satisfactorily investigated: the frequency of the appearance of deformed, disabled or abnormal characters and the reasons for their abnormality; I want to look at the uses of deformity.
To begin with the blind, or the eyeless, or those who have lost a single eye, or the use of an eye, I will start with the most obvious reason for blinding in a tale: the punishment for a transgression or misdeed. Thus Tiresias is struck blind by Athene when he accidentally sees her bathing, or, alternatively, he is blinded by Hera for declaring that women derive the greater pleasure from sex; the men of Sodom are blinded by God when they attempt to break into Lot’s house to seduce his guests, while Oedipus tears out his own eyes when he discovers his incest.

But the tale often exhibits its own logic, a logic that transcends or reverses the pattern of life. Just as the youngest sibling is often the one to succeed, so the blind are usually the greatest seers. The reasoning is impeccable: by losing sight of the worldly one is granted vision of the “otherworldy”. The prophetic powers of Tiresias are well attested in myth; paradoxically, he is blinded for seeing and compensated with vision. The Edda tells how Odin voluntarily sacrifices an eye by breaking a pledge and drinking from the well of Mimir to gain divine wisdom, and in an Irish tale, Queen Medb makes the posthumous children of Calatin sorcerers by blinding the left eye of each of the daughters.

Georges Dumézil is so convinced by the equation between the loss of an eye and the function of the magician that he uses it to identify Odin with the first function of gods in his model of a tripartite Indo-European society. But Queen Medb also cuts off the right foot and left hand of Calatin’s sons to make them sorcerers. Why? Why not the eye? For Dumézil the loss of a hand denotes the lawgiver, but Queen Medb is bent on creating sorcerers. Is this a fatal mistake that will have further ramifications as the tale unfolds? Or is any mutilation sufficient for initiation, a price to be paid, a test of worthiness, a mirror of ritual, a testimony to commitment, a sacred seal, the sign of a covenant, a surrogate sacrifice? Odin gained the runes – true tools of the magician – after hanging nine days from a tree, wounded by a spear, in an act of self-sacrifice; not after drinking from the well of Mimir. And if the loss of a single eye secures the arrival of vision, why not two eyes?

Perhaps the aim of Queen Medb is to create a bodily asymmetry and thereby secure magical powers. For this, too, is a key to the otherworld, a route of ritual no less than a motif of myth. To create a symbolic disjunction through which the potent powers of chaos or magic or the holy may enter, or to change the microcosm to affect the macrocosm. Cú Chulainn, in his frenzied battle fury, has one eye, grown enormous, protrude down his cheek as the other recedes into his skull while the limping dance, Lévi-Strauss proposes, is no more than a simple technique of asymmetry to alter a prolonged “symmetrical” weather...
pattern, to wrest rain from a prolonged dry period.\textsuperscript{19} If symmetry is the norm, to reverse the norm one must create asymmetry, a logic similar to that of walking "widdershins" or reciting the Lord's Prayer backwards.\textsuperscript{20} Or maybe Queen Medb's introductory readings on sorcery extend to Deonna, for whom to reduce to the limit organs that are normally double intensifies their power, just as does the multiplication of them.\textsuperscript{21} One thinks of the black holes of extinct suns, absolute density from which nothing, not even light, escapes. Does this explain the power of the single, huge, central eye of the Cyclopes, which Cook and others have identified as a sun symbol?\textsuperscript{22} If so, the power is only exceeded by a lack of wit which allows for the easy defeat of both Cyclops and the Irish Balor of the Evil Eye.\textsuperscript{23}

And does the single eye have an affinity with the blazing third eye of Siva, that burning force of creation and destruction, that gives birth to the dark, twisted Hindu demon, Andhaka? Andhaka is born in darkness and is therefore blind. He is given to a demon named Hiranyanetra ("Golden Eye"), and is later, according to one tale, destroyed by the eye of Siva and then purified and reborn through it.\textsuperscript{24} And what are we to make of that most potent of symbols of Egyptian cosmology, the Eye of Horus or the Eye of Ra, the sun god?\textsuperscript{25}

It soon becomes clear that to interpret a single motif it is necessary to look clearly, to scrutinise the text, to examine the context, to explore the specifics of time, place and culture, of external influences and internal permutations. What is true in one tale at one time is not true for all tales at all times. And every true tale has many, often conflicting, variants. While eyes have the natural function of sight, whether they be lodged in the breasts of the Blemmyae,\textsuperscript{26} the forehead of the Cyclops, covering the body of the Greek Argos or the Egyptian Bes,\textsuperscript{27} or even, in the form of an anus, guarding trickster's meat while he sleeps,\textsuperscript{28} their symbolic and even narrative role is by no means so easily defined. Similarly, while blindness may be a punishment for transgression or the sphere of a seer, it may also denote the impartiality of Fortune or Justice, or simply reveal the misery of the condition. Just as the same motif may have a different function depending on the specific context in which it appears, so many different motifs may have a similar function. Punishments are limited only by the imagination of the storyteller and range from blindness to the eternal sight of what is tantalisingly close but just out of reach, from death to the inability to die.\textsuperscript{29}

Monolithic theories may falter, grand explanations fail, yet it is still possible to analyse the reasons for the abnormality, deformity or disability of a character within an individual narrative or genre, to chart the reasons and map the alternatives. Creation stories are a good place to begin. The creation, the time of the gods, the culture heroes, the
ancestors, or just the abstract forces of nothingness and non-being, was, of necessity, “other”. Often sacred and eternal, if sterile and unchanging, it anticipated a fall into secular time, a time of life and of death. In the beginning, say some tales, there was a giant being, male, female, or androgy nous, who was immolated to form the universe; whether Tiamat or Ymir, Pangu, or the Vedic Purusa, the scenario alters little: the body is torn apart and the bones form the mountains, the blood the rivers, the hair the grasses, the eyes the sun and moon. The obverse of this is an evolution towards the present anatomy of man. During the Dreamtime, or Dreaming, runs a myth from the Aranda of Australia, the amorphous mass of half-developed infants that was to be humanity was reformed and animated by the culture heroes who emerged from the ground and “sliced massed humanity into individual infants, then slit the webs between their fingers and toes and cut open their ears, eyes and mouths”. Adam, too, according to a Jewish legend, was created as an unformed mass, a Golem. This is an initial reason for deformity, a result of incomplete development, whether of the whole race or of an individual.

Another salient reason for abnormality in tales is that of belonging to an unusual race or having unusual ancestors or parents. A demon may be expected to have cock’s feet or hairy legs, a genie to be somewhat incorporeal, while having a queen for a mother and a bull for a father may not be an auspicious start even for a young minotaur.

Even though the parents may appear anatomically quite normal, the time of conception, pregnancy, and birth, as with any rite of passage, is fraught with danger. Not for nothing does one guard against the Evil Eye during these days, not for nothing does one lace the bed with charms and rowan berries, scattering bibles and hiding knives. What the mother sees, hears, tastes or lusts after during conception or pregnancy can affect the child, whether this leads to blood-red birthmarks or a child of a different race, size or colour. Lusting after the fallen angels, mortal women give birth to giants 3000 ells tall. Lusting after human children, the fairies leave changelings in the cot.

Conceptions, too, incline towards the bizarre; whether impregnation is by means of the Holy Ghost, a theriomorphic god, touching the head of a fish, the ingestion of a magic bean, or the foam of the sea, the result is likely to be remarkable, the offspring bearing physical anomalies. There are those who have no natural conception, except perhaps in the minds of their creators. These are the artificial beings created by man, like the Golem created from clay and animated by a magical text by the Jews of Prague to protect them from persecution. The Golem was the forerunner of Frankenstein and many
contemporary androids. To be made of clay, to be made of wood or of the dismembered limbs of others is, by any criterion, to look unusual.

And then there are those who live in an unusual environment, whose physiognomies are modified for survival: the mermaid with her fish tail, the winged spirits, Nebuchadnezzar grown wild in the desert, with nails resembling bird’s claws to tear up roots. There are those, too, who are afflicted, or blessed, by the elements: the sun blackens the faces of the women who accompany Nehemiah from the Exile, hail sears the flesh of the Egyptians, while the celestial dew in which Jacob is bathed fills his marrow and transforms him into a giant.36

The realm of the senses is another important source of deformity in narrative: many are the taboos against seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, or eating, and invariably they are violated, often with disastrous consequences. Just as with punishments, the transgressor may be blinded, cursed with leprosy, lamed, given horns, paralysed or in some other way live to regret the deed. Similarly words, the most powerful tool of man, can curse or bless, mutilate or transfigure: in the myth, which is nothing more substantial than a construction of language, language has the ultimate power, to change the universe, or, on a smaller scale, the body of man. Magic, that close ally of words, and enchantment, can also transform. Here it is pertinent also to mention disenchantment, the beautiful woman turned cat or the man turned wolf, whose paw is severed at night and who returns to the diurnal form missing a hand, an indisputable testimony to nefarious nocturnal activities.37

The mundane also has a role in tales. Deformity may be the result of a battle, fight or other physical attack; it may be the result of prolonged captivity, torture or extreme cruelty; or just due to the natural disfigurement of disease or extreme ageing, although even here the marvellous tends to enter: when Poseidon restores Pelops, whose shoulder has inadvertently been eaten by Persephone, he replaces it with a beautiful ivory shoulder and when trickster, juggling with his eyes, loses them, they are replaced by eyes of pitch.38

So far I have been looking at deformity as the result of a previous action, but it often performs the more active function of catalyst. One need only think of the test, whether of character, strength or ability. In the Bible, Job’s piety is tested by his being smitten with boils and disease.39 Is his devotion the easy down-payment for a life of wealth and prosperity, or will he continue to believe, even when he has lost everything, even when his own body becomes painful and repugnant? The deformity of others can also be a test of character – consider that common motif of the Loathly Lady. Those handsome young men who refuse her embraces, who, it is implied, see only the surface, or, as the more cynical among us might suggest, do not know the logistics of the
plot, do not know that one must always grant the stranger her wish, never stay to see her transformed into a beautiful maiden. Only he who stoops to kiss her, despite her rank smell and her hideousness, passes the test. In the same way, through her compassion, beauty wins the prince.

Abnormality, deformity or disability in a character can also be an important didactic device or convey crucial information: the tattoo inscribed on the forehead of the slave, the lopped hand of the thief, the mark of Cain. The mark of Cain, which Ruth Mellinkoff has explored in an excellent monograph, has been variously interpreted as a sacred mark or letter on the forehead or arm or as leprosy. It is at the same time a means of recognising the murderer, a prophylactic device to prevent him from being killed by those who meet him, and a sign of shame. Deformity can also be a proof of identity – the hidden scar, the unusual pubic hair, the cloven foot – or divine guidance: the hand of Moses turns leprous and white as snow when he places it in his shirt and withdraws it to prove to the Israelites and the king of Egypt that God has appeared to him.

The role of deformity in creation and fecundity has already been mentioned. Many an Australian aboriginal tale tells of the massive genitals of the culture heroes, and the Winnebago trickster has a detachable penis which he can send off at will until it is chewed by a chipmunk and converted into plants. Similarly, a part lost may be substituted for the acquisition of magical powers: Tezcatlipoca loses a foot to the sacrificial knife and it is replaced by a “smoking mirror”, a mirror of obsidian glass through which smoke-darkened surface the magician foretells the future.

Deformity and abnormality can be used to terrify opponents, achieve superiority in battle, kill, enchant, maim. The glance of the gorgon petrifies, that of Siva consumes and creates, the distortions of Cú Chulainn induce or are induced by his frenzy, the multiple limbs of Kali increase her terrible power. Conversely, to prevent Abraham being frightened or alarmed, Death assumes the form of a beautiful archangel with an appearance of sunlight and cheeks flashing with fire.

The body may be mutilated to fit – witness the chopped toes of the ugly sister as she tackles the slipper; or elongate to reach – the legs that magically lengthen to cross the river; altruism or the avoidance of a worse fate may cause a woman to sever her breasts, while a specific task may demand castration: who better to guard a harem than a eunuch, who better, also, to sing as a child?

Pleasure or comfort are also motivating factors: to satisfy her desire for herself, a Muse becomes androgynous, to nourish the infant, Esther, milk flows from Mordecai’s breast.
I do not want here to merely enumerate all the diverse reasons for deformity in myth—I have listed them elsewhere—but it is valuable to look at a third category: abnormality, deformity or disability as a symbol. Here the emphasis is not so much on the role that a particular deformity plays in the narrative progression as the importance of the deformity in defining a character. The abnormality may be a symbol of identity—the wings of the angel, the cloven hoof of the devil; or a symbol of moral status—the radiance of the holy, the grotesqueness of the demon. It may be an indication of a psychological trait—Esau’s blood-red colour at birth and hairiness portending a sanguinary, bestial and violent nature, leprosy commonly being associated with lust—or an omen. Above all, physical abnormality defines “the other” whether on an individual plane, where an anomaly causes an estrangement from a peer group, or collectively, where a distant race is perceived as deviant. Beyond the horizon, the early travellers related, live those without mouths who feed on aromas, races with huge ears in which they wrap themselves at night, without heads and with faces on their breasts, with a single large foot which serves as a shade when the heat is too intense; the first cartographers carefully depicted them in Africa or at the antipodes.

Abnormality or deformity in characters may also be part of a narrative device, essential for the development of the plot. If the intention of the story is to show a miraculous healer at work it is necessary to have suitable conditions to be cured; if the intention is to show the rewards of virtue and the wages of sin, a physically deformed but morally impeccable protagonist may have their deformity, a hunchback for instance, transferred onto an evil adversary. In parables and allegories the entire tale operates in a symbolic mode and the individual deformity is important only to the extent that it represents an abstract concept to be deciphered. The humorous, the marvellous, the frightening or the ridiculous may all enter a story through a physically grotesque character.

A final reason for deformity in tales is that suggested by etymology. As the biblical character Laban’s name means “white”, a legend arose that he was an albino, and similarly the “horns” of Moses have been interpreted as a mistranslation of karen or, “horns of light”, by Jerome, who used the word cornuta in his Latin translation.

I began by defining the laconic nature of traditional literature, the closed universe where nothing is wasted, neither a word nor a whisker, where a dragon’s tooth sown by Cadmus sprouts a regiment of armed warriors. But it is also true that a tooth may be lost which not even the tooth fairy redeems with a coin; it is possible for a deformity, as it is in
life, to be purely contingent, heresy though this may be to a structuralist such as Lévi-Strauss.

Notes

5. For a taxonomy of the uses of deformity see the second part of my motif-index *Forms of Deformity*, Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1991.
7. Ibid.
8. Genesis 19, 6-12.
11. Poetic *Edda*, *Volsupá*.


18. T. Kinsella, The Taim, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970. It is possible that he closed one eye to intensify the force of the other one.


26. Members of the “monstrous races” who have faces on their breasts. See below.

27. Apollodorus, Bibliothèque, ii, 1.3.

29. How the mind loves these apparent paradoxes: that sight, as with Tantalus, can be worse than blindness and that, like the legends of the wandering Jew, or Tiresias, one can be cursed with immortality.


34. This idea of a mother's irrational fears or desires leaving an imprint on the embryo originated with Hippocrates and was continued by Pliny. For the fallen angels see the Midrash *Genesis Rabba* 26.7, while testimony to the widespread Scottish belief in changelings can be found in Bennett's fascinating work *Scottish Customs: From the Cradle to the Grave*, Edinburgh, Polygon, 1992.

35. The Antichrist's conception – by touching the head of a fish – is recounted in the *Apocalypse of Daniel* 9.11, 16-26.


37. For example, motif D.702.1.1. in the Stith Thompson index.


41. Beauty and the Beast – AT 425C.

42. Mellinkoff, *The Mark of Cain*.

43. One recalls the recognition scene in the *Odyssey* and the cloven foot of the devil. See also Exodus 4.6.


45. An illustration in the *Codex Borgia* depicts the black Tezcatlipoca trapped by Tecpatl, the god of the knife, while his four alter-egos have torn themselves free, losing a foot which is then replaced by a mirror.
47. Testament of Abraham 16.6-8.
48. Aschenputtel, No. 21 in Grimms’ *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (AT 510A).
49. Apocalypse of Adam; *Genesis Rabba* 30.8.
50. *Genesis Rabba* 63.6, 8, 12; *Genesis Rabba* 75.4.
52. Serious birth abnormalities, as the etymology of the word “monstrosity” (monere/monstrare) indicates, have been regarded as omens since ancient times.
55. 4 Ezra tells of a barren woman who gives birth after thirty years but whose son dies on her wedding day. Her face suddenly shines and flashes like lightning; she utters a cry and becomes invisible, but in her place there is an established city. This is an allegory in which the woman is Zion, the thirty years refers to the 3000 years of the world before the first offering, the son is Solomon who built the city, the wedding is the destruction of Jerusalem, and the established city is Zion in all her brightness and beauty. (4 Ezra 9.43f.; 4 Ezra 10.25-27, 44, 50).
56. *Genesis Rabba* 60.7; *Numbers Rabba* 10.5.

References

*Apocalypse of Adam.*
*Apollodorus, Bibliothèque*, ii, 1.3; iii.

Codex Borgia

Elder Edda.

*Genesis* 19, 6-12.

*Genesis Rabba* 30.8; 60.7; 63.6, 8, 12; 75.4.

Hesiod, *Theogony*, "The Battle of Moytura".
Homer, *Odyssey*

Hyginus, *Fabula*, 178.

*The Mahabharata.*

*Midrash Genesis Rabba* 26.7.

*Numbers Rabba*, 10.5.
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, iii; iv, 780.


Sophocles, *Oedipus*.


*Testament of Abraham*, 16.6-8.


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Partridge, the Man of the Hill, and Blifil: folkloric functions in *Tom Jones*

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Henry Fielding has received much praise for the creation of one of the first English novels, *Tom Jones*. His control of plot, his handling of description and scene, his characterisation, and his use of satire have all secured the attention of many critics throughout the years since the novel's publication in 1749. One area that has seemed to escape much critical attention is the appearance of folklore and its use in accomplishing some of Fielding's purposes in the novel. The author himself makes it very clear that he will not rely on the devices of myth, as the ancients did, and he rejects the inclusion of various other supernatural elements. For example, the narrator tells us in book VIII, chapter 1 that he will not confer with "supernatural agents" because it is his intention to "[keep] within the bounds of possibility."1 He also says that "we will lend him [Tom] none of that supernatural ... for we had rather relate that he was hanged at Tyburn ... than forfeit our integrity, or shock the faith of our reader."2 So, he makes it very clear that no mythical or supernatural figures will be introduced to aid his characters, but what about the author himself? It appears as though some folkloric elements and devices are used in order to help the author shape characters, complete satirical portraits, and criticise certain institutions and ideals. In addition, in the case of the Man of the Hill, Fielding possibly draws upon a folkloric form to shape the Man's history.

Perhaps one of the funniest characters introduced in this great adventure is Partridge, the schoolmaster. Partridge seems partially to represent Fielding's "mostly negative" reproach of the educational system.3 Also, Partridge possesses vanity, a quality of which Fielding was not too fond. Partridge is vain in the sense that he constantly uses his Latin, which "he is not a great adept in" and which Fielding finds "useless and unprofitable", in every conversation.4 Even though the reader may not know that Fielding thought vanity "becomes ridiculous only, when there is a certain incongruity between the quality affected and the character of the man who affects it", he can easily discern that the author intended his audience to view Partridge and those like him as utterly ridiculous characters by simply noting the faith the schoolteacher has in folk beliefs.5 For example, the country pedagogue reveals the certitude he has in omens (or, to be more in line with Gillian Bennett's definition, telepathy) when he says:
"Besides, I dreamt, the night before I saw you, that I stumbled over a stool without hurting myself; which plainly showed me something good was towards me: and last night I dreamt again, that I rode behind you on a milk-white mare, which is a very excellent dream, and betokens much good fortune."6

Certainly a man who cannot make a decision on his own and who must rely on dreams to decide his course of action will receive the ridicule of Fielding. Throughout this adventure, Partridge continually reveals that his "head [is] full of nothing but of ghosts, evils, witches, and such like".7 He encounters several women who he thinks are witches, even chastising Tom for not paying one in order to elude a spell:

"'Did you not observe, sir,' said he to Jones, 'that old woman who stood at the door just as you was taking horse? I wish you had given her a small matter, with all my heart; for she said then you might repent it; and at that very instant it began to rain, and the wind hath continued rising ever since. Whatever some people may think, I am very certain it is in the power of witches to raise the wind whenever they please. ... [A]nd if ever I saw a witch in all my life, that old woman was certainly one ... and if I had any halfpence in my pocket, I would have given her some ...'"8

And before encountering a band of gypsies, he correlates the loud sounds with the appearance of ghosts, a folk belief recorded by W. Carew Hazlitt.9

How does this assessment of the ridiculous nature of Partridge's character come simply from the fact that he believes in omens, superstitions, and the existence of ghosts? First, opinions concerning folk beliefs must be considered. David Hufford notes that "Most academic theories have assumed that folk belief — especially belief about spirits — is false or at least unfounded, 'non-rational' and 'non-empirical'."10 Gillian Bennett brings this idea a little closer to Fielding's time. She points out that people in the seventeenth century accepted a positive view of folk beliefs; however,

"The eighteenth century ... was a time in which a different emphasis began to develop. This was largely a product of the rational-mechanical worldview brought about by the Scientific Revolution. As far as supernatural beliefs were concerned, the effect was not to abolish traditional concepts altogether, but to restrict their more extravagant expressions. As time went by, accounts of omens, signs and warnings became less dramatic and their range more restricted."11

Also, one can go to the text to discover Fielding's attitude toward supernatural elements, namely ghosts:
“The only supernatural agents which can in any manner be allowed to us moderns, are ghosts: but of these I would advise an author to be extremely sparing. These are indeed, like arsenic, and other dangerous drugs in physic, to be used with the utmost caution; nor would I advise the introduction of them at all in those works, or by those authors, to which, or to whom, a horse-laugh in the reader would be any great prejudice or mortification.”

Perhaps the most succinct example of Fielding’s attitude toward those who believe in ghosts comes with Partridge’s account of Francis Bridle and the ghost of a man who was hanged due to Francis’s testimony:

“O Lord have mercy upon me! I am just now coming to the matter; for one night, coming from the alehouse, in a long, narrow, dark lane, there he ran directly up against him; and the spirit was all in white, and fell upon Frank; and Frank, who was a sturdy lad, fell upon the spirit again, and there they had a tussel together, and poor Frank was dreadfully beat ....”

Both Jones and the Man of the Hill laugh at this story, and we can imagine that Fielding laughs at it also. The reader can even chuckle at Partridge’s foolishness because a dead calf with a white face was found in the same alley the next morning and Frank had consumed a quart of liquor on the night of the altercation.

Again, if we examine the general opinion of folk beliefs and the opinion of Fielding himself, it is easy to recognise that the author uses Partridge (and those like him) and everything he believes as objects of satire. It is truly ironic that a learned man, a teacher, would buy into a system that many saw as trivial and silly. If Partridge is meant to represent education in the country at that time, then surely the system is in bad shape. While Fielding denounces the validity of the folklore, his coupling of these “unofficial beliefs” with the schoolmaster heightens the satire. In other words, the author gets his point across more clearly, and he characterises Partridge more fully through the inclusion of folklore.

A second example of folklore in Tom Jones comes with the Man of the Hill episode. When Tom and Partridge first come upon the dwelling of the Man of the Hill, Partridge, naturally, immediately falls upon his folk beliefs to draw up a picture of the situation and the inhabitants, and given a little information about the man who lives in this strange house, the reader can begin to discern a folktale-like figure living in this domicile. The Man’s housekeeper fills in the gaps about her master, and this description reveals that he is a figure who has spawned some oral tales by the folk in the area:
“he is a strange man, not at all like other people. He keeps no company
with anybody, and seldom walks out but by night, for he doth not care to
be seen; and all the country people are as much afraid of meeting him; for
his dress is enough to frighten those who are not used to it. They call him,
the Man of the Hill (for there he walks by night), and all the country
people are not, I believe, more afraid of the devil himself.”16

The arrival of this person reveals that he is not a figure in a folktale
because he is a real person, but he still seems to have a lot in common
with a character in a folktale (specifically, a European folktale). For
example, his name, which has been given to him by others, sounds like a
tale-type or a motif. Secondly, his appearance and the location of his
house align him with “the wild man”. According to Max Lüthi,

“In south German and Swiss folk belief, the wild man ... lives outside the
village in the forest or mountains. He many be either fearsome or
benevolent ... He is clothed in moss, bark, or skins, and carries an
uprooted sapling in his hand.”17

In Fielding’s work, the Man of the Hill lives on the top of the hill in the
forest, and the author describes him as follows:

“This person was of the tallest size, with a long beard as white as snow.
His body was cloathed with the skin of an ass, made something into the
form of a coat. He wore likewise boots on his legs, and a cap on his head,
both composed of the skin of other animals.”18

In many ways, the Man of the Hill resembles the “Wholly Other”
described by Lüthi.19 Additionally, Tom reacts to the Man much as the
hero in a folktale will respond to the “Wholly Other”. Lüthi notes that
“an actor in a folktale, whether a hero or an ordinary person, a man or a
woman, deals with these other beings as though he perceived no
difference between them and him”.20 Tom is a little curious about this
figure, but when they meet, Tom treats him just as he treats everyone
else, even though he has come across this man while “wander[ing] far
and wide”.21

While there are some similarities between the Man of the Hill
episode and a folktale, and the likenesses help to shape this character,
there are also many differences. However, if a folktale can be used to
 teach a lesson or offer a warning, then this folktale-like figure, the Man
of the Hill, does just that with a personal experience narrative, “a prose
narrative relating a personal experience, ... told in the first person” and
containing non-traditional content.22 There has been much ink spilled in
trying to determine exactly why Fielding would insert such a serious
section in this comic novel. However, if we look at the Man of the Hill story and its contents, the purpose becomes entirely clear: as P. J. de Voogd points out, "it is 'a warning to Tom'."23 In this personal experience narrative, the Man of the Hill relates "his sudden fall from high to low ... his descent from the life of a scholar to the profligacy of a debauchee".24 As a result, the Man has developed contempt for mankind; he has become a misanthrope. Since he and Tom have had similar experiences, Tom can see what may become of him if he allows himself to be influenced by the wrong people. In the end, Tom learns from the personal experience narrative that "natural sagacity and regard for the lesson of experience are a better guide than credulous reliance on the goodness of others".25

If Fielding set out to present "characters who define themselves through their own words and actions", then he accomplished that goal in the Man of the Hill’s relation of his own history.26 The form of the personal experience narrative works very well to achieve that function. Sandra Dolby Stahl comments:

"The overall function of the personal experience narrative is to allow for the discovery of the teller’s identity (especially in terms of values and character traits) and to maintain the stability of that identity for both the teller and the listener."27

In hearing what the Man of the Hill has done, where he has been, and whom he has met, the reader gets a fuller appreciation of his character. Overall, Fielding has provided the audience with a character who uses a folkloric form to reveal his own make-up and to expose his purpose in the novel.

Additionally, Fielding uses a motif found in folklore as a metaphor for revealing the true character of Blifil, the nephew of Mr. Allworthy and (as it is later discovered) the half-brother of Tom Jones. Throughout the novel, young Blifil never seems to be a very likeable character, but when Mr. Allworthy finally identifies him as "that wicked viper which I have so long nourished in my bosom", it becomes clear that Fielding draws him as a bosom serpent, an evil character who ingratiates himself to another by deceit.28

According to Daniel Barnes, the popular oral accounts of the bosom serpent legend contain the following characteristics: "a specific, but distant locale ... the animal’s mode of entry ... and its eventual expulsion ... and the creature’s dimensions".29 Of course, not all of these details are present in Fielding’s usage of the bosom serpent motif. As Blifil acts as a metaphorical bosom serpent, the specifics are more symbolically inferred. For example, Blifil gains entry into the heart of Allworthy by maligning Tom:
"I [Blifil] know him to be one of the worst men in the world ... for in the very day of your utmost danger, when myself and all the family were in tears, he filled the house with riot and debauchery. He drank, and sung, and roared; and when I gave him a gentle hint of the indecency of his actions, he fell into a violent passion, swore many oaths, called me rascal, and struck me." 'How!' cries Allworthy; 'did he dare to strike you?' 'I am sure,' cries Blifil, 'I would have forgiven him that long ago. I wish I could easily forget his ingratitude to the best of benefactors; ... for that very evening ... we [Twackum and Square] unluckily saw him engaged with a wench in a manner not fit to be mentioned. Mr. Twackum ... advanced to rebuke him, when ... he fell upon the worthy man, and beat him so outrageously that I wish he may have yet recovered the bruises. Nor was I without my share of the effects of his malice, while I endeavoured to protect my tutor.'

Mr. Allworthy, through an "initial act of carelessness", trusting Blifil, allows "the implantation of the egg inside [his] body", and the result is his turning Tom out of his house and his life. Blifil continues to affix himself more firmly within Allworthy's affections through deceit and hypocrisy. And although he tries to identify Tom as "that wretch whom [Allworthy] nourished in [his] bosom", Tom is really a false serpent; he has too much goodness and charity to be evil. Blifil, rather, really comes across as the evil one. After all, he is not just any snake, for Allworthy specifically names him a viper, a venomous snake, and he truly does try to poison Allworthy's mind against Tom in order to receive his favour and his fortune.

Just as Blifil's serpent symbolically enters Allworthy's bosom, there is a symbolic expulsion as well. Allworthy learns from many people that Tom has shown a very generous spirit towards several individuals, some being quite unfortunate or impoverished. With these accounts, Allworthy softens his resolve a little towards Tom, but it is not until he receives a letter from Mr. Square that he finally learns of the deception of which he has been a victim. With this knowledge, Allworthy is able to loosen slightly the grip that the malicious Blifil has had on his heart. The final act of purgation comes when Allworthy orders Blifil from his house forever. The deceiver is expelled from his uncle's heart and his home (which is quite interesting when applied to the old maxim "Home is where the heart is").

By comparing Blifil to a bosom serpent, Fielding accomplishes a great task in revealing the true nature of this character. As a serpent, the character is expected to be evil, and he proves this through his injurious treatment of Tom. Furthermore, he truly is the serpent in the garden, for it is his lies that bring an end of the happiness once experienced at Allworthy's residence and result in Tom's expulsion from paradise
(Paradise Hall, that is). In addition, like the serpent in Eden who thinks only of what he can gain and little of the harm he does to others, Blifil is very self-centered and selfish. Fielding describes him as follows:

“As there are some minds whose affections, like Master Blifil’s, are solely placed on one single person, whose interest and indulgence alone they consider on every occasion; regarding the good or ill of all others as merely indifferent, any farther than as they contribute to the pleasure or advantage of that person: so there is a different temper of mind which borrows a degree of virtue even from self-love. Such can never receive any kind of satisfaction from another, without loving the creature to whom the satisfaction is owing, and without making its well-being in some sort necessary to their own ease.”

Furthermore, Blifil’s nature is also represented by the snake of the Latin proverb (which is also an English proverb) *Serpens Ni Edat Serpentem, Draco Non Fiet* or “a serpent must eat another serpent before it can become a dragon”. Wolfgang Mieder interprets the meaning as “They [avaricious or power-hungry individuals] become powerful by hurting others, and their fortunes will not be as great, as desired, unless they drain those [people] whom they would be.” This idea concisely describes Blifil. He is extremely jealous of Tom, and he feels that he must destroy Tom’s reputation with Allworthy to gain approval and, ultimately, a larger share of Allworthy’s fortune. This idea also applies to Blifil’s interest in Sophia Western. He desired not the “entire and absolute possession of the heart of his mistress”; rather, “[h]er fortune and her person were the sole objects of his wishes”. The reader discerns that Sophia would be ill used by Blifil if they were married. He would set out to destroy her and reap the benefits that her money would bring him. After all, he seems to know nothing of caring for anyone but himself and satisfying his personal desires: “yet was he altogether as well furnished with some other passions, that promised themselves very full gratification in the young lady’s fortune”. Overall, Blifil can become the man he wants to become only by destroying others.

Although Henry Fielding rails against the insertion of supernatural elements in his fiction, many of those elements do appear in and serve a valuable purpose in *Tom Jones*. Partridge’s unswerving faith in omens, ghosts, witches, spells, and other folk beliefs serves concretely to get the point across that Fielding attempts to present a character the audience should laugh at and not imitate. With regard to the Man on the Hill, how could the reader know his nature or discern his purpose in the novel if not for the use of a personal experience narrative? In his case, we cannot rely on what other characters have said about him because, to them, he has become an “other world” figure, a character in a folktale. Finally,
the fact that Blifil is compared to a bosom serpent helps to expose just how despicable he really is. Overall, the use of folkloric devices has greatly aided the novelist in drawing complete character sketches of Partridge, the Man of the Hill, and young Blifil.

Notes

4. Fielding, I, p. 43; van der Voorde, p. 163.
5. Van der Voorde, p. 188.
15. Hufford, p. 11.
19. Lüthi, p. 5.
20. Lüthi, p. 6.
35. Ibid.
37. Fielding, I, p. 207.

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Ballad tradition in the Tamil language: an introductory study

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Introduction
The following paper attempts to outline the nature of the ballad tradition in the Tamil language. Tamil is spoken by more than six million people, most of whom live in Tamilnaadu, South India, and the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. Tamil is the oldest Dravidian language and it has a great literary tradition that goes back more than 2000 years. The prevailing oral tradition, as well as available printed and unpublished folklore materials of India and Sri Lanka are evidence of the richness of the folk literary tradition in the Tamil language. At this stage there is an urgent need for extensive fieldwork on the ballads and ballad tradition of the Tamils. I hope that this introductory paper will stimulate a keen interest in the description and analysis of Tamil ballad. As the ballads precisely reflect the cultural traditions of the Tamils, scholars can draw on them as a basic source of evidence.

The history of Tamil literature shows that classical literature and folk tradition from time to time exchanged (literary) forms, content and contexts. There has been extensive influence of folk tradition on classical literature in Tamil. It is important to note that Cilappatikaaram, the first great epic in Tamil language, has its origin in a myth. This epic has adopted various folk motifs in its composition. The classical literary tradition adopted mythical stories for its literary composition during the period 1200-1800 A.D. This main literary trend had an influence on the ballad composers who lived in the same period. Most of the Tamil ballads seem to have been composed between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries A.D., during which a few “literary ballads” were written, namely Kurralak Kuravanci, Raamanaataka Kiirttanai, Mukkuutatpallu etc., by scholarly poets. This “literary ballad tradition” basically adopted the techniques of oral ballad composition, such as the refrain, repetition, dialogue, simile, metaphor, ironical expression, verse forms, etc. Thus, the “literary ballad tradition” and the “folk ballad tradition” appear to be only two variant forms of expression of their poetic language usages.

Definition
Several studies of British balladry have clearly defined the ballad and its classification. Ballad is a genre of folk literature and narrates a story set to music. As Kinsley says, “ballads are narrative songs in which music and poetry are interdependent”. Buchan defines the ballad as “a
folk song that tells a story, where folk song means a song that has been transmitted by word of mouth rather than by print." In his definition, Buchan attaches particular importance to the oral transmission of a text and its performance, but his definition of ballad is certainly applicable to Tamil ballads. Ballads have been created according to certain formulas. The major difference between folktale and ballad is that the latter has musical performance; further differences can be identified in length, language, style, narrative techniques etc. Though ballads may appear in print, they have their own musical formulas.

Collection and preservation

Although there is a strong ballad tradition in Tamil folk culture, the manuscript collection and taperecording of these ballads has unfortunately not yet been done in a scientific way. Likewise, Tamil ballads have not received attention from modern scholars. There are a few publications available which feature those ballads which are based on myths. Some ballads based on Indian heroic epics – Mahaa Bhaaratha and Raamaayana – were published for commercial purposes in the early twentieth century in Tamilnaadu and Sri Lanka. These ballad books included illustrative line drawings explicitly illustrating the incidents in the stories, and were printed in bold letters. Most of these books were about 100 pages long. Even in the 1960s I observed this type of book being sold at temporary bookstalls during temple festivals, and in other public gathering places.

From the scholarly point of view it is a great drawback that these books do not contain detailed information about the collectors, editors, and sources of the ballads; some of them even fail to indicate the date of publication. The compilers often chose what they considered to be the most important verses of a long ballad in order that the main outline of the story could be contained within the estimated size of the book; they also freely altered many lines and phrases – chiefly, it would seem, in order to make the words or phrases fit in with the tune more easily. So far not a single publication has included musical notation, the functional background of the ballads, the ballad tradition of the village, or recent composition and variation. Despite this, such books are the primary sources for the study of Tamil ballad tradition.

In the history of Tamil literature, from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, the folk ballad tradition and the composition of literary ballads in Tamil became very popular in Tamilnaadu. Coincidentally, this paralleled the period of the popularity of ballad tradition in European languages. Housman comments that
"The ballad seems to have come into existence throughout these islands and all over Europe during the late Middle Ages, probably from the late fourteenth century onward. Occasional references to short, popular narrative poems are found before that date, but in the absence of extant texts it is impossible to prove that these poems were ballads in any real sense".9

The same is true for the ballad tradition in the Tamil language.

The Caraswati Mahaaal Library in Tanjore, Tamilnaadu, has played an important role in the collection and preservation of Tamil ballads. This library has functioned as the centre for the literary activities of Tamilnaadu. It was built and patronised by Caraboogi, the Naayakka king of Tanjore, Tamilnaadu, in the seventeenth century. Various literary manuscripts were collected from different parts of Tamilnaadu and Sri Lanka and preserved in this library. Tamil classical literary manuscripts in this library collection received wide attention from Tamil scholars, and from the late nineteenth century onwards they started to edit the classical literary works, yet no attention was paid to the folk literary manuscripts available in this library till the 1940s.

Throughout his lifetime, K. V. Jegannathan, a Tamil journalist and the editor of Kalaimakal, a monthly literary Tamil magazine, collected folksongs, ballads, and other folk literary genres in Tamilnaadu, and published them periodically, with a short introduction, in his magazine in the period 1940-1970. He also wrote several popular articles about the folklore collection of the Caraswati Mahaaal library.10 The late Tamil professor, S. Vaiyapuripillai, edited one of the ballad manuscripts deposited in the library, that of a historical ballad, Raamappa Iyyan Ammaanai (1951) which was published by the University of Madras.11 The same ballad was republished, undated, by the Caraswati Mahaaal library.

N. Vaanamaamalai, a teacher, journalist, and wellknown South Indian folklorist, has given a new dimension to the study of Tamil folklore.12 During the 1960s he undertook extensive fieldwork in the Tirunelveli district, Tamilnaadu, and has published two volumes of Tamil folksongs. Madurai Kaamaraaj University invited him to edit some Tamil ballad manuscripts available in the Caraswati Mahaaal library collection. He also collected manuscripts from villagers from several parts of Tamilnaadu and has published ballad stories with an introduction and notes.13

In Sri Lanka, only one standard edition of the Tamil mythical ballad Kancan Ammaanai is available so far. This was edited by the late Tamil professor, S. Vithiananathan, in 1971.14 He also edited four folk drama texts and two volumes of Sri Lankan Tamil folksongs. As mentioned above, the historical and epic ballads are very popular in Sri
Lanka, and the ballad *Kancan Ammaanai* is very popular among the Eastern Sri Lankan Hindus. In Hindu households where a death has taken place this particular ballad is performed for eight nights as part of their Hindu funerary custom, and this tradition is still practised in Eastern Sri Lanka. Although the ballad performance is a living tradition among Tamils, only a little scholarly work has been done in this field.

**Classification of Tamil ballads**

It is appropriate to follow the universal ballad classification for the Tamil ballads. Housman, in his *British Popular Ballads* (1952) has classified the English ballads into six groups: Religious ballads, Ballads of the supernatural, Tragic ballads, Ballads of love, Historical ballads, and Humorous ballads. Shepard has divided English ballads into four main groups: Traditional ballads, Broadside ballads, Literary ballads, and Drawing room ballads, but does not give any explanation for his classification, and in it one group overlaps another. Buchan has classified the ballads on the basis of transmission, as Oral, Chap, and Modern. However, I believe that he was not satisfied with this classification, and devised another type of classification for the Scottish ballads in 1973, such as magical and marvellous ballads, romantic and tragic ballads, and historical and semi-historical ballads. In my view, the Tamil ballad repertoire can be classified according to the following categories, based on themes: a. Epic ballads; b. Mythical ballads; c. Historical ballads; d. Social ballads.

**Epic ballads**

The Tamil language has a very rich repertory of epic ballads, which originated from the Indian heroic epics *Mahaa Bhaaratha* and *Raamaayana*. Though these ballads are based on the Indian epics, I must stress that this type of ballad is the local and indigenous folk account. Even minor characters in the heroic epics have main roles in the Tamil epic ballads, and some minor incidents in the heroic epics are described in detail in the ballads. The main motif of the Tamil epic ballads is the achievement of love. Most of the ballads have female names as their titles, and the ballad stories centre on the activities of the female characters, as in the following examples:

- *Ali Aracani Maalai*\(^1\) = The story of queen Alli.
- *Pavalakkoti Maalai* = The story of queen Pavalakkodi
- *Cubattirai Kaliyaanam* = The story of queen Cubattirai.

Female domination is clearly revealed in these epic ballads, and there are acceptable reasons for this. *Mahaa Bhaaratha* and *Raamaayana* are
creations of Aryan culture. Since North Indians are considered Aryans and South Indians belong to the Dravidian ethnic group, according to the social structure of each, Aryans belong to the patriarchal group and Dravidians are a matriarchal group. Therefore, it is obvious that the male domination is made explicit in the Aryan creation of *Mahaa Bhaaratha* and *Raamaayana*. From the third century A.D. Aryan culture began to influence the Dravidian culture of South India. It is from this time that stories of *Mahaa Bhaaratha* and *Raamaayana* were being introduced to the Tamils.

It is evident from the available material that the epic stories were taken into the folk literary tradition from the sixteenth century onwards. Folk drama, ballad, ritual song, and folksong were composed, based on the epic stories from this period. It is a general phenomenon that literary composition basically explicitly illustrates the social structure and its behaviours. A knowledge of the social background is essential for the understanding of a particular literary tradition. Hence, it is necessary to be aware of the social background of the Tamils in order to study their ballads. The figure on the following page charts the Aryan origin of Tamil ballads.

As the Tamils are Dravidians, goddess worship and the prominence of the female role are very important in Tamil society. When the Aryan creations of *Mahaa Bhaaratha* and *Raamaayana* stories diffused into the Tamil culture, Dravidian cultural aspects would have been incorporated in the epic stories. The folk poets naturally added their social and cultural elements in their oral composition, and this is why the Tamil ballad composers attach more importance to the female characters of their ballads. In addition, the heroines of epic ballads possess magical powers. It is worth noting Beck’s observation regarding this aspect:

“This is one particularly important aspect of magical power which the well-bred women of our epic appear to control. This is their ability to transfer their blessing or curses, at will, to men who are closely associated with them. They are thought to see through the superficial qualities of things, and to possess an uncanny insight that the heroes lack.”

Hence, the Aryan and Dravidian epic stories can be clearly differentiated in this respect.

Tamil classical love poems describe love and heroic motifs in detail. Love and heroism were the two main aspects in the cultural life of the Tamils during the classical period (100 B.C.-300 A.D.). Even in ballads of the later period (1400-1800 A.D.) these two aspects were given an important role. The love motif is the main element of Tamil epic ballads: the heroes put all their talent and effort into overcoming the physical barriers to love; they also spend a great deal of energy and lose
ARYANISATION OF TAMIL CULTURAL TRADITION

North India

Aryans

Language Sanskrit

Patriarchal Society

Vedic Religion

Hindu Myths and Heroic Epics

South India and Sri Lanka

Dravidians

Language Tamil

Matriarchal Society

Folk Religion

Tamil Mythical and Epic Ballads

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their soldiers in order to overcome the barriers and reach the lovemaids’ fortresses, ultimately gaining their heroines. The ballad stories thus end with their marriage.

During the period 600-900 A.D. the Caiva and Vaishnava Bhakthi movements very successfully carried out their religious propaganda activities in South India. Indian epic stories were popularised through these activities among Tamils. The Indian stories of the epics have been used in devotional songs as a medium for the propagation of religious faith, and these religious literary works from 600 to 900 A.D. belong to the mainstream of Tamil literature.

**Mythical ballads**

Mythical ballads are an important genre in Tamil literature. Their ritual value in Hindu life is of particular significance, and they are recited in village temple rituals as well as in rituals in the home. Hindu devotees listen to these performances with devotion. Some of the ballad stories are selected by the folk poets purposely to entertain the audience. The ballad *Valli Titumanam* (the story of the love marriage of Lord Murugan and Divine Valli) is a typical example of this type of ballad. Such Puranic stories are composed very attractively, and appeal to the village folk in theme and feeling. The didactic type of mythic ballads were composed with the purpose of educating the people and, to a certain extent, of eradicating evils from society. The mythical story of *Ariccantiran Naatakam* was written in Tamilnadu in order to emphasise the values of “truth”. It became very popular and spread to the south and southeast Asian countries too. Most of the ballads deal with the origins and the kingdom of folk deities, and stories of these deities have been used in various forms such as ballad, drama, folksong, and other ritual songs. Puranas (Hindu mythical writings) are the main source of most of the religious ballads. Puranas were originally composed in Sanskrit by the Aryans of North India, whose social and religious structure and behaviour are reflected in Puranic literature. When the Puranic stories were diffused and popularised among the Tamils, these stories were modified according to the social and religious behaviour, beliefs and practices of the Dravidians.²⁴

As mentioned earlier, the Bhakthi movement in Tamilnadu was the main channel for the popularisation of Hindu mythical stories among the Tamils. Caivaism and Vaishnavism became the main religions of Tamilnadu from the sixth century A.D. Although Dravidian culture was predominant in Tamilnadu, the Aryan culture, through religion and the Sanskrit language, gradually influenced the various aspects of the cultural life of the Tamils. This “Aryanisation” took place through the Caiva and Vaishnava Bhakthi movements. Hindu mythical stories and beliefs were
adopted by the Bhakthi movement, and the Hindu mythical concept and stories were popularised by the Naayanmaar (leaders of the Saivist Bhakthi Movement) and Aalvaarkal (leaders of the Vaishnavist Bhakthi Movement) who were the religious propagandists from the sixth to the ninth centuries. They performed the mythical stories for religious propaganda purposes, and the devotional songs played a very important role in their religious movement; they were memorised by the Hindus and recited in their daily religious life. Mythical stories were narrated through these devotional songs, and also during religious gatherings. Thus, these stories became very popular among the ordinary people, and it is therefore understandable that the folk composers also used the mythical stories in their ballad compositions from this period on.

When the Dravidians became familiarised with the Aryan myths, they adopted the stories to suit their culture. Lord Shiva was the supreme God in the Vedic religious tradition of Aryans, but in the folk religious practices and beliefs of the Tamils the Goddess has supreme power. The Goddess is also the popular deity among the Tamils, as is well illustrated in their mythical ballads. On the other hand, the worship of Shiva, and temples dedicated to Shiva, are very rare in folk religious tradition. Goddess worship, and temples and shrines for the Goddess, however, are widely prevalent among Tamils in Tamilnaadu and Sri Lanka. The archaeological evidence of the Mohen-je-Daro and Harappa civilisation of North India (5000-2000 B.C.) has also proved that the Goddess was the popular deity among the Dravidians from prehistoric times. Tamil classical literature, the earliest literary documents in the Tamil language, also provides more evidence of Goddess worship among the Tamils during the pre-Christian era. “Aryanisation” took place in Tamilnaadu after the Christian era, and by the sixth century A.D. it had significantly influenced the Tamil cultural tradition. After Aryanisation, the religious practices of the Tamils changed, and Lord Shiva was accepted as the supreme God.

Puranic stories became very popular among Tamils from the fourteenth century, as did the composition of mythical ballads in the same period. In the folk concept of the deities there are several female and male deities, who can be identified as follows:

a. Female deities and their powers:
   i. Maari Amman (fertility and prosperity)
   ii. Kaali Amman (destruction)
   iii. Neeli Amman (destruction)
   iv. Peecci Amman (prosperity)
   v. Katal Naacci Amman (protection from sea)
   vi. Valli Amman (love)
b. Male deities and their powers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Deity</th>
<th>Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Vairavar</td>
<td>(boundary protection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>Viirapattirar</td>
<td>(heroism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>Kaattavaraayar</td>
<td>(protection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv.</td>
<td>Vatanamaar</td>
<td>(protection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>Anumaar</td>
<td>(heroism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi.</td>
<td>Muni</td>
<td>(protection)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Vedic Sanskrit literature, one of the most ancient Hindu scriptures, there are sources for the mythical stories; the Vedic myths were taken into the Puranic literary tradition. Puranic literature was very popular in the North Indian Sanskrit literary tradition from 500 B.C. to 500 A.D, and these myths were brought into Tamilnaadu by Aryans through religious activities and literature, and spread to all the Tamil communities. Most of the Tamil classical epics have been composed based on Puranic stories, and were taken into the folk tradition from the classical literary tradition. Most of the Tamil religious ballads which are available now were composed between the fourteenth and the eighteenth centuries, which is proved by the social, historical, and religious evidence of the texts. As an example, an outline of a mythical story can be cited here:

The story of the Kaattavaraayan ballad

The first part of the story takes place in the Himalayas and in heaven. Goddess Maari and her son Kaattavaraayan are the main characters. Although Lord Shiva is the supreme God, Goddess Maari wants to be supreme in the entire world. Therefore she undergoes penance, and her wishes are granted by Lord Shiva; she also receives a son from Shiva as her reward. Lord Shiva, in the form of a male deer, and Lord Vishnu in the form of a female deer, copulate and deliver a male child to Goddess Maari. She names the child “Kaattavaraayan”.

The second part of the story takes place on earth (South India). Kaattavaraayan studies with his uncle Lord Vishnu, and becomes king of one part of South India. He makes friends with Cinnaan, a chieftain of Paalayam, South India. Both of them go hunting to protect the farmers from wild animals. In the forest Kaattavaraayan meets a divine virgin, Aariyappuumaalai, and falls in love with her. To marry her he asks permission from his mother, and in order to give him permission Maari makes four demands, as follows:

i. that he get rid of prostitution in the city of Kaancipuram,

ii. that he control the arrogant attitudes of the people,
that he arrest the young witch women who harm the people by witchcraft,

that he claim the divine Kalumaram (impaling stake) and reach the top.

He succeeds in the first three challenges, but is unable to meet the fourth. He seeks help from his elder mother, Goddess Kaali Amman. Finally, Kaali and Maari appear in front of him and wish him to get married to his lover.

a. The elements of the story:

i. Goddess Maari is a divine virgin; she attains supreme power by penance.

ii. She receives a divine son (Kaattavaraayan).

iii. He has an unnatural birth.

iv. His father is Lord Shiva.

v. He studies with his uncle, Lord Vishnu.

vi. He becomes a king and makes friends with another king, Cinnaan.

vii. They go hunting.

viii. He falls in love with a divine virgin (Aariyapuumaalai).

ix. He asks his mother’s permission to marry his lover.

x. He faces challenges with success and defeat.

xi. He crosses the islands.

xii. Finally Goddess Maari helps him to succeed.

b. The objectives of the story:

i. To popularise the glory of the Goddess Maari and her supreme power.

ii. Goddess worship and beliefs.

iii. To censure bad social elements, such as caste systems, prostitution, humbling, arrogant behaviour, witchcraft, etc.

iv. To deride the Gods of the mainstream through the substream believers.

If textual analysis of Tamil ballads were to be carried out on an extensive scale it would be possible to construct a motif index for the corpus.

It is notable that there are a few mythical ballads which have originated from the Tamil epic, Cilappatikaaram. The Kannaki Amman ballad and Tiroupati Amman ballads come under this category. It is thought that the story of Kannaki prevailed in oral tradition during the third century A.D. Elankoo, the author of Cilappatikaaram, composed in the fifth century A.D. and one of the five great epics in Tamil literature,
had taken the Kannaki story from oral tradition and composed the epic with various folk motifs.\textsuperscript{27} The Kannaki story was transmitted in oral tradition from 300 A.D. On the evidence of the text and poetical expression of the Kannaki ballad, it is clear that a folk poet of the seventeenth century borrowed the story from the Tamil epic \textit{Cilappatikaaram} and composed his ballad. Kannaki ballads have various versions and literary forms. The Kannaki cult is very popular among Hindus as well as Buddhists in Sri Lanka, and the Sinhalese language also has various ballads based on the Kannaki story.\textsuperscript{28}

\textit{Mahaa Bhaaratha} was originally composed in Sanskrit and translated into Tamil by Bharathar with the title of \textit{Mahaa Bhaaratham} in the sixth century A.D. Several folk ballads originated from this literary work and have been transmitted by the oral tradition. One of these, \textit{Tiroupati Ammaanai}, the story of Paancaali (alias Tiroupati, the wife of Panca Paantavar) is treated as a religious ballad. In Tamil folk tradition Kannaki and Tiroupati are the goddesses of chastity, and there are several temples in Tamilnaadu and Sri Lanka dedicated to both. The Tiroupati Amman cult is very popular, especially in Eastern Sri Lanka. \textit{Mahaa Bhaaratha} stories have been performed in different forms, such as ballad, drama, dance, and folksongs, for devotional purposes, in the Tiroupati cult.

Although these mythical ballads are popular in worship, as well as in the cultural life of Tamils, no scholarly attention has been paid to them. This has also been the situation in other languages too. Thomas Pettitt comments that

\begin{quote}
"The religious ballads are a significant but much neglected sub-genre, which probably loomed larger in early tradition than the few surviving texts do in the standard collections. It is therefore appropriate that any technique of analysis should sooner or later be tried on them."\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

The repertoire of mythical ballads in Tamil can be classified into two groups, as follows:

i. Ballads that deal with stories of deities,

ii. Ballads that deal with stories of heroes and heroines, who reach divine status.

The following ballads can be identified as belonging to the second group:

i. \textit{Kannaki Katai} = the story of Kannaki – a merchant’s wife.

ii) \textit{Tiroupati Ammaanai} = the story of Paancaali – heroine of \textit{Mahaa Bhaaratha}
The heroes and heroines of the above ballads were born human, but they attain divine power at the end of the story. People who believed these stories made temples for these heroes and heroines. This cult was later transmitted by oral tradition, and it is a universal phenomenon of folk religious ideology. In this regard, Buchan comments:

"The religious ballads contain a relationship involving one or more biblical or morally didactic figures in an adversial tension which leads to divine or miraculous intercession. The stories deal with commission, or revelation, of a sin and the subsequent divine reaction." 30

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Christian missionaries in Sri Lanka wrote many of the stories in the Holy Bible in the form of "literary ballads" with the help of Tamil folk poets, to educate and entertain the ordinary people. These ballads were recited or enacted during church festivals in front of a huge congregation. The ballad called Arc Yaakappar Ammaanai (the story of St. Theophilus) is very popular among the Christian community in northern Sri Lanka.

**Historical ballads**

The historical ballads mostly deal with local heroes as well as memorable historical events. The events portrayed in them are artistic recreations of historical fact, and the composers paid more attention to human feelings than to facts in the historical scenes. As Cheesman comments: "Ballads are historical records and in their own time, tools of cultural struggle and change-struggle along many fronts of social tension, and not least between the dominant, literary culture and subordinate, oral culture". 31 This type of ballad provides previously unrecorded details for the study of society and the history of a nation. Historical ballads offer even more information on the social and political structures of the times in which the ballad story occurred. After analysing the ballad *The Battle of Harlaw* and the historical documents of that battle, Buchan has come to the conclusion that,

"The historical ballads, we would all agree, are no 'documents', but the evidence just presented would indicate that they can be much nearer to the truth than is normally realized. They can contain factual truths that are not found in the often scanty records, and they can contain emotional truths, the attitudes and reactions of the ballad singing folk to the world around
them ... since this ballad has shown how a historical event is made to serve as an aesthetic correlative, an aesthetic correlative which fulfils a certain sociological function in that it focuses the emotional conceptions of a particular culture".32

Like historical ballads in the English language, those in the Tamil language originated in and have been orally transmitted since the fourteenth century. Only a few historical ballads have been published in the Tamil language, of which the following are available in print:

A. i. Raamappa Iyyan Ammaanai (1950)  
ii. Iravikkuttipillai Poor (1951)

These two ballads describe various victorious military activities of Raamappa Iyyan, Army Commander of Naayaka Kingdom of Tamilnaadu (eighteenth century).

B. iii. Khaan Saaheb Katai (1923)  
iv. Civakankaik Kummi  
v. Civakankai Ammaanai  
vi. Pulitteevan Cintu  
vii. Kattappomman Katai Paatal (1962)  
viii. Kattappommuturai Katai

These ballads are interrelated in their stories, and describe the wars of the South Indian patriots against the British. These stories of heroes of resistance have survived the attempts of the British to wipe out memories of struggles against their domination, and kindled the noble sentiment of patriotism.

C. ix. Ivar Iraacaakkal Katai

This story describes the struggle between Kannada invaders and five Paandiya chieftains of Tamilnaadu.

D. x. Kanti Raacan Oppaari (1971)  
xi. Puucaniyaal Katai (1971)

These ballads describe the cruel activities of Sri Wicramarajasingan, the last Tamil king of Sri Lanka (1805-1815), against a Sinhalese minister and his family who worked as spies for the British invaders.

E. xii. Veelappanikkar Naacciyar Oppaari (1980)
A story of the courageous wife of Veelappanikkel, a chieftain of Vanni, Sri Lanka.

F. xiii. Puutattampi Katai
xiv. Cankiliyan Katai

These ballads describe the struggles and war of the Tamil kings of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, against the Dutch forces in the northern part of the country.


A story of Veti Aracan, who was described in the ballad as the first king of the northern peninsula of Sri Lanka.

It would be possible to discover more manuscripts if a largescale field collection were undertaken.

Although the historical scenes in these ballads are the imaginative creations of folk poets, they provide more evidence about political, social and economic situations for related studies. They also set up a gallery of heroes and heroines ready for hero worship. Particular importance is placed on the heroes’ self-sacrifice, their devotion, power of endurance and heroism. Heroism and hero worship are part and parcel of the cultural life of Tamils, and this phenomenon is well described in their classical literature as well as their folk literature. There are remarkable temples erected for hero worship in Tamilnaadu. At the temple of a hero, during worship, the particular ballad of the hero is recited to the audience gathered there. Vaanamaamalai describes this situation as follows:

“A few ballads are still extant since they are sung to rural audiences on days of propitiation of the village deities. Heroes of folk history are sometimes deified in the places of their birth or activity and their stories are sung when festivals are held in their honour. Thus, Ivar Raaçaakkal Katai is sung as villuppaattu (bow song) in certain tracts of the Tirunelveli district. Heroes like Marutu, Pulutteevan, or Kattappomman are not considered to be gods, but only as mortal heroes with supernatural powers, and hence their stories are sung on occasions of festivities or enacted as folk dramas.”

Social ballads

Alexander comments that “most of the (European) social ballads are concerned with individuals, and their destiny, with their personal, often tragic conflicts”. Social ballads generally reflect the whole system of human relationships. As it is, most of the Tamil social ballad stories originated from the problems of caste oppression, inter-caste marriage and its consequences, the misery which women endured in the patrilineral
joint family system, and exploited farmers’ lives, etc. Especially in these ballads, the caste hierarchy is well described. For example, in the *Muttuppattan* ballad, the hero Muttuppattan, a Brahmin, high-caste youth, quarrels with his father and runs away to the state of Kerala. There he settles and earns money. His brothers come to him and invite him back to his own village. On his way home, he meets two young girls from the untouchable caste, and falls in love with them. He then asks for permission to marry them, but their father refuses. Muttuppattan leaves his family and family status, agrees to follow the Cakkilis’ (cobbler caste) traditions, and gets married to these two girls. A few years later his father-in-law dies. Then Muttuppattan is elected as the chief of the Cakkili community. During his leadership the community is peaceful and happy. One day he faces the cattle raiders and fights with them. In the battle he is killed. His two wives cry their grief in songs and burn themselves on his funeral pyre. Vaanamaamalai says, “the people of the region built a temple and installed the images of Muttuppattan and his wives and paid homage to them”. The social ballads such as *Muttuppattan* reveal the exceptional nature of the people as well as the socio-psychological nature of the people and their relationships.

The following Tamil social ballads are very popular:

i. *Muttuppattan Katai*
ii. *Maturaiviiran Katai*
iii. *Cinnanaatan Katai*

These ballads are based on inter-caste marriage and its tragic consequences.

iv. *Cinnattampi Katai*

This ballad describes the oppression and unjust treatment of the people belonging to the lowest caste by those of the high caste.

v. *Tottukaari Amman Katai*
vi. *Venkala Raacen Katai*

These ballads describe the clashes between the matrilineal and patrilineal groups when the former seeks a marital alliance with the latter.

vii. *Nallatankaal Katai*
The ballad tells the tragic story of Nallatankaal, a sister of seven brothers, who is affected by the denial of property rights to women and its tragic consequences.

viii. Kautalamaatan Katai

This is a story about humanism transcending religious and caste barriers.

ix. Viinativiinan Katai

x. Jampulinkam Katai

Social heroes like Viinaativiinan and Jampulinkam lived in the fifteenth century in Tamilnaadu. They fought against injustice and the antisocial activities of the landlords as well as the rich. In these ballads they rob to help the poor, and they are treated as champions of poor people. These social ballads are valuable sources for scholars who want to work on the social structure, hierarchy and customs of the Tamils.

Ballad performance

The Tamil ballad tradition has developed through two main channels – folk drama and ballad singing performances. Literary evidence reveals that folk dramas became a popular art form among Tamils from the fourteenth century onwards. Folk dances and folk dramas were very frequently performed during temple rituals as well as at festivals and during periods of recreation. Some of the most popular folk dramas are still performed in almost all Hindu traditional villages in front of an audience of thousands of the Hindu faithful. The study of Tamil drama clearly reveals its close relationship with ballad literature. Ballad texts have been used in folk dramas since the fourteenth century A.D., and in the process ballad tunes in the dramas might have been changed according to the formula of dance rhythms. The lyrical characteristics of the ballad, its natural imagery, its refrain and its musical accompaniment have nevertheless been used by literary composers of folk dramas. The epic ballads have mostly been performed as folk dramas, although the number of religious ballads performed in dramatic form is very small.

Ritual dances are performed during the worship of folk deities, at the same time as religious ballads are recited. One or two singers sing the ballad with musical accompaniment whilst, in general, the ritual dancer goes into a trance for a particular deity and then dances. The dancer dresses as a folk deity in accordance with the story being performed. For example, at the Goddess Maari temple, the Maari Amman ballad will be recited, and the dancer will be dressed as Goddess Maari and will dance according to the story and the musical rhythm. The ballad singing takes
place on various occasions in social and sacred situations. The ballad
singers aim to entertain their audience. Ballad singing, however, has been
practised by rural folk themselves, and as a result the ballad retained its
tune, so that both text and tune continued as a unit well into the twentieth
century. The simple forms of the ballad stanza and the frequent
occurrence of refrains helped to preserve this unity. As mentioned above,
the different forms – drama, dance, and ballad – provide verbal and
musical entertainment for rural people. At the same time, the ballad
tradition has also been perpetuated by oral transmission.

Epic ballads have been recited in many villages continuously over
several days. Some of the mythical and historical ballads have been
performed in the form of Villuppaattu (bow song), and folk drama. These
two forms are very popular in Tamilnaadu and Sri Lanka. At the
University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, I have produced three folk dramas using
mythical ballads, namely Kaattavaraayan Katai, Caavittiri Katai, and
Kannaki Katai, which were well received by academics as well as the
public. In the form of folk drama the ballad stories have also been
continuously practised in the society.

The folk poets are the bearers of oral tradition, and their methods
of composition and transmission of ballads are distinguishable from
classical literature, because they stored the ballad texts in their memories
and could therefore readily reproduce the ballads in performance. The
wandering ballad singers roused their audience with remembered glories
from the past. However, ballads have been transmitted and preserved
mostly in rural areas rather than in towns and cities. The atmosphere of
the village and the life pattern of the village people provide more
opportunities for ballad performances. Housman is inclined to agree with
the suggestion that traditional balladry flourishes in a non-literate,
homogeneous, agricultural society, dominated by semi-independent
chieftains, that is situated in a remote, hilly, or border region where
cultures meet and feuds and wars abound; this kind of society provided
both subjects for ballad-story and occasions for ballad performance and
lasted till the advent of widespread literacy.\textsuperscript{39}

In South India and Sri Lanka, ballad singing societies are made up of
farmers who are characterised by their commonality, especially in social
and religious life. These feudal societies are homogeneous, where
landlord and farmers (cultivators) live together. These traditional villages
are not much affected by cultural intervention. Most of the villages in
Tamilnaadu are remote and therefore the oral tradition is being well
preserved there. In the traditional villages there are one or two men or
women who are popular performers and sometimes compose ballads. The
talented ballad singers compose new ballads which are acceptable to the
villagers in the traditional form. The successful ballad composer, who
understands the mind of the audience, sings his story so as to appeal to their tastes, ethical sense, political consciousness, and feelings. This is evidence that the ballad singing and composing tradition is still alive and is part and parcel of existing folk tradition in the Tamil language. The persistence and the practice of the ballads in Tamil is a reflection of the strong sense of cultural identity.

Broadside ballads

There are a number of broadside ballads available in pamphlet form, which deal with great disasters like cyclones, floods, tidal waves, war and its destruction, starvation, great epidemics, political campaigns, etc. Whenever momentous events occur, ballad singers compose broadside ballads and make money out of them. The composers follow the composing techniques of the traditional ballad, especially in metre, language, refrain, and rhythm. During the parliamentary election propaganda meetings, broadside ballad singers appear on the platform and sing about the candidate. On several occasions I have noticed that this type of propaganda attracts the audience in villages as well as in cities in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka, but it is a great pity that so far not a single collection of broadside ballads has been published.

Conclusion

Ballad stories are a noteworthy branch of Tamil folk literature. People are fond of their ballads and ballad singing is part of their culture. The wandering ballad singers rouse their audience with remembered glories from the past. As religiosity is a particular feature of village life, the mythical ballads gain more and more functional value. It is worth quoting here Cheesman’s comments on the value of ballads:

“Ballads are, and were even more in previous centuries, extremely important whether as epiphenomena of cultural change or as means of effecting (or arresting) change, not only because the genre straddles the divide between literature and oralure ... also because the ballad is a genre of simple narrative, and narratives are the most efficient and most universal vehicles of ideology. Ballads tell brief tales of transgression and reconsolidation of suggested norms – thus they very powerfully inculcate social values”.

Historical and social ballads deal with various aspects of the land use and land rights of Tamils, and illustrate the agricultural operations and the feudal systems of the people. They present a general picture of the social hierarchy of each and every caste of Tamils, and the caste and kinship institutions of different communities are described. Folk ballads have served as an instrument of social change ever since the eighteenth
century, and have exposed social evils which had plagued Hindu society for centuries. Some historical and social ballads exposed the caste struggle, while in others the sacrifices and adventures of heroes and heroines exemplify the native militancy and national spirit. Some dedicated folk poets were committed to exposing the British colonial rulers in Kattappomman, Cankiliyan, and Puutattampi ballads, which served as instruments of nationalism in India and Sri Lanka. In-depth study of these ballads can bring new social and historical information to light.

Little by little the ballad tradition is being forgotten in the life pattern of modern culture. The present generation, rooted in technology and materialism, has developed the popular art forms most appropriate to its own times. Until now, with the fading of old people’s memories, the manuscripts and various ballad books that have been printed remain for the study of ballad tradition. Before old people’s memories fade for ever, the musical forms of the ballad songs should be recorded and preserved in the national archives. The governments, universities and cultural organisations should make it an urgent priority to give financial assistance and encouragement to fieldworkers and scholars to work on Tamil ballad repertory.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Professor J. D. A. Widdowson and Dr. Julia Bishop, of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition at the University of Sheffield, for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
3. See P. R. Subramanian, *Folklore of South India with Special Reference to Tamil Folk Songs*, Trivandrum, Kerala University, 1969.
8. This is evident in the 1960 and 1971 editions of the Kancan Ammaanai ballad.
12. N. Vaanamaamalai has formed a folklore study circle, and trained a group of teachers to carry out fieldwork on folklore. This group has published a quarterly
research journal, *Aaraacci*, in Tamil, under the editorship of Vaanamaamalai, which especially published research papers in the fields of folklore and anthropology.  


19. *Maalai* = garland. Maalai is one of the literary forms of Tamil literature, and some of the ballads are also called *Maalai*. It is interesting to note that *Maalai* is equal to *garland* in the English literary tradition. Regarding this *garland*, Shepard comments that:  

> "Some of the earliest printed collections of songs and ballads in pamphlet form were known as 'Garlands'. They often included poems and since they might have as many as thirty or more pieces they could be considered books ... Almost any collection of poetry or song has been called a Garland, but a less confusing term for these early collections is 'poetical miscellanies.' " (Shepard, pp. 27-28)  


24. It is also believed in the English ballad tradition that "the dominant elements in ballad survival are undoubtedly vestiges of the Aryan migrations of ancient times, stemming from the common source of Indo-European tradition" (Shepard, pp. 40-41). After analysing astounding parallels from the ballads, Shepard comments, "both the themes and some of the form of these extracts from ancient Hindu scriptures have been preserved in European folktales, songs and ballads" (p. 43). Likewise, the Tamil language also borrowed themes from the Aryan myths preserved in ballad form.  


27. See Vaanamaamalai, 1969.  

33. “This narrative and musical tradition takes its name from the bow around which the performers sit as they sing ... The Tamil bow-song group has a minimum of five performers, each of whom both sings and plays an instrument. The leading singer plays the bow striking its cattle-hide string with a pair of thin sticks that shakes both the various pitched bells hanging from the bow’s wooden frame and the tiny bells attached to the sticks. The four other performers each play one of the following instruments: a small hourglass-shaped drum, a large earthen pot (played by slapping its open mouth with a paddle made from a sheath of the arecanut tree), a pair of slim wooden blocks, and a pair of brass (or bronze) hand cymbals. To this basic set of five performers, one or two more with hand cymbals or wooden blocks may be added. Singing style is antiphonal and somewhat limited tonally, but it is backed by complex polyrhythmic instrumentation” (S. H. Blackburn, “Oral Performance: Narrative and Ritual in a Tamil Tradition”, Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 94 (1981), 209-210).
34. Vaanamaamalai, 1969, p. 5.
37. The texts of the ballads numbered as 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9 above are available as a cheap edition; 3, 6, 8, and 10 are not available in print, but are available in manuscript form.
40. This was evident, in my village, Kaaraitivu, in Eastern Sri Lanka. One of my uncles was a storyteller. In his home front yard almost every night at around eight p.m., elderly relatives and neighbours would gather and he would sing ballads. He used ballad books in his performances, and sometimes I also joined my father to listen to them.
41. Cheesman, p. 88.
42. See Vaanamaamalai, 1969.

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Content, form, and functions of Ibibio women’s folksongs

UWEMEDIMO ENOBONG IWOKETOK

Abstract

Ibibio women’s folksongs constitute a valuable document which reveals the content and form of these poetic compositions as well as their aesthetic art form. The content establishes the functional nature of the folksongs. This paper analyses ten Ibibio women’s folksongs as being part and parcel of the life and ethos of the Ibibio people. The songs depict the aspirations and visions of the womenfolk and are employed for cultural and social continuity and growth; the propagation of moral values, promotion of and insistence on fair play and justice, as well as to discourage social vices and debauchery. These have been of overriding importance and are expressly the motivating factors in the composition and performance of the songs which are usually enriched by musical accompaniment.

Folksongs in most African communities are social commentaries on the state of existence of a people. They may be short or long, dramatic or versified. Generally, folksongs employ the rich use of proverbs, witticisms, parallelisms, and symbolism to instruct, educate, correct, amuse and entertain. Much of African oral poetry exists in songs. This is corroborated by Helen Chukwuma who says “songs [are] oral poetry ... [and] poetry cannot be discussed outside music”. Commenting on African music Goines says that it functions “as part of religious rituals, as an expression of social organization and as recreation”. However, Wade thinks that “folksong texts can reveal a great deal about societal attitudes, about what social behaviour is admired, hated or taken for granted.”

Ibibio oral poetry or folksongs, like those of other African countries, exist on two levels: ritual and non-ritual, or sacred and non-sacred. This paper focuses on the non-ritual. Chosen for analysis are ten songs by the Ebre Society; the content of these songs, Akpabot says, is “designed to effect social control of the community and make them conform with the norms of the society”. This is because the folksongs, Akpabot adds, are able to “challenge the existing order ... and in many cases force a change”. This female guild, the Ebre Society, wherever it occurs in Ibibioland, exerts a very strong power not only over women but over the entire community. The women champion the cause of good morals, stand against stealing, satirise the men and “seek redress for wrongs done to them by their husbands”. Their songs serve as a form of
protest against male chauvinism. The mood of the chosen songs tends to be solemn, humorous, helpless, mocking, cheerful, or even ribald, depending on their themes and language. For instance, texts 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 9 express mockery and derision; 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8 are ribald and humorous; while texts 2, 3, 9, and 10 express lament and solemnity. The language of Ibibio women’s folksongs is very vibrant, richly blended with invective, proverbs, personification, witty remarks, exaggeration, sarcasm and even raillery. These usages enhance the aesthetic, social and thematic effects of the songs.

The thematic focus of the songs discussed here varies in its social concern. There is nevertheless the recurrent issue of the execrable husband, and of the husbands’ neglect of their marital duties. This is expressed, for instance, in

TEXT 1

Cantor: Öbọñ enenta - o
Response: Ebe dad uwawañ ndueb edem

(Cantor: Mosquitoes are biting me - o
Response: My husband, use a wrapper and drive them away from my back.)

Through symbolism, matrimonial negligence is established and condemned. The negligent man is therefore enjoined to awake to his matrimonial expectations and “use a wrapper” if he is going to get rid of the “mosquitoes” biting his wife’s “back”. The reference to “wrapper” symbolises love, care and protection (especially from in-laws). The use of “back”, “wrapper” and “husband” expresses the desire for conjugal love, bliss, and protection from all kinds of external harassment.

TEXT 2

Cantor and Response: Ayen odo imọ òkòbọńkọbọ
Cantor: Akpanikọ ñkpaanyọññ k’ufok ndọ ñkpọñ odon
Response: Ayen odo imọ òkòbọńkọbọ
Cantor: Ade’ dom imọ nsafia ikpọñ
Response: Ayen odo imọ òkòbọńkọbọ
Cantor: Akpanikọ adikeene Umọ adia amaafañ - o
Response: Ayen odo imọ òkòbọńkọbọ
Cantor: Umọ adia ekaidem òkọró mme ñkọk
Response: Ayen odo imọ òkòbọńkọbọ
Cantor: Ayen anam, mbo ke ñkpaanyọñ...
Response: u - u - u - u
Cantor: o - ó - o - o
Response: Ayen odo imọ òkòbọńkọbọ
(Cantor and Response: Children are sources of an inextricable bond
Cantor: I should have divorced this husband
Response: Children are sources of an inextricable bond
Cantor: I'm married, yet I live a lonely life.
Response: Children are sources of an inextricable bond.
Cantor: In fact, if you follow Umo, you will never be prudent in life
Response: Children are sources of an inextricable bond
Cantor: Umọ has eaten all the cocoyam including the seedling
Response: Children are ...
Cantor: But for the children, I should have left
Response: o - o - o - o
Cantor: Response: Children are sources of an inextricable bond.)

Song 2 extends the critical issue of husband neglect and irresponsibility. Here, the women desire to quit marriage: ṕaanyọk k'ufọk odom ṕọn odom (I should have divorced this husband) because of their husbands' improvidence which led to the eating of the ekaidem (seedlings), thereby tarnishing future hopes of survival. The use of the word Umọ is an allusion to a historical incident of gluttony; an Ibibio archetype of a feckless, irresponsible husband.

TEXT 3

Cantor: Uwa iibaan ikanna odo - o
Response: Se daña etekeyin ódák ufọk adinam anyọn.
Cantor: Uwa iibaan ikanna odo - o
Response: Se daña akparawa ódák ufọk adinkañ anyọn.
Cantor: Uwa iibaan ikanna odo-o
Response: Se daña akparawa ódák ufọk adimben anyọn.
Cantor: Uwa iibaan Ikannaodo-o
Response: Se daña etekeyin ódák ufọk adimmia anyọn.

(Cantor: That's the life of a woman - o
Response: See what a small boy came into the house and did to me.
Cantor: That's the life of a woman - o
Response: See how a young man came into the house, had sex with me and left.
Cantor: That's the life of a woman - o
Response: See how a young man came into the house and took me away.
Cantor: That's the life of a woman - o
Response: See how a small boy came into the house, assaulted me, and left.)

Uwa Ibaan, which means the life of a woman, narrates the life of a woman as experienced by her throughout her marriage because of her inadequate husband, variously referred to as etekeyin (small boy) and
akparawa (young man). Due to the temperament of the women at this oppressed time, no words are considered obscene. They express themselves without mincing words. Ribald and bawdy expressions like adinkān (had sex with me), adimben (took me away), adimmia (assaulted me), and adinam (took advantage of), are used. This in itself shows how didactic, battle-ready and uncompromising the women are in expressing vital social and marital issues. However, such songs can only be performed by women whose vestal innocence was proven before wedlock; otherwise one will be guilty oneself. Nevertheless, the songs set out to warn men against disrespecting the marriage institution by neglecting their wives and flirting. Marriage is not a matter of doing what one likes, but of keeping to the social etiquette and vows communally demanded by the institution.

The value of and insistence on marital vows and morality has been stated. Belligerent women are therefore booed, jeered, and even stripped should they violate the social norms. Some of the Ibibio women’s songs express their contempt of women who steal, or engage in sexual promiscuity. The women’s disgust for these vices is unequivocally expressed in Texts 4 and 5.

TEXT 4

| Cantor: | Ibaan ñkebodie? |
| Response: | Mmema ukpekpe ñkan inō ntōrōrō |
| Cantor: | Ibaan ñkebodie? |
| Response: | Mmema ukpekpe ñkan inō anem |
| Cantor: | Ibaan ñkebodie? |
| Response: | Mmema ukpekpe ñkan inō ikpōn |

(Cantor: Ladies, what did I say?
Response: I prefer paid weeding to stealing cassava.
Cantor: Ladies, what did I say?
Response: I prefer paid weeding to stealing sweet yam.
Cantor: Ladies, what did I say?
Response: I prefer paid weeding to stealing cocoyam)

Text 4 describes how a woman disregards the principle of chastity and is caught. In Text 5 she is beaten and stripped.

TEXT 5

| Cantor: | Òkpò-iwa amanwaak òfòñ - |
| Response: | Yak ikikood ebe ida idinnō - o |
| Response: | K’ubōk ama ambōhō adaña |
She however confesses figuratively *ubōk amaambōhō adaña* (my hand has crossed the boundary) to this nefarious act. In Text 6 below

**TEXT 6**

(Cantor: Ebe inō - o  
Response: Ñkapad nte efidifiid)

(Cantor: The husband of a thief - o  
Response: His feet are like those infected by elephantiasis.)

the husband is not spared, for he is *ebe inō* (the husband of a thief). His feet are said to be heavy as in *efidifiid* (elephantiasis). He suffers both psychological and pathological disgrace and trauma. Both the wife and husband can hardly participate in social activities again.

The theme of sexual aberration is also advanced in Texts 7 and 8.

**TEXT 7**

(Cantor: Ąkeben aran ŋka udua Ibagwa  
Response: Ami nyam utôd ndaka - o)

(Cantor: I took my palm oil to sell at Ibagwa market  
Response: But on getting there sex was in higher demand  
Response: So, I went in for sex - o  
Response: I went in for sex.)

Amidst graceful dancing, drumming and uproarious ecstasy, the women sing (Text 7) about a woman who went to Ibagwa market to sell palm oil, only to take advantage of the confused and almost indifferent atmosphere of the market situation to satisfy her lecherous desire. Unfortunately she is caught. The language here is terse and the diction bawdy. However, the song depicts the Ibibio women as insistent on positive moral values and adherence to the marriage vows.

**TEXT 8**

(Cantor: Ekoood Adiaha inō eka - o  
Response: Aye - e - e  
Cantor: Ekoood Adiaha inō eka)
Response: Adiaha akappa ubök udom
          Eka akappa nnasia.
(Cantor: Call Adiaha for her mother - o
Response: Aye - e - e
Cantor: Call Adiaha for her mother - o
Response: Adiaha turns to the right hand
          Her mother turns clockwise.)

This text captures succinctly a like-mother-like-daughter situation in waywardness. Like her mother, Adiaha (the first daughter) takes after her mother in immoral living: Adiaha akappa ubök udom; eka akappa nnasia (Adiaha turns to the right hand, and her mother turns clockwise). That is, both keep to the same direction. This tells much about the precedence set in the family; especially with “Adiaha” as the first daughter. The message is that parents should set good examples as models for the family. This expectation is summed up in an Ibibio proverb which says ukod ebod odio nte ubök odio. (The hind legs of the goat always tread where the forelegs trod). So the dangers of an inappropriate lifestyle are here visualised.

The following songs buttress Ibibio women’s denunciation of the co-wife situation, hence the frequent friction.

TEXT 9

Cantor: Ebe emi eketi ikö ye emi
          Ńwaan nnyin ësák ëdòôǹ ënò
Response: Dòôǹ nò ayaubehe - o
          Ńwaan nnyin ësák ëdòôǹ ënò.
(Cantor: My husband was scolding me
          And my co-wife was encouraging him
Response: Go on, encourage him;
          Soon it will be your turn.)

In this song a preferred co-wife encourages the husband to denounce another co-wife. The latter reminds the former of impending retributive justice which she can expect in turn: dòôǹ nò ayaubehe (soon it will be your turn). This song is performed along with clapping and dancing as the women emotionally respond by openly abusing their co-wives.

TEXT 10

Cantor and Response: Ibaan efôn ke edoho ikpòôǹ
          Emaedo iba ekó ôtop.
The dangers of polygamy are stressed in Text 10. There is bound to be constant fighting, jealousy, bitterness, and even death when a man marries more than one wife. The audience is therefore urged to opt for peace, as polygamy is not acceptable to women, the reason being that *emaedo iba ekôñ otop*, that is, when they are two, there is bound to be war.

The Ibibio women’s folksongs express from the foregoing the totality of the existence of the women in relation to change and continuity. The songs depict the flora and fauna of the Ibibio milieu. The mention of “weeding”, “cassava”, “sweet yam”, and “Ibagwa market” are pointers to the occupational and social activities of the people of the area. Functionally, the songs also amuse, recreate, educate, inform and unite. The musical instruments accompanying the songs include *obodom* (wooden drum), *ntakrök* (wood block), *ǹkuon* (gong), *ekaibid* (big drum), *nsak* (rattle), *ifiom* (whistle), and *ǹkanika* (bell).

The functions of Ibibio women’s folksong range from social instruction, awareness, and search for justice, to lampooning of social observations, among others. These functions are portrayed in the songs analysed in this paper. In the light of the import of this genre, it is suggested that efforts should be made to enhance the entertainment value of the songs by widening the scope of the audience and listenership through the modern electronic media of communication. The folksongs should be regularly documented to avoid possible extinction, because they preserve and portray the traditions and customs of the Ibibio people. Institutions of learning should incorporate and study traditional songs and music, not just for preservation purposes, but also for the creation of new ones and a better understanding of the sociology of the people.

Human beings have always strived to express themselves in relation to their environment through various art forms. Folksongs are one such way of capturing the overall existence of a people in view of time, change, and continuity. The Ibibio women’s folksongs constitute a brilliant effort to provide a social commentary on the Ibibio community. The songs are rich in content which imparts some aesthetics to the poetic form. The songs employ a blend of dramatic or versified lines, using local imagery and colour. They have the capacity to force change by lampooning social vices, insisting on positive marital behaviour, as well as projecting the acceptable norms of the society. The songs are potential weapons for striking hard at the weak mind with the view to enforcing change, and also providing recreation. Finally, the Ibibio women’s folksongs give room for the proper and broader expression of the wishes,
visions, and aspirations of the rural women. Thus the songs express and reflect their lives, appeal to the men to be reasonable, and demand a change for the better.

Notes

4. The Ibibio people are found in the southeastern part of Nigeria called Akwa Ibom State. They are the fourth largest tribe in Nigeria and their language is Ibibio.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid
9. Ibagwa is a village in Abak LGA in Akwa Ibom State where the Wellington Bassey Army Barracks is located.

References

“Edward”, “The Twa Brothers”, or the bare bones of both?

J. D. A. WIDDOWSON

In the early years of the Survey of (English) Language and Folklore, based at the University of Sheffield, fieldwork was concentrated on the city and its neighbourhood, and on the surrounding counties. Interviews with people in the Sheffield area soon revealed a wealth of information across the full range of the investigation, which covered language, childlore, custom and belief, narrative, music, dance and drama, and material culture. Among the more important discoveries were mummers’ plays, folksongs, and also the singing of traditional carols during the Christmas season in local pubs, all either still being performed or in living memory. The villages of Stannington and Dungworth on the northwestern fringes of the city were among the several localities that maintained a vigorous carol-singing tradition, which is still active today. On the evening of December 12th, 1969, three founder members of the Sheffield Survey Team, Joe Atkins, Paul Smith, and myself, visited the home of Joe Turner and his wife, Ethel, at Hilltop, near Dungworth. Mr. Turner, a smallholder, who was also a skilled maker of clogs and horsewhips, was wellknown in the area as a singer and raconteur. We had first visited him on August 29th, 1969, together with George White from Stannington, a member of a family of renowned local singers, and had taperecorded a number of carols sung by Joe Atkins, Joe Turner, and George White, as well as some of their stories, anecdotes, and reminiscences. When we were invited to visit Mr. and Mrs Turner again in 1969, the aim was to record more such material in the informal setting of a home environment – much as it would be in local houses and pubs both then and now.

The evening begins with jokes, stories, and rhymes, and gradually moves on to a discussion of local carols and carol singing. This leads on to the singing of some dozen folksongs and carols, sometimes as solos, sometimes ensemble, including a spirited rendering of “The Mistletoe Bough”, led by Joe Turner, accompanied by Joe Atkins, which traditionally ends carol-singing sessions in local pubs. Christmas food and a range of other topics are then discussed, including the local tradition of “Cakin’ neet” on the eve of All Souls’ Day when masked figures visit houses, or nowadays participate in competitions for the best costume in local pubs. At this point, Paul Smith asks Joe Turner whether his father played the melodeon. Joe confirms this, but says he cannot play the instrument himself. He adds that his father also played the mouth
organ, and Ethel Turner mentions that she still has her father’s melodeon upstairs in the house today. This conversation seems to jog Joe Turner’s memory, and he says: “I tell ya what ‘e used to sing, an’ all … in between ‘ands when … wi’ t’ carols, an’ play ‘em”. Much to our surprise, as we were expecting him to sing another carol, he immediately launches into the song on the following page. When the song ends, Joe Turner briefly sketches in the background and context:

Joe Turner: ‘E used to sing that to us when we were kids, aye.
Ethel Turner: Who sung that?
Joe Turner: Mi dad, ah.
P.S. Rather an old feller!
J.W. That’s a very old tune.
P.S. Very old.
Joe Turner: It is, aye. Well, like … ‘e used to sing it to us when we were kids rahnd t’ hearth an’ suchlike, and … I’m sixty eight, soon be sixty nine, so you can guess how long it is sin’. Ey ah, there were a real lot of … old … songs that they used to sing, like. An’ ‘e could play t’ .. melodeon an’ t’mouth organ, ya know.

These comments make it clear that Joe’s father sang the song during the first decade of the twentieth century, and its survival in living memory some sixty years later is not only remarkable in itself but also with regard to its potential contribution to the ongoing debate about the tangled relationship between the ballads “Edward” and “The Twa Brothers”, not to mention “Liz(z)ie Wan”. This drastically pared-down version of the ballad text, and its coupling with an insistently memorable tune captured during a unique performance in its traditional context, obviously calls for detailed investigation and comparison with the relatively few versions of these ballads recorded in recent years.

This version, stripped down to its bare bones in only three stanzas, contrasts markedly with the much longer versions presented under Child 13, “Edward”, Child 49, “The Twa Brothers”, and Child 51, “Lizie Wan”, and with many others recorded later. Nevertheless, its highly condensed structure incorporates three elements, which are absolutely essential to this particular minimal variant of the narrative:

1. In response to the mother’s first question, the son confesses to the killing of his brother;
2. In response to the mother’s second question, the son says he will sail overseas (in this case to America);
3. In response to the mother’s third question, the son says he will never return.

It would be difficult to imagine any further reduction of the content if any meaningful narrative were to be sustained. The mother’s catechising of
1. What is that blood on thy shirt sleeve? My son come tell it unto me. For it is the blood of my own brother dear, That lies under yonder tree, That lies under yonder tree.

2. What shalt thou do when thy father comes home? My son come tell it unto me, I shall plant my foot on board a ship, And sail to America. And sail to America.

3. When shall I see thy own face again? My son come tell it unto me. When the sun and moon shines on yonder hill, and that will never be, And that will never be.
her son here is similar to version A of Child 13, “Edward”, which in lines 1 and 3 of verse 9 also dimly echoes “I shall plant my foot on board a ship” in Joe Turner’s version. On the other hand, the notion of having to answer to the father in the second verse of the Turner version has parallels with the father’s catechising of the son in version E of Child 49, “The Twa Brothers”. Verse 17 of the E version,

“ ‘O when will ye come home again?  
Dear Willie, tell to me;’  
‘When sun and mune leap on yon hill,  
And that will never be.’ ”

is also close to the final verse of the Turner ballad, as are verse 24 of the F version of “The Twa Brothers” and verse 12 of the A version and verse 17 of the B version of Child 51, “Lizzie Wan”. These parallels may of course be regarded as floating motifs or formulas attached to individual variants, but their positioning either at the end or towards the end of several versions suggests that their role in providing an appropriate denouement is one of several characteristic features which link Child 13, 49, and 51. Perhaps the closest version noted by Child is a variant contributed from Manchester, which was “Sung after a St. George play regularly acted on All Souls’ Day at a village a few miles from Chester…” The second verse of this reads:

“ ‘And it’s what are the spots on this thy coat, my son?  
Come tell it unto me.’  
‘They are the spots of my poor brother’s blood,  
Which lies beneath yonder tree.’ ”

Verse 4 asks:

“ ‘And it’s what will the father say when he comes, my son?  
Come tell it unto me.’ ”

and the final verse is also reminiscent of that in Joe Turner’s performance:

“ ‘And it’s when shall we see thy face again, my son?  
Come tell it unto me.’  
‘When the sun and the moon shines both at once,  
And that shall never be.’ ”

As Dungworth lies on the side of the Sheffield conurbation which is closer to Manchester and Cheshire, it is perhaps unsurprising that these two versions have something in common. The fact that Child classifies
the Cheshire text as a variant of “The Twa Brothers” suggests that the bare bones version which Joe Turner learned from his father is closer to that ballad than to “Edward”, but its extreme brevity presents difficulties in establishing a definitive historical provenance.

Joe Turner’s speech is in many ways typical of the dialect of the Sheffield area. He pronounces unstressed you as [jə], mouth as both [maːθ] and [maʊθ], unstressed my as [mi], suchlike as [sʌtʃlaɪk], round as [raːnd], and organ as [ɔːrɡən]. Initial /h/ is usually absent, the definite article the is abbreviated to [t] or [ʔt], and with and since lack a final consonant, which is also mostly true for and. He also uses both aye and ah for yes. The performance is characterised by a measured rhythmical beat, emphasising individual words in this largely monosyllabic text.

In the song, final [r] is distinctively pronounced in yonder before the word hill [hil] in the third verse, though not elsewhere. Joe Turner’s local northern pronunciation of the vowel in blood, son, brother, comes, sun, and in the first syllable of unto, as [v] is clearly heard throughout. He also uses the -s form of the verb shine with a plural subject in the third line of the last verse – again a typical northern feature. While the last word of verse 2, line 2 (me) would be expected to require a rhyme in [iː] in line 4, as in such variants as across the sea in the analogous texts, Joe Turner emphatically, and unexpectedly, sings [əˈmɛrikə:] (America) rather than, say, /əˈmɛriki:/ (Americky), not only in the final lengthened note of the line but also in the three rising notes preceding the repeated “And sail to America”, further emphasised by the final vowel being held somewhat longer, as is true of those in the final word in all three verses. This surprising and idiosyncratic substitution distinguishes this variant from other older versions. Although the preservation of the archaic second person singular possessive pronoun thy is evidence that we are dealing here with a comparatively old text, it should be borne in mind that, along with the pronouns thee and thou, thy is still heard in Sheffield dialect speech today, so would have been unexceptionable a century ago.

In presenting this ballad text and tune the aim is twofold: firstly, to make the material available for comprehensive and detailed analysis and comparison with cognate examples, thereby contributing to the continuing debate regarding the relationship between Child 13, 49 and 51, and opening up a further avenue for exploration; secondly, to draw attention to the unrivalled resources in the archives of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, including the wealth of information gathered by the Centre’s Survey of (English) Language and Folklore, of which this is a small, but highly significant example.
Notes

1. Tape A0078 69-003, Archives of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, University of Sheffield; sung by Mr. Joe Turner, Dungworth, near Sheffield, December 12th, 1969; collected by Joe Atkins, Paul Smith, and J. D. A. Widdowson; originally transcribed by Alvina Greig, retranscribed and typeset by C. Paul Fox and Steve Dumpleton.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.
Thomas Hardy’s “Play of St. George”

PETER ROBSON

Introduction

Thomas Hardy, the poet and novelist, was born at Higher Bockhampton, near Dorchester, Dorset, in 1840. He spent most of his life in the Dorchester area and his best known “Wessex Novels”, such as *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, have Dorset settings. Folklore abounds in Hardy’s work and he is believed, at least by literary critics, to be a faithful recorder of the customs and traditions of nineteenth century Dorset. Examples include the skimmington ride in *The Mayor*, club walking in *Tess*, and witchcraft in *The Withered Arm*. These, and many other instances, may be verified by reference to contemporary accounts of similar happenings in Dorset and elsewhere.

Hardy never studied folklore as such, but wrote from personal experience and family recollection. In that sense he might be regarded as a primary source, although the fact that most of his folklore descriptions are in a fictional context means that they should be approached with caution. Nevertheless, information on traditional drama in nineteenth century Dorset is sufficiently scarce to warrant careful consideration of any contribution to the subject from Hardy. Such a contribution may be found in his novel *The Return of the Native*. In this book, the “Native”, Clym Yeobright, returns from Paris to his birthplace on “Egdon Heath”, a location which Hardy based on the countryside between Higher Bockhampton and Puddletown. Here, he engages the attention of Eustacia Vye, who lives on the Heath with her grandfather. In order to meet Clym, Eustacia changes places with one of the youths in the local mummers’ play and is thus able to effect a disguised entrance to Clym’s house. In the relevant parts of the book, Hardy describes the mummers’ rehearsal in Captain Vye’s barn and their subsequent performance at the Yeobrights’ party. In 1921, T. H. Tilley produced a dramatised version of *The Return of the Native* in Dorchester and Hardy provided a full text of the mummers’ play for the occasion. This text was later published separately as *The Play of St. George*. English Ritual Drama lists a Higher Bockhampton play, citing William Archer’s interview with Hardy as the reference, and it is suggested that “This is probably the source of the play at ‘Egdon Heath’ described by Thomas Hardy”. The play’s text is classified as “fragmentary” which suggests either that the authors were unaware of Hardy’s full version or that they did not consider it authentic. In 1977, Michael J. Preston subjected Hardy’s full text to computer analysis and concluded that it “is not traditional in any strict sense of the term”.
The present paper briefly discusses the location of Hardy’s source play and goes on to question Preston’s conclusion as to the authenticity of Hardy’s text. Finally, Hardy’s value as a folklore source is illustrated by considering the contextual background of nineteenth century Dorset mumming plays.

The Egdon Play

Although *English Ritual Drama* attributes the Egdon Play to Higher Bockhampton, this is unlikely. The hamlet had only eight cottages in Hardy’s childhood and is not a great deal larger today. Although it may have provided a venue for visiting mummers it is unlikely to have furnished a team from its own resources, particularly since most of the residents were retired soldiers. It is more likely that the play seen by Hardy in his youth would have been from one of the two neighbouring towns, either Dorchester or Puddletown. The text of the Dorchester play in *English Ritual Drama* does not resemble Hardy’s text and it has been shown to originate from West Lulworth. On the other hand, Hardy’s recollections of mummers in his *Real Conversations* interview with William Archer follow on from his boyhood memories of Puddletown, where he had frequently visited his aunts. Further, Hardy is known to have attended a rehearsal of the Puddletown play:

“At the Christmas mummers’ rehearsal at Sparks Corner, while drink was flowing in the unofficial beer barn next door, Thomas started making violent approaches to his older cousin Rebecca. He was caught and there was a family scene.”

In the light of this passage, it is interesting to note that, following the mummers’ rehearsal in *The Return of the Native*, one of the young mummers makes a sexual approach to the older Eustacia Vye: “Eustacia regarded the youth steadfastly. He was three years younger than herself, but apparently not backward for his age.” Also, Hardy’s cousin Rebecca had a brother, Jim Sparks, of about Hardy’s age while, in *The Return of the Native*, the part of the Valiant Soldier in the Egdon Play is taken by a youth named Jim Starks. Given Hardy’s knowledge of the Puddletown play and his family connections it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the source for the mummers’ play in *The Return of the Native* and for Hardy’s *Play of Saint George* was the Puddletown play.

Preston’s analysis

Preston has sought to develop a means of determining the reliability of folk play (his term) texts by noting similarities, rather than differences, between texts. To this end he has produced a concordance,
from 156 plays and thirty eight fragments, against which to measure specimen texts. By using the KWIC (Key Word In Context) computer program it is possible to list, in alphabetical order, each word in the concordance centred in eighty characters of context and with the twenty succeeding words and characters alphabetised. For example, the first four usages of “I” in the concordance, followed by forty characters in each case are:

I AM A KING AND A CONQUEROR AND NOW DO I
I AM A KING AND A CONQUEROR TOO - AND HERE
I AM A KING AND A KING THATS HIGHLY KNOW
I AM A LADY BRIGHT AND FAIR MY FORTUNE I

If thirteen of the first fifteen characters succeeding the keyword are identical between the specimen text and the concordance (as in the first three examples above) then the keyword is said to be matched.

Preston uses the Cinderford, Gloucestershire, play as an example and lists the number of matches recorded for each word in the play. e.g.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Room</td>
<td>brave</td>
<td>gallants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray</td>
<td>give</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>room</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence “Room” is followed by thirteen of the fifteen characters “-a-room-brave-g” on twenty seven occasions in the concordance, “a” is followed by “-room-brave-gal” on thirteen occasions, and so forth. On this basis, the Cinderford play scores 67.2%, in that 234 of its 348 words are matched at least once in the concordance. Hardy’s play, on the other hand, scores only 47.8%, 571 matches from 1205 units; and it is from this basis that Preston argues against the provenance of the play.

**Hardy and mummers’ plays**

Preston also questions Hardy’s knowledge of mummers’ plays by citing some comments of his contemporary, the Dorset folklorist J. S. Udal. He further notes that, while those parts of Hardy’s full text quoted in *The Return of the Native* are, in his view, traditional, most of the remaining text is not. Preston therefore surmises that Hardy relied on his father, who was staying with him at Bath when the relevant part of the novel was written, for the genuine parts of the text, while by 1921 he had to fall back on his own resources to construct the full version. It is true that Udal, commenting on Hardy’s description of mummers as “not enthusiastic” and performing with “stolidity and absence of stir”16
observes: “I can only say for myself that I have noticed no such perfunctoriness in the spirited little performances which I have observed in West Dorset.” However, Udal also says, in the same passage: “Mr. Hardy possesses such a marvellous insight into all that concerns the psychology of the Dorset peasant that I will not venture to gainsay his deduction.” Elsewhere, Udal praises Hardy’s knowledge of folklore in glowing terms: “I have always looked up to you as a master of the subject to which I have devoted so many years of my life”. Therefore it is clear that Udal, far from criticising Hardy’s knowledge, in fact regarded him as an expert on the subject. Hardy’s description of the style of performance of nineteenth century Dorset mummers is also supported by an account from Shillingstone: “... they stood stiffly in a row and slew one another like marionettes .... formal, undramatic, incredibly dull.”

So far as the influence of Hardy’s father is concerned, I have already shown that Hardy’s personal acquaintance with the Puddletown play was sufficient to enable him to quote from first hand. In any case, the Hardys did not visit Bath until autumn 1877, while the first fifteen chapters of The Return of the Native, including part of the material on the mumming play, had been written by the previous Spring. The novel was accepted for publication in autumn 1877. We also know, from Hardy’s interview with Archer, that local mumming plays continued “till 1880, or thereabouts”, so reliance on Thomas Hardy Senior was unnecessary in 1877. Any inaccuracies in Hardy’s 1920 text may therefore be attributed to lapses of memory or to dramatic licence rather than to the removal of a key source.

The results of the computer analysis

Turning now to Preston’s textual analysis, it is necessary to consider how Hardy, despite his firsthand knowledge of mummers’ plays, nevertheless produced a text considered “not traditional in any strict sense of the term”. The first point to be made is that Preston does not define “traditional” nor indicate criteria by which the traditional nature of a play might be judged. In the absence of such guidance we cannot say that Hardy’s play is not traditional but only that it differs significantly, in its textual form, from the plays in the computerised concordance. The traditional provenance of the (apparently randomly chosen) plays in the concordance is not known. In fact, I am far from convinced that the play does differ markedly from the concordance examples. We know only that Hardy’s text scores 47.8% while the Cinderford play scores 67.2%. I am not a statistician but I suspect that the Cinderford play’s score of 67.2, on a 100 point scale, does not represent a good correlation to the norm. Nevertheless the Cinderford play is, by inference, “traditional” while the Hardy version is not. At what score does a play drop out of the
“traditional” canon – 50%, 60%? What we need to know, of course, are the scores of all the plays in the concordance, in rank order. Only then could we be sure that the Hardy play is at the bottom of the order and of a significantly lower score than the other plays and fragments, thus showing it to be anomalous.

I have mentioned that Hardy’s text contains 1205 textual units against 348 in the Cinderford play and I believe that the comparison of two plays of such disparate lengths represents a flaw in the analytical technique. Clearly, the more text a play contains, the more likely it is to include material not found elsewhere: extra characters, additional comic business and so forth. This extra material, of a specifically local nature, will not appear in other concordance texts and thus will make the play score low on comparative analysis. The inclusion of local material within a long play is illustrated by the apparent discrepancy, noted by Preston, between those parts of Hardy’s play quoted in *The Return of the Native* and the remainder. The text in the novel, chosen by Hardy to give a brief outline of the course of action, comprises key speeches of the leading characters, pretty well common to most plays. The text in the remainder of the play contains the local variations.

The Symondsbury, Dorset, texts of 1880 and 1952, both included in the concordance, similarly indicate the perils of comparing long plays, containing much local material, with short plays of a standardised type. The full text of 1952 contains all four parts of the play, three of which are of a type encountered only in Dorset. Assuming, for the sake of simplicity, that the four parts are of equal length and that part one, the hero combat element, correlates 100% to the concordance, then Symondsbury 1952 would score 25% on analysis. The 1880 text, expurgated by Udal, includes only part one, part four, and some of part two. Therefore it would score about 40%, since it includes a lower proportion of local material. Consequently, the Symondsbury play, performed locally for many years before its first collection in 1870, would score as “non-traditional” while its expurgated 1880 text would appear more valid than the full text of 1952.

Having considered some reservations on the interpretation of the scores from the computer analysis it is now necessary to consider whether the method used to arrive at the scores is itself valid.

**The effect of minor textual variations**

Preston’s Cinderford text contains the following line from *Beelzebub*:

\[
10 \quad 44 \quad 50 \quad 6 \quad 0 \quad 0 \quad 0
\]

and on my shoulder carries a nub\(^{23}\)
The apparent descent into unorthodoxy after the third word stems from the word “nub” at the end of the line. In plays from elsewhere in the concordance Beelzebub may carry a “club”, “knob”, “clog”, “tin”, “ball”, etc., but never a “nub”. At Cinderford, whether through mishearing by the collector or misunderstanding by the participants, he carried a nub. This, while not in any way altering the character of the play, lowers the textual analysis score.

Similarly, again at Cinderford, the collector says

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
37 & 32 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 0 & 3 \\
\text{If you don’t give us some money} \\
1 & 1 & 24 & 6 & 8 & 9 \\
\text{I will sweep you to the grave}^{24}
\end{array}
\]

The couplet is familiar but scores badly in its middle part because the collector asks the audience to give \textit{us} money. In the concordance there are twenty eight correlations for “give me money”, all preceded by “if you don’t” but none containing \textit{us}. Again, a small local variation has an adverse effect on scoring. The cumulative effect of such minor variations will obviously be significant.

Turning now to Hardy’s text, we have a speech by Valiant Soldier, including:

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
2 & 0 & 0 & 3 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\
\text{One of my brethren I’ve seen wounded}^{25}
\end{array}
\]

The word “brethren”, unknown in the concordance, leads to the low scores. A change to “brother” gives two correlations and immediately improves the play’s score.\textsuperscript{26} One of the correlations is with the concordance play from West Dorset and a comparison of the low-scoring Hardy speech with the traditional West Dorset version shows a close resemblance, obscured in the analysis scoring by a number of minor variations:

Hardy: \[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\
\text{One of my brethren I’ve seen wounded,} \\
1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
\text{Another I’ve seen slain,} \\
0 & 32 & 2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
\text{So I will fight with any foe}
\end{array}
\]
Upon this British plain. 27

West Dorset:

One of my brothers I have seen wounded
And another I have seen slain
I'll fight thee King George
On the British plain. 28

We do not know how the West Dorset play would score against the concordance but, for the reasons adduced for the Symondsbury texts, I believe that it would score low. This would give us three “traditional” Dorset texts, all scoring low against the concordance, with Hardy’s text performing similarly. Further, so far as I can ascertain by sampling rather than by computer analysis, where Hardy’s play does show correlation with the concordance it is with the other Dorset texts rather than the remainder. This suggests that Hardy’s play, rather than being a single anomalous text, is one of a geographical subset, the members of which share common features.

The effect of major textual variations

In the Hardy play Father Christmas, in calling for a Doctor, finishes his speech with the following couplet:

4 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
I've heard of a mill that grinds old people young,

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 0 0 0 0
But not of a leech to give these dead men tongue! 29

The common phrases “I’ve heard of” and “these dead men” have analogues in other concordance plays, but the remainder of the couplet shows no matching with the concordance and therefore seems to be non-traditional or, at least, anomalous. Amendments to individual words do not alter the low scoring, since it is the concept of the “mill that grinds old people young” which is alien to the concordance material. In this case a comparison with the Symondsbury 1950 text is instructive. Here St. George says:

I once heard a tale of a mill
That could grind old men young
But I have never heard of a doctor
That could raise dead men to life again. 30

263
So far as I am aware, these are the only instances of the miraculous mill appearing in mummers’ plays, and the resemblance of content of the Symondsbury text to that of Hardy is obvious, although the form is different. It could be that the Puddletown play, on which Hardy drew, had the mill couplet in the form given by Hardy, or it might be that Hardy recalled the form incorrectly. Either may be true, but I am inclined to think that Hardy’s first line is traditional, while he rewrote the second line to retain it within his rhyming scheme (since Hardy’s play is all in verse while St. George’s speech at Symondsbury is in prose). If Hardy did rewrite the line then it is indeed non-traditional but, I would maintain, he is here accurately recording the essential elements of the speech, albeit in amended text. Therefore we know that the Puddletown mummers’ play contained this very rare element in this particular context. A completely accurate reconstruction would certainly have been better from the point of view of the folklore scholar, but what we have is certainly of sufficient value for it not to be dismissed as “non-traditional”.

A similar comparison may be made between the corresponding versions of part of the Doctor’s vaunting speech:

Hardy:

```
I can restore a leg or arm 
From mortification or more harm 
I can repair a sword-slit pate, 
A leg cut off ... if not too late.
```

Symondsbury 1950:

```
In restoring a limb suffering from mortification, 
Arm cut off by a sword 
Or head blown off by a cannon ball 
If the application be not too late.
```

Again Hardy has reproduced the essential content of a speech but, in rendering it into verse, has altered its form to the extent that it scores negligibly against the concordance.

The effect of textual omissions

Yet a further instance may be cited of lines from Hardy’s play which, while scoring negligibly on analysis, may be shown to relate
closely to traditional material. This is the closing speech by Father Christmas:

\[
\begin{align*}
0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 \\
\text{You needs will have confess} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 2 & 0 & 0 \\
\text{That our calling is the best} & 0 & 1 & 2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
\text{But now we won't delay lest tediousness befall} & 1 & 10 & 17 & 20 & 26 & 58 & 36 & 1 & 14 & 3 \\
\text{And I wish you a merry Christmas and God bless you all.} & .
\end{align*}
\]

The only recognisably traditional element is the Christmas greeting in the last line, with odd words elsewhere showing small correlations with the concordance. In order to effect a comparison with Symondsbury 1950 it is necessary to consider a longer extract from the latter text. I have indicated the corresponding lines:

Chorus (sung)

* For we needs must confess  
* That your calling is the best  
* And we give you the uppermost hand,  
* So now we won’t delay  
But pray both night and day  
To God bless the honest husbandman.

Doctor

Now, ladies and gentlemen, we've shown you the best of our pleasure  
And now we wish for you to bestow upon us a little of your treasure.

Chorus (spoken)

Well done old Father Christmas  
And that's the best of all  
* We wish you a "Merry Christmas"  
* And God bless 'ee all.35

During the production of the stage version of The Return of the Native in 1921, Hardy told the cast that he could not remember the song which concluded the mummers' play and suggested the substitution of "A Mumming We Will Go."36 In fact, the text quoted above shows that he had remembered the closing lines of the song "Husbandman and
Servingman”, widely used in West Dorset mummers’ plays, and combined these with a traditional closing line to produce a coherent rhyming finale for his own play.

The nature of Hardy’s text

Further textual examples might be quoted to support my contention that Hardy’s play, whilst undoubtedly differing in many places from Preston’s concordance texts, nevertheless bears a close resemblance to traditional West Dorset plays. Preston suggests that, in order to fill out his text, Hardy added “speeches which may yet be found in texts from Dorset” but a comparison of texts does not support his contention.37 Udal’s Symondsbury and West Dorset texts were published in 1880 and were available to Hardy, had he known of them, at the time that he wrote The Play of St. George. However, his text is not an edited version of either, nor does it contain any extracts from these or other known Dorset plays. Instead, it bears a strong family resemblance to other Dorset plays while retaining its individual character.

This relationship with other Dorset plays is consistent with my belief that Hardy’s Play of St. George was a fairly accurate reconstruction of the Puddletown Mummers’ Play as seen by Hardy in the mid-nineteenth century. Certainly the text is not “traditional” in the sense that the Symondsbury text is traditional, but it is a good deal nearer that category than is suggested by the computer analysis, as I have shown. Where text is obviously interpolated by Hardy, it is in order to preserve his rhyming scheme while retaining the sense of the partly-remembered traditional original. The sheer bad quality of some of the resulting lines illustrates Hardy’s determination to retain as much of the original as possible. Had he been inserting a large proportion of his own material, as Preston suggests, then Hardy’s outstanding qualities as a writer would have ensured the production of verse much superior to that in The Play of Saint George.

Hardy as a source

If I have succeeded in rehabilitating Thomas Hardy as a reliable source of information on West Dorset mummers’ plays then we may profitably refer to The Return of the Native for further enlightenment on the subject. Some of the references are unexceptional, confirming what is already known from other sources. Hence the “Egdon” mummers rehearsed for some three weeks before Christmas and performed on Christmas Eve. They were youths, in their late teens, although an older man played Father Christmas and “accompanied the band as general protector in long night journeys from parish to parish, and was bearer of the purse.” No written text was used, since “Timothy Fairway ... leant
against the wall and prompted the boys from memory, interspersing among the set words remarks and anecdotes of the superior days when he and others were the Egdon mummers-elect that these lads were now.\textsuperscript{40} This mode of learning is confirmed indirectly elsewhere in the novel, since Clym Yeobright proposes to open a school on the Heath, thus implying illiteracy amongst its young inhabitants. In reality, as in Hardy’s story, there was no school in this area in the mid-nineteenth century.

The preparation and design of the mummers’ costumes is treated at some length by Hardy, who gives an illuminating insight into the fact that the various characters in West Dorset plays are indistinguishable by their costume:

"Without the co-operation of sisters and sweethearts the dresses were likely to be a failure; but on the other hand, this class of assistance was not without its drawbacks. The girls could never be brought to respect tradition in designing and decorating the armour; they insisted on attaching loops and bows of silk and velvet in any situation pleasing to their taste. Gorget, gusset, basinet, cuirass, gauntlet, sleeve, all alike in the view of these feminine eyes were practicable spaces whereon to sew scraps of fluttering colour.

It might be that Joe, who fought on the side of Christendom, had a sweetheart, and that Jim, who fought on the side of the Moslem, had one likewise. During the making of the costumes it would come to the knowledge of Joe’s sweetheart that Jim’s was putting brilliant silk scallops at the bottom of her lover’s surcoat, in addition to the ribbons of the visor, the bars of which, being invariably formed of coloured strips about half an inch wide hanging before the face, were mostly of that material. Joe’s sweetheart straightway placed brilliant silk on the scallops of the hem in question, and, going a little further, added ribbon tufts to the shoulder pieces. Jim’s, not to be out-done, would affix bows and rosettes everywhere. The result was that in the end the Valiant Soldier, of the Christian army, was distinguished by no peculiarity of accoutrement from the Turkish Knight; and what was worse, on a casual view Saint George himself might be mistaken for his deadly enemy, the Saracen. The guisers themselves, though inwardly regretting this confusion of persons, could not afford to offend those by whose assistance they so largely profited, and the innovations were allowed to stand."\textsuperscript{42}

Hardy also describes the making of mummers’ costumes, in an 1878 letter to Arthur Hopkins, in sufficient detail to further underline his expertise in the subject.\textsuperscript{43} During preparations for the 1921 dramatisation of \textit{The Return of the Native} Hardy supervised the production of the mummers’ costumes, and a surviving photograph therefore allows us to see exactly how the Puddletown mummers of the 1850s would have appeared.\textsuperscript{44}
I have already mentioned the questioning of Hardy’s description of the style of the mummers’ performance, but several passages emphasise the bombastic and ritualised nature of the mummers’ delivery:

“... in the fuel-house ... seven or eight lads were marching about, haranguing, and confusing each other ...”

“Eustacia ... began, precisely in the same words, and ranted on without hitch or divergence ...”

“Eustacia then proceeded in her delivery, striking the sword against the staff or lance at the minatory phrases, in the orthodox mumming manner, and strutting up and down.”

“Harry as the Saracen should strut a bit more.”

These descriptions are supported by Hardy’s description of the Puddletown mummers in his interview with William Archer:

“The performers used to carry a long staff in one hand and a wooden sword in the other, and pace monotonously round, intoning their parts on one note, and punctuating them by nicking the sword against the staff — something like this: Here come I, the Valiant Soldier (nick) Slasher is my name (nick).”

The picture is quite clear and this style of performance is retained by Symondsbury mummers to the present time.

A feature of mummers’ performances usually unrecorded by the nineteenth century folklorists is the reaction of the audience and, in this respect, Hardy is again instructive:

“Nobody commented, any more than they would have commented on the fact of mushrooms coming in autumn or snowdrops in spring. They took the piece as phlegmatically as did the actors themselves. It was a phase of cheerfulness which was, as a matter of course, to be passed through every Christmas; and there was no more to be said.”

Conclusion

It has been necessary for me, in arguing in support of Hardy’s expertise on mumming plays, to be critical of some aspects of Michael Preston’s approach to the subject. I should nevertheless like to pay tribute to his pioneering work in the application of computing techniques to the analysis of mumming play texts. I believe his methodology to be of great value in the comparison of separate performances of a single text, as at Keynsham where he demonstrates a correlation of 89.8% between two 1824 texts. Such an analysis could usefully be applied to contemporary
plays such as those of Antrobus, Marshfield, or Uttoxeter, where a number of performances are given in a variety of locations during a short season. Textual variation might then be related to variations in cast, location, time etc.

In the case of plays such as Hardy’s, of above average length and with specifically local character, the computer analysis gives misleading results. If the perceived impurity of the text were then to eliminate Hardy as a source of information, valuable insights into non-textual aspects of mummers’ performances would be lost to us. An emphasis on textual aspects of plays, as opposed to those of dress, performance, reception, etc. was, I think, more characteristic of the 1970s than it is of the present time. I hope that I have shown The Return of the Native to be worthy of study by anyone with an interest in mummers’ plays. It also has much to offer on witchcraft, November 5th celebrations, maypoles, traditional songs, and more. Finally it is, of course, to be recommended as a great work of fiction. Do read it.

Notes

1. This is a reconstruction, from my notes, of my contribution to the Sixth Conference on Traditional Drama Studies, hosted by the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, held at Sheffield on October 22nd, 1983.
7. Hardy, Native, pp. 127-143.
8. J. Stevens Cox, ed., Mummering and the MUMMERS’ Play of Saint George, Three Versions Including that of Thomas Hardy, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, Toucan Press, 1970. Hardy’s play was first published, in an edition of twenty five copies, by Mrs. F. E. Hardy, his second wife, in April 1921 and printed by Cambridge University Press.
15. Preston, 171.
18. Unpublished letter from J. S. Udal to Thomas Hardy, February 2nd, 1923 (Dorset County Museum Hardy Collection).
21. Archer, p. 35. My fieldwork indicates that a play was performed at Puddletown until the early twentieth century.
22. Preston has subsequently noted that some of the concordance texts are suspect: Michael J. Preston, “A Key to the KWIC Concordance of British Folk Play Texts”, *Roomer*, 3, 5 (1983), 32-40.
25. Ibid, 175.
26. A score of only two correlations is low in itself, but the number of correlations per word does not affect the overall score of the play, which is based on the percentage of words which have at least one correlation.
27. Preston, 1977, 175.
31. The concept of “a mill which grinds old men young” is believed to have made its first appearance in print in England in 1672. Interestingly, it was associated in sixteenth century Europe with the rejuvenation of old women by miraculous means. Such a rejuvenation is the subject of the second part of the Symondsbury Play. See Malcolm Jones, “Folklore Motifs in Late Medieval Art 2: Sexist Satire and Popular Punishments”, *Folklore*, Vol. 101 (1990), 74.
33. Kennedy, 8.
35. Kennedy, 12.
36. P. Robson Collection, Interviews with Gertrude Bugler, April and May, 1983.
39. Ibid., p. 128.
40. Ibid., p. 129.
41. Ibid., p. 120.
42. Ibid., p. 128.
44. P. Robson Collection. Copy of original in the possession of executors of Mrs. Gertrude Bugler.
46. Ibid., p. 130.
47. Ibid., p. 133.
48. Ibid., p. 129.
49. Archer, p. 34.
51. Preston, 1977, 163.

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_____ *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, Hertford, the author, 1922.

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Social networks and the changing foundations of tradition

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Introduction

In a world full of change, the persistence of tradition takes some explaining. The unquestioned assumption that we will wear black at a funeral, the Christmas cards sent, or the more selfconscious rituals involved in the selection of the village May Queen or the meetings of the folksong club, still continue. New traditions like the laying of kerbside flowers after a road accident or hen-nights before a wedding emerge, while old ones fall into half-recalled traces like the pitman’s vocabulary or the once strongly felt need for a suitable first-foot, for example. Rapidly or gradually, once and for all, or slowly incremental, the lapse of ancient customs, the abandonment of immemorial habits of speech and thought, of the old values and attitudes, may be viewed with regret or observed with indifference, with disorientated grief or a relieved sense of liberation.

We can adapt to even substantial changes, either in our personal circumstances or in the wider world, almost without being aware of them if they are sufficiently gradual. More rapid change may be cause for anxiety or regret or be welcomed, seen as improvement but, either way, are more immediately noticeable and demand more deliberate adjustment of our attitudes and conduct. But cultural change, whether imperceptibly slow or dramatically sudden, like continuity, presents us with what is essentially the same puzzle. What is it that makes numbers of people behave in the same sort of ways for a given period of time, or more so at one time, less at another, or differentiates some of us from numbers of others? Observations about universal human needs or predispositions are too broad to account for either changes or diversity. On the other hand, more individualistic explanations in terms of personal motivations are too particular to account for the generosity of apparent historical trends — the similarities and consensuses as well as the idiosyncratic or personal. Continuities of culture and tradition, as well as these widespread changes, have their common ground in shared social environments. Of course we respond to our social circumstances as individuals each in our own way, with enthusiasm or resignation, nostalgia for what once was, a distaste for present decadence or, alternatively, with confident hope or a taken for granted acceptance of a better time. But these responses are not randomly distributed. There are patterns to be found in their relative prevalence or frequency. We think and behave sufficiently like some of
our fellows for it to be evident that there are common cultural patterns in
the continuities and changes.

At a descriptive level the social environments within which such
patterns emerge may be differentiated by locality, or ethnically
identified, or seen in terms of class position. These descriptive
differences are not, however, explanatory in themselves. What is it about
someone’s social class position, either as objectively ascribed or as
personally identified, that causes him or her to think or behave in one
particular way? And why don’t all the members of the same class turn
out to be the same? Clearly, broad categorisations are too broad. The
concept of “environment” on its own is altogether too vague to be very
helpful. To understand what is going on, why things are changing or not,
we need to identify the structural elements in the social environment
which predispose people to behave in one way or another. Without being
deterministic about it, can we discover how different circumstances
present us with different sorts of choices? The analysis of our social
environment as a network of relationships with identifiable others
describes more clearly some of the structural characteristics of our
situation in ways which cut across differences of class, gender or
ethnicity. It also provides us with a model with an explanatory potential
not readily found in other accounts of the relationship between cultural
elements such as tradition and their social context. The notion of social
network relates the qualitative aspects of individual experience to its
social structural setting on the one hand, while the character of the
networks themselves can be seen to be clearly shaped by the large scale
economic, political and social processes at work in the larger society.

Social networks and the social environment

The idea of the social environment as a network of relationships
seems to have originated with Barnes’s study of a Norwegian fishing
village, but it was Elizabeth Bott’s research on married couples in
London which first showed its potential as an independent variable
capable of explaining many other aspects of experience. The essence of
the idea is that a person’s effective social environment consists of a set of
relationships with identifiable other people. There are our relatives and
friends, the neighbours, the people at work and so forth. These are not
abstract collectivities or generalised categories but particular people. This
is not to deny the significance of the wider social or cultural context
which includes political systems, religious beliefs, inherited tradition,
current fashions, literature, the mass media etc. But these things
influence us, if at all, in and usually through a social situation
comprising those we know directly. That is to say, the preacher, the
public figure, the entertainer or the writer, in the present as much as
from the past, require the mediation of secondary systems of formalised communicative performance to reach us. Our immediate social network, on the other hand, consists of people we can see, ring up, have a cup of coffee with, gossip to, and who are as likely to respond to us in much the same way as we to them.

These relationships with the people we know can be visualised as a set of lines radiating outwards: there we are at the centre of a web. Some of the people at the periphery may know one another independently of their relationships with us, so we can join up those points too. In this way we can map our social networks and compare them. They will differ in size and, no doubt, in all sorts of other ways but they will also fall somewhere along a continuum between the hypothetical extreme case where all points are linked, that is where everyone we know knows everyone else, and the other extreme case where the only connections between any of them are through their contacts with us at the focus. For simplicity's sake, think of some none-too-social persons (Pa) (Pn) with only three other people (a), (b), and (c) in their social networks. In the first extreme case (a), (b), and (c) all know one another so there are the maximum possible six relationships involved:

At the other extreme where (a), (b), and (c) are unacquainted, only the three relationships with (Pn) out of the possible six in fact exist. This measurement of the degree of inter-connectedness among the members of a social network is described as network density. Where $n$ is the number of people in a network, and remembering that relationships are, after all, usually two-way affairs, the number of possible relationships in a network is given by the formula

$$n \frac{(n-1)}{2}$$

The number of possible relationships rises sharply with the number of people in the network. For five people it is 10; for 15 it is 106, and for 25 there are 301 possible relationships. Network density is the proportion of these potential relationships that have actually been established.

John Scott has written an excellent brief history of the development of network theory, and I do not propose to recapitulate that account here nor yet to paraphrase the mathematical and
methodological complexities of network analysis as it has subsequently evolved. The network idea is more than a merely descriptive device, however. What I find exciting about it, is the way it shows how, what at first look like purely quantitative differences (in network density), can have extensive qualitative consequences for the people at the centre of the network, in other words, how the impact of the social environment works.

**Qualitative effects of network density**

It is hardly likely that we should ever come across anyone at the uttermost poles of density, either where literally everyone they know has an independent connection with all the others or, still less, where none of them has any direct sort of relationship with any of the others at all. But though our networks all fall some way short of these extremes we may nevertheless recognise their approximation towards one end of the scale or the other. For the sake of exploring their effects, then, consider some of the general properties of close-knit, that is to say, high-density networks, and how they contrast with those towards the other end of the spectrum, loose-knit or low-density networks.

a) **Structural support**

Because of all the third-party connections, relationships in high-density networks are mutually supportive. You might lose touch or even quarrel with someone but there will still be others who know both parties and who can and perhaps might engage in diplomatic renegotiation when relations are strained. In fact, it is hard to wholly sever connections with anyone in a high-density network since it makes things awkward for too many of the others. High density networks seem to be just there: they can be taken for granted. They can contain a great diversity of experience, positive and negative. If almost all the people we know know one another, then they all also know about us in every sort of situation. The same people are likely to recur as friends and neighbours, workmates and kinsfolk. Relationships, that is to say, are likely to be multiplex. As a result, with a high density network, as we relate to the same people in many different settings, our behaviour towards them and our sense of our own identity will generally be highly consistent.

Where, on the other hand, network density is low, there probably will be no-one who can pass on news or bring people together again when relationships have begun to wither, perhaps as a result of some difference of view, some misunderstanding, or from lack of attention. Relationships in low-density networks are not mutually supportive. We need to work at each one to keep them in good repair. Our relatives probably have nothing to do with our present neighbours, or colleagues,
and none of them know anything of our friends. If we do not keep in touch, make the phone-call, remember to send the birthday card and so on, relationships tend to attenuate and fade. Any friction or conflict will threaten the continuation of a relationship so, except perhaps at work, their affective range is restricted to the positive. The fragility of the relationships is accentuated by the probability that there is no-one else with an interest in keeping their own life manageable by seeking to restore our good relations with someone else they know.

b) Network density, communication and control

In low density networks, then, relationships tend to be chosen rather than simply being there. They are also likely to provide us with a range of diverse experience and opportunities to present ourselves differently in the different settings in which they occur. Because our various social situations, at home with the family, at work, out with friends etc., involve us with quite separate sets of other people who may well have different attitudes and styles of behaviour, there is no external pressure on us to behave consistently. Who could observe and tell if we take on the colour of our setting? In such circumstances identity itself becomes relativised, situationally negotiable.

Socially, culturally, and morally our effective environment need not at all coincide with the geographical area we happen to live in. And, unless the neighbours are fond of loud music at unsociable hours, or keep bad-tempered dogs, proximity is no real indication of the relative importance of people in our lives. When nine out of ten households have a telephone and more than two thirds have a car, even high density networks no longer need to be geographically confined to walking distances. Low density networks, however, may not only be easily dispersed across the whole country or span the oceans, but may necessarily depend upon the low intervisibility of spatial separation if their low density is to be maintained.

A high density network is a system of communication with many channels. Information flows quickly and readily permeates the whole network. Everybody not only knows everybody else but everyone also knows everybody else's business. When your social network is of very low density, however, for all practical purposes information can pass only through you, the focal figure at the centre. Your family knows only what you tell them about the people at work. The neighbours have no other source of gossip about your friends except the tales you carry.

How do we know how to behave or what is expected of us? Where is the line between friendly interest and nosy over-familiarity? What kind of clothes should we wear? How hard is it reasonable to work? When does a relaxed informality become idle sloppiness? These and all
the myriad similar social rules are not conveniently written up on the back of our bedroom door. Rather, we learn what is expected of us from the sorts of comments we hear being made about him at number 17, or that Elsie in the accounts department. And we are complicitly asked to share in the approval and disapproval of those who appear to accept us as like-minded equals. Shared gossip defines group membership, shared gossip provides for shared attitudes, shared values. And the channels along which gossip travels are social networks.

Of course we do not want to be disapproved of by our friends, our neighbours and workmates, so we nod and say, too true, disgraceful that people should behave so, at her age, and him a married man too! And we take some care in future that the same should not be said about us. Gossip, in other words, is both a source of normative information, that is to say, we learn about the prevailing cultural values from it, what our peers think and therefore, presumably, what standards we should be applying, but also it is an anticipatory sanction reinforcing our future conformity to the social norms generally accepted amongst those we associate with.

Families with close-knit social networks have multiplex relationships, direct and indirect, with each other. They can observe, discuss and evaluate many aspects of one another's behaviour. The high "visibility" of their behaviour thus facilitates a degree of social control which may seem oppressive – Mary Douglas writes of "... the despotism of neighbours whose business it is to know and judge everything that is done, what food is eaten, what time the children are put to bed, who is seducing whom and who is wearing clothes that look too seductive by local standards." Appropriate behaviour can be specified and sanctioned for many spheres of life. Writing of peasant societies, Shanin described how "... undergoing similar life experiences, in close, personal interaction with an absence of anonymity" leads to a "highly traditional and conformist culture." In contrast, in a low density network, any given sequence of gossip is unlikely to include more than a limited segment of network members so that the "visibility" of behaviour will be low. Moreover, with a low density social network one may well find that standards vary from one set of relationships to another. Since family, friends, neighbours and worktime colleagues have little or no contact with each other, it is possible, even likely, that they have different tastes, attitudes and beliefs. But there is no great problem about reconciling these differences since, as they are never likely to meet, no reconciliation is necessary. The person at the centre of the low density network merely has to be able to adapt to the different expectations he or she meets in each different situation.
With a high density network, the relationships are secure and we readily know what everyone feels about any issue. There is a strong structural pressure towards conformity in attitudes and beliefs, manners and customs, tastes and preferences. Proper behaviour is a straightforward matter of what everyone we know thinks or does, what we all do, what we always say. What Durkheim called the conscience collective is likely to be strong. With a low density network, we may find, as Bott said, that there are simply no norms of common consent. We are more likely to discover that the people we know in different contexts have quite different ideas about things, different attitudes, different tastes. Social norms no longer have the appearance of objective truths that everybody will acknowledge. We have to adapt and choose between alternatives, what to think, how to talk, how to behave. “The more varied his social experience, and the more unconnected the standards he internalises”, Bott argued, “the more internal rearrangement he must make”. The normative absolutes of a high-density network become cultural and moral conditionals in a low-density network, because the structural basis for certainty is not there.

Among Bott’s families, traditional divisions between husbands as “breadwinner” and wives as “housewife” occurred where social networks were close-knit. With loose-knit, or low-density networks, husbands and wives were much less likely to conform to traditional patterns. Instead, such couples developed their own idiosyncratic relationships to suit their own needs and preferences. In her Belfast study Milroy identified network density as the basis for the persistence of local dialect. Those with low-density networks, with relationships outside the close-knit neighbourhood-based group, were less likely to be dialect speakers. Conformity to local norms was greatest not, as might be assumed, amongst the old people but amongst adolescents, as contacts with a more diverse range of people outside the locality increase in adulthood.

Age and the life-cycle, then, as well as economic change, migration, and the other large-scale historical processes, impinge upon the cultural experience of individuals via the structural characteristics of the network of relationships that those social processes largely determine. In this way we can see how social network analysis builds bridges across the great conceptual divide in social theory between methodological individualism and sociological realism (the view that we are only what society makes us). It shows how properties of the structure of relationships can have consequences for the cultural experience of the people involved. For looking at the broader social system Wellman has proposed that we should widen the focus of attention to analyse socio-centred networks which he describes as the “concatenation of personal networks”. Socio-centred networks may thus be regarded as the
substratum of general cultural phenomena, but on the other hand, it is only to the extent that they are mediated through the personal networks of individuals that they can be conceived as having any tangible effect. Socio-centred networks are less of a bridge between action and its structural determinants than they at first seem. People live within their personal networks and do not have a direct involvement in any generalised socio-centred matrix. It is therefore the structure of their personal networks that will shape their experience and influence their actions. While the concept of the socio-centred network may be of descriptive value, it is the properties of the personal social network that offer a powerful explanatory potential.

The processes of social and economic change, and the consequent career and life-cycle changes that have tended to lower density in personal social networks, have indirectly eroded the structural conditions for the survival of traditional values, customs and beliefs. The apparently objective reality of inherited traditions would appear to be displaced by the subjective uncertainties of a rootless individualism. Low-density networks are seen as the structural context of relativised values and ultimately of cultural anomie. Furthermore, because they are the product of the same structural conditions, the security and support of a close-knit network cannot be divorced from the intolerance of non-conformity and the suppression of individualistic ideas. Similarly, the freedom to choose, to develop one’s own unique qualities, cannot be disentangled from the insecurities and moral uncertainties which may beset those with low-density networks. They are the heads and tails of the same coins.

We begin to see the possibility of a structurally intelligible analysis of current post-modernist relativism. It has often seemed that “Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold” (at least since 1924). Sometimes, however, things can hold together for a very long time. That is to say, before we are seduced by fashionably apocalyptic visions of the present cultural crisis, we should remember we have been dealing with extreme cases. The reality is less dramatic, more complex and perhaps more interesting than that.

Social networks and present trends

Most people fall between the extremes of traditionalism and anomie we have been considering. Those are only markers which can give us a sense of the directions and pace of change. They may help to make sense of the apparently incoherent trends in present-day society and culture. It is argued, for instance, that we have arrived at a postmodern era of ironic stylistic eclecticism and relativised normative and cognitive paradigms in morals and identities, as well as in tastes and consumer preferences. “Things fall apart”. Traditional standards and traditional
beliefs can be acknowledged as still on offer, cafeteria-style, for pick ’n mix, but no longer as unquestioned assumptions. ("The centre cannot hold"). Yet traditions are constantly recreated and live on, not just in the formaldehyde of “heritage” and the quaintness of craft fairs, but as living, if often unrecognised, practices of ordinary everyday life,\textsuperscript{18} or the now well-recognised emergence of urban legend.

Present-day culture is highly differentiated and diverse and this is rooted in a complex pattern of social differentiation. It therefore comprehends a diversity of experience and patterns of change which shape identities, aspirations and values in divergent ways. Mary Douglas has consistently pointed out the social dimension in cultural differences. In present-day society, when we make our various choices about what we wear, what we eat, how we decorate our houses and so forth, we are also expressing who we are and, of course, making clear to ourselves and others who we are not:

“Food is eaten, clothes are worn, cinema, books, music, holidays and all the rest are choices that conform with the initial choice for a form of society. Commodities are chosen because they are not neutral; they are chosen because they would not be tolerated in the rejected forms of society and are therefore permissible in the preferred form.”\textsuperscript{19}

Our preference for garish or sober colours, in the kind of language we use to one another, our tastes in food and music, the clothes we wouldn’t be seen dead in, define the boundaries of the community we identify with, in terms of who we include and who we exclude. As Alison Lurie said, “to choose clothes ... is to define and describe ourselves”,\textsuperscript{20} but there is a social dimension to that definition. Good taste and vulgarity are not merely aesthetic contours but define and differentiate a finely-tuned social discrimination amongst people who thereby signal their common identity or differences. This is a much more subtle and complex pattern than badges of class, age, ethnicity or gender and includes, but cuts across, these categories.

Douglas describes two types of collectivist and two types of individualistic thought styles which are traditionalist or innovative in orientation. These she labels Hierarchist and Enclavist, and Isolate and Individualist, respectively.\textsuperscript{21} They appear to derive from her earlier and widely influential analysis of cultural differentiation\textsuperscript{22} based on the dimensions of Grid and Group. High Grid relates to highly-structured, clearcut and explicit normative standards. Everyone in such a cultural setting knows where they stand in terms of approved patterns of behaviour. Low Grid represents a more pragmatic, less clearly-defined, more situational interpretation of what seems to be required. There are no hard-and-fast rules. High Group refers to the orientation of norms
and values in terms of the collectivity and Low Group to a greater emphasis on individualistic interests. In Douglas’s cultural analyses these dimensions seem to operate somewhat like Talcott Parsons’s pattern variables, and all cultures can be seen as falling within the cultural space they define (and possibly determine). There is the question, however, of how these dimensions might be related to structural variables, of what factors may bring people to subscribe to one quarter of the cultural field they define, rather than another. If everything the consumer “chooses to do or buy is part of a project to choose other people to be with who will help him to make the kind of society he thinks he will like the best”, what sort of environmental factors determine those social preferences?

It is here that the older ideas from social network theory we looked at earlier provide us with a possible account of how the distribution of cultural identity is established, and how we might explain the shifting balance of tradition and change, instrumentality and fashion. It does not seem too fanciful to identify Group and Grid with the properties of network density we have already discussed. Social processes, however, take place in time. As Margaret Phillips noted, “we must recognise the part played by time, a real life group will change its nature as we look at it”. So the social implications of Grid and Group will depend upon how they have operated in time. For high network density to generate conformity to traditional patterns of behaviour and belief it must continue to persist through the succession of generations. Similarly, low network density will have different effects depending on what happened to the individual concerned before. The exile from the traditional culture of his native origins, lost in the ambiguities of the metropolis, encounters its cultural diversity in a very different way from the individualist whose earliest experience was in a low density network and who has never known any other kind of environment. The latter, rather than feeling the loss of tradition, is more likely to be navigating the shifting channels of complex cultural diversity with the familiarity of the adept. “Born to surf” has an additional resonance in the context of this kind of cultural mobility.

We have looked at the traditionalists inheriting and retaining an environment of high density personal networks (Hierarchists), and the exiles detached from the supportive close-knit networks, inheriting the high Grid but no longer having direct access to the high Group identification, however powerful their nostalgic recollections of traditional roots (Isolates); and thirdly, the cosmopolitan individualists, inheritors and protagonists of the low Grid, low Group culture, sustained by low density personal networks (Individualists). The fourth quadrant represents the growing population of those of low Group, low Grid origins, but who find themselves comparatively high density networks...
(Enclavists). These joiners and identifiers display the conformity of high Grid, in spite of low Group identifications. The values of their present network membership come to replace their former ethical and normative uncertainties. Here perhaps we may perceive the social origins of cult membership; \(^{25}\) of support for political and other “correctness”; the structural context of “other-directedness”; \(^{26}\) of the hold which fashions in taste, conduct and thought can have, without the time-honoured continuity of an inherited tradition. Whether these self-selected groupings can replicate themselves as authentic traditions, as the bearers of the unquestioned assumptions for a succeeding generation, will vary from case to case with the impact upon them of more general social and economic processes.

The sociological argument proposed here is that traditional culture is sustained by the persistence over two or more generations of structures of social relations which the accelerating pace of social change in present-day society seems to threaten. \(^{27}\) The confrontation of tradition and change is to some extent a false antithesis, however. Social and cultural trends are complex, and not necessarily all in the same direction. The structural conditions for the formation and transformation of cultural tradition can, I believe, be more clearly understood in terms of the social network concept. It offers us a way of systematically relating the large scale sociological, economic and demographic trends, and the effective social environment, at the level of individual personal and subjective experience. When we know about people’s past and present social network densities, we can make at least theoretical sense of their cultural response to the world about them, be it in terms of an opportunistic or eccentric individualism, or their conformity, either to currently fashionable patterns of thought and behaviour, or to the ways of more enduring cultural tradition.

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The Traditional Heritage Museum

As noted in the Editorial in the present volume, the Traditional Heritage Museum, which forms part of the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition at the University of Sheffield, grew directly out of the Survey of (English) Language and Folklore, inaugurated in 1964. The teaching, research, and archive programme at the Centre has been based from the outset on the six genres outlined in the Halpert classification system. The sixth of these categories – Material culture, traditional work techniques, arts and crafts – proved to be of particular interest among members of the general public who attended the hundreds of lectures, workshops, and other events presented by members of the Survey’s team of fieldworkers and researchers across the country in the 1960s and 1970s. Following the major changes which took place in the handcrafted trades and in domestic life in England after the Second World War, many people became increasingly aware that older patterns of living and working were disappearing, and that along with them the older artefacts such as craft tools and familiar household articles were being discarded. On the domestic front, the typical furnishing and interior style of homes, which had changed comparatively little in the first half of the twentieth century, were undergoing major transformation, not least in terms of appliances, home entertainment, and other developments resulting from technological advances, higher income, and greater mobility and leisure. At the same time, many of the old handcrafted trades were in severe decline, and increasing mechanisation was effecting fundamental changes in industry, agriculture, and maritime occupations. The awareness that some of the older traditional aspects of the English way of life were being superseded proved to be very useful in the early days of the Survey, notably through the willingness of individuals and manufacturers to collect and/or donate obsolescent items to augment the material used in teaching and research at the Centre. For the most part, the items collected by the Survey Team and/or donated by other contributors, have come from the Sheffield area. At an early stage it was decided to limit the Centre’s growing Material Culture Collection largely to the city and its neighbourhood, in order to preserve for posterity a representative sample of local life and work in the period 1850-1950. The Collection developed slowly, and was restricted by the fact that it relied almost entirely on the generosity and goodwill of the many people who donated items, as the Centre had no funds to purchase material. Another major constraint was the lack of accommodation, especially for larger artefacts. When this problem became acute, the search began for suitable premises to house the Collection, and to this end the University of Sheffield acquired a former church hall at 605 Ecclesall Road in the city. During the early 1980s the
material was moved to the new location from the various storage places in and around the University and elsewhere. At first, what was known as the Endcliffe Exhibition Hall and later became the Traditional Heritage Museum, relied entirely on volunteers for the documentation, conservation, and display of the Collection. Built in 1928, the hall is typical of many such buildings of that period, and its main architectural features, including the decorative proscenium arch and the unique blue tiles bearing the initials of the original donors, displayed in the entrance area, have been preserved. The University not only generously made the building available but also carried out essential alterations and refurbishment of the interior in order to make the fullest possible use of the available space and to facilitate access to the Collection.

Originally intended for the use of students at the University of Sheffield and for other researchers in the fields of cultural tradition, folklore, and local history, the Collection developed steadily in its new location. The main hall of the building became the site for the creation of a series of displays and exhibitions which evolved slowly, but which received a major boost in the 1980s from a series of work experience and community programmes sponsored by the Manpower Services Commission. Beginning with individual part-time work placements, these programmes developed substantially over several years, and were instrumental in setting up the ground plan and organisational structure of the museum. The architect of this process was Alan Jepson, whose inspired vision of how the exhibition areas could develop was matched by his practical skills in planning, designing, and constructing the original displays, and his talent for training others to assist him to achieve these objectives. Aided by the technical ability and resourcefulness of his colleague, Stan Basford, by volunteers, and by a succession of young trainees, Alan Jepson devised and created the series of reconstructed workshops, retail shops, domestic interiors, and other displays which formed the first exhibits in the museum, and from which the present exhibition areas have developed. As space in the main hall was limited, the planning and construction processes inevitably entailed a degree of trial and error, but the eventual outcome ensured that maximum use was made of the area available, so that today some twenty principal displays are on view in the main hall and the entrance hall on the ground floor.

When the various Manpower Services schemes ended in 1988, the museum once again came to rely on voluntary assistance to maintain its activities, having opened to the public from 1985. Indeed, volunteers had been continuously involved from the beginning, and their input became increasingly important over the years. When the very existence of the museum was threatened by a series of severe financial cutbacks in higher education in the late 1980s and the 1990s, it became clear that it would
have to become increasingly self-financing if it was to survive. After prolonged discussion and negotiation an interim solution was proposed: the Friends organisation, Traditional Heritage, which comprises volunteers who offer assistance and support to the Centre, would assume responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the museum, on behalf of the University, under the terms of a formal internal privatisation agreement. The initial agreement, covering a three year period, was signed in 1990, renewed for a further seven years in 1993, and again for five years with effect from 2000. As part of the agreement, the University assumed ownership of the Collection, by arrangement with the principal donors and depositors.² Over the years since the agreement was signed, volunteers from Traditional Heritage have worked tirelessly to develop the museum and to extend its role by opening it to the public. The Friends organisation became fully established under the terms of a formal constitution in 1989, its officers and administrative committee being elected at an annual general meeting. The Traditional Heritage Committee reports to the Faculty of Arts at the University of Sheffield via the Centre’s Advisory Committee. A separate Museum Management Committee is charged with the operation of the museum, and two sub-committees are concerned with acquisition and disposal policy, and educational outreach respectively. After a long and frustrating delay, the efforts of Traditional Heritage were rewarded by the granting of Full Registration status to the museum under the national scheme on February 14th, 2002, Provisional Registration having been granted on September 26th, 2000.

As mentioned in the Editorial above, the first items acquired for the Material Culture Collection were baskets and basketmaking tools from a family of long-established craftsmen whose last workshop and retail premises were situated in Burgess Street, Sheffield. Other acquisitions were soon made, including material from the premises of a local silversmith and engraver, a filemaker, a cutlery manufacturer, and a shoemaker and clogmaker. Artefacts, fixtures, and fittings from a number of other local workshops and retail shops were acquired later, along with a wide range of domestic items. Taken together, this material not only complements the holdings in other museums in the region, but also helps to piece together a fuller picture of how people lived and worked in the area in the period concerned. With two notable exceptions, the majority of the material in the museum comes from the city itself and has been acquired either by donation or through the good offices of the Survey Team, and the Friends organisation, Traditional Heritage, or through the efforts of other supporters of the museum. The exceptions include, firstly, the materials from a chemist’s and optician’s shop, and domestic items from a family, both from the Chesterfield area, which were donated
before that town established its own museum. Secondly, in view of the Centre’s major research programme in traditional drama, a unique collection of puppets and other theatrical material was bequeathed to the museum by the executors of an artist and puppeteer from Cheshire.

In addition to the main exhibition hall, the ground floor of the building incorporates a large room which is used for teaching, meetings, and other events, and which doubles as an exhibition gallery for other aspects of the Centre’s work. Further rooms on this floor include those used for storage, cleaning and conservation, and documentation, and also an office, a kitchen, and other facilities. A workshop is located in the basement, and the original balcony area at first floor level is used for storage. In recent years the accommodation at this level has been substantially extended to provide additional storage and office space along two sides of the building, above the exhibits in the main hall. This extension is fronted by a façade which simulates the appearance of the upper floors of buildings reconstructed in the main exhibition hall, complete with tradesmen’s signs and other street furniture. The shops, workshops and domestic interiors are arranged to suggest a streetscape, and visitors are allowed access to many of the individual displays to experience something of their unique ambiance.

The primary aim of the museum is to preserve and present an encapsulated historical record of life and work in the Sheffield area from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, focusing particularly on local domestic life and the handcrafted trades. Its immediate goal is to conserve and document its collections, and to make them fully accessible for the benefit of users. In the longer term the intention is to improve, develop and extend the existing collections to provide a fuller and more detailed experience of traditional lifestyles and work practices of the period, set in their local context. A major programme is under way to expand and upgrade the systems and facilities at the museum, and to promote it both to the local audience and to the wider community. The programme includes the enhancement and extension of current exhibitions and displays, the expansion of educational outreach, the construction of new storage and display facilities, the provision of additional environmental monitoring and control, and the development of new publicity initiatives. The museum currently holds some 50,000 items, assembled over a period of almost forty years. Its holdings are catalogued under the Museum Documentation Association’s Social History and Industrial Classification system. Although it remains primarily a teaching and training resource for students and researchers, the museum welcomes visitors on its regular open days throughout the year, and is available for group visits by arrangement. Its educational outreach programme is very popular, especially the events and activities
organised for school groups visiting the museum. These visits are jointly planned in advance by the school and museum staff, and include hands-on experience of objects, role play (such as re-enacting a Victorian washday and other historical activities), observational drawing, learning about domestic customs and routines, shopping, and numerous other activities. Special topics such as those in the GCSE syllabus are also catered for, each visit being tailored to the individual needs of the visiting schools.

At the present time the museum offers a fascinating variety of displays and exhibits illustrating what it as like to live and work in and around Sheffield in the not so distant past. On entering, visitors are introduced to what is on view via a display in the entrance hall which provides an overview of the history and development of the museum and of the exhibits and their location in the various parts of the building. They then find themselves walking through an old-style pawnbroker’s shop, with its constantly changing array of miscellaneous items which are typical of those once pawned in thousands of such shops. Moving on into a dimly lit passageway the visitors then discover a World War II Air Raid Warden’s post – all too familiar to many of the older generation in Sheffield, and indeed in any other English city. Continuing on into the main exhibition hall, we find a local corner shop which, like so many other small shops, was simply the front room of a terraced house, converted to provide extra income – often the sole income – for those living there. These little shops sold almost everything which householders in the neighbourhood needed. Opposite, by contrast, is the high class grocer’s and coffee and tea retailer’s shop originally run for many years by the Pollard family on the corner of Glossop Road and Fitzwilliam Street, Sheffield. Across the alleyway from the corner shop we find the basketmaker’s workshop, the contents of which, as mentioned earlier, were the first to be donated to the Collection. Next door is Ben Bradley’s shoemaking and clogmaking shop from Shalesmoor, Sheffield. Opposite this are the chemist’s and optician’s shops of Elliot and Chadwick from Whittington Moor, Chesterfield. Moving along, we find a scalepressing workshop, where animal horn and other materials were processed and shaped for making handles for table knives etc., and to cover the sides of pocketknives. The material in this unique display is mainly from the local firm of Hill Brothers, of Broom Close, and some of the machinery in the workshop, belt-driven by electric motors, can be seen in operation. Adjacent is a filemaking workshop, featuring machinery and artefacts donated by the Horton family from the firm of Horton Brothers, formerly Austin and Dodson, of Love Street in the city centre. The display also includes examples of early magnets made by H. Shaw and Son at the same address. Around the corner we come across an
exhibition of “buffing” – the process of polishing items in the local cutlery, holloware, and tableware trades – including material from the premises of James Farrer and Sons, once located on Division Street, but long since demolished, along with those of most buildings which originally housed the workshops and retail shops preserved in the museum. Directly opposite this display is a fully operational grinder’s workshop, or “hull”, reconstructed as it might have been in the heyday of the local cutlery and edge tool industries. Seated on a “saddle” or “horsing” behind the fast-moving sandstone grinding wheel, spinning in its trough of cooling water, the grinder leaned over the wheel, putting a sharp edge on the knife blade or cutting tool. The wheel is driven by a belt running from a revolving drum, the original drum having been rescued and restored for the purpose. All the artefacts in the “hull”, and indeed in most of the exhibitions in the museum, are original items which were recovered from various industrial and domestic properties in the area, usually immediately before the buildings were demolished, and in one case while demolition was actually in progress! This in itself indicates the urgency which often invested the process of rescuing material at short notice before the developers moved in.

A selection from the museum’s extensive collection of toys is on display towards the rear of the main exhibition hall, which is not only particularly enjoyed by younger visitors, but is also linked with a display of traditional games in the adjoining exhibition gallery, and with the Centre’s continuing programme of research into all aspects of children’s language and folklore. Stairs lead to a separate raised exhibition area at mezzanine level, above and behind the grinding hull and the display of toys. Here we discover a re-creation of the kitchen of a typical “back-to-back” Sheffield house, as it might have appeared in the 1920s. Opposite is the parlour or front room (often simply called “the room” in Sheffield), as it would have been in a more affluent home in the 1930s. Retracing our steps down the stairs we find a shop window display of Sheffield-made tools from the renowned Ken Hawley Collection. The items in the display are currently on loan, and the museum is especially grateful to Ken Hawley, not only for making this unique material available, but also for personally setting up the display, as it would have been in his retail shop in Earl Street, Sheffield, before his retirement from the business in the early 1990s. Facing the Hawley shop window is an exhibition of glassware and other items from local silversmiths, Roberts and Belk, of Furnival Works, Furnival Gate, salvaged in the nick of time while a section of the building was being demolished. Alongside there is a display of table knives from one of the dozens of “little mesters”, as local independent cutlery manufacturers were known. This showcases the evolution of table knives made by the firm of J. Green and Sons, of 82,
Backfields, Wellington Street, from before the development of stainless steel through to the mid-twentieth century. The display is located on the exterior wall of the reconstructed manager’s office from Washington Works in Wellington Street, Sheffield, home of the famous cutlery manufacturers, George Wostenholme and Son, whose wellknown trade-mark, IXL (“I excel”) reflects the high international reputation enjoyed for centuries by Sheffield cutlery. Washington Works, built in the 1790s, was one of the first “pre-factories” where independent craftsmen could rent space to make cutlery. The office includes the original roll-topped desk (made in Washington, D.C. in the U.S.A.) table, and other items, and also the unique bow-fronted glass display case from the Directors’ office which, like all these artefacts, and a substantial quantity of documentation, was salvaged by members of the Survey Team before the premises were demolished. Most of the documents were discovered on shelves in the flooded basement, and the Survey Team members who rescued them had to wade through the water to recover what they could of the material above the waterline. Among the articles in the display case is a selection of the 3000 printing blocks used in advertising the firm’s products which were retrieved from the derelict building, and which preserve a unique record of the range of items produced, such as penknives, pocketknives, bowie knives, dirks, scissors, and razors. Next door to the office is a recent addition to the principal exhibits: the reconstructed retail shop of Albert Holmes, Electrical Contractor, established in the 1920s at Meadowhead, on the southern fringes of the city, and remaining in business until the 1980s. Although primarily general electrical contractors, the firm also pioneered early radio, and later were very active in television rental, and the retail electrical trade.

Alongside the electrical contractor’s shop is another retail outlet, that of the Leclère family, silversmiths and engravers, whose premises were located in Howard Street, near what is now the main campus of Sheffield Hallam University. As the name suggests, the family was of French descent, and the firm was internationally famous for its engraving skills, producing fine work for aristocratic families and embassies throughout Europe, among many other distinguished clients. It was said that the Leclères could reproduce virtually any engraving so as to be indistinguishable from the original, so their work was in great demand. The fixtures, fittings, and artefacts in this exhibit were among the first to be donated to the Centre’s Material Culture Collection, and these acquisitions came somewhat by chance. A leading member of the Survey Team, Paul Smith, who directed the Centre’s Display Service and was instrumental in identifying and securing numerous items for the Collection, in addition to donating a substantial number himself, happened to pass by Leclères’ shop, and saw a small box of engraving
tools in the window, accompanied by a handwritten sign inviting “offers” for them. On investigation, it turned out that the executors of the former owners were in the process of clearing the property prior to vacating it. They accepted our modest cash offer for the small box of tools, as a contribution to the compensation fund for workers who were to be laid off by the closure of the firm. This chance encounter led to the executors willingly agreeing to donate the shopfittings and other items to the Collection, along with workbenches, storage cupboards and drawers, and numerous artefacts from the firm’s upstairs workshop. Until recently, the reconstructed workshop was also on view at the museum, next to Leclèrè’s retail shop, and is presently in storage, but accessible to students and researchers. Some representative documentation was also retrieved from the site, including original engraving designs and sketches, a selection of which is on display in the lobby adjacent to the reconstructed retail shop. This area also features designs for caskets presented to Sheffield’s Master Cutler in the early twentieth century, and pictorial images and artefacts illustrative of cutlery manufacture and other local handcrafted trades.

Finally, as visitors leave the museum, they have the opportunity to see one of a series of exhibitions, presented over several years, featuring a selection of items from the James Muir Smith Puppet Collection. This unique collection of puppets made by Dr. Muir Smith and his wife, of Northwich, Cheshire, was donated to the museum, together with the original puppet theatre used in performances, a number of plaster casts for the making of masks, and other theatrical material. Initial contact with Dr. Muir Smith arose from the research of Frances Clarke, who completed her MA thesis on the performing tradition of Punch and Judy at the Centre in 1983. She interviewed him in the course of her investigation of the puppet theatre tradition in England, and was shown his collection, and the theatre he had made, which he used to entertain local children. Correspondence with him, and later with his friends and family, continued for several years, and in due course the collection was transferred to the museum, a selection of the material having already featured in a special exhibition devoted to James Muir Smith’s life, theatrical interests, and paintings at the Salt Museum in Northwich. His consummate skill as a puppeteer is graphically illustrated in a brief video which was also passed on to the Traditional Heritage Museum, depicting a puppet juggling a pile of boxes. The film ends with the puppet and the boxes deftly dismembered, as it were – lying apparently in pieces on the ground, after having been brilliantly manipulated, as if the juggler was alive, just a few seconds earlier. This unique collection is testament to the artistic abilities of a man whose profession was that of inorganic chemist.
in a national chemical company, but whose lifelong devotion to this fascinating hobby reveals a very different side of his personality.

An area in the centre of the main exhibition hall is designated as a flexible workspace for visiting school parties and other groups, and is also available for accommodating travelling exhibitions and other temporary displays. The museum shop is situated in this area, offering a wide variety of gifts, including traditional craft items, toys and games, and the full range of the Centre's publications on aspects of English language and folklore. The emphasis in this retail outlet is on items relevant to the material on display in the museum and on printed items such as lists of dialect and trade terms which complement and augment the interpretative information incorporated in the various exhibits.

As noted above, the exhibition gallery in the lecture/meetings room adjacent to the main hall showcases other aspects of the Centre's work. At present, it features a display of Sheffield history, highlighting small businesses, shops, and everyday life in the city in the early twentieth century and during the Second World War. A section of the exhibition focuses on childlore, and other major themes include English calendar customs, with special attention to those in the Sheffield area, and traditional dance and drama, including the local longsword dances at Grenoside and Handsworth, and also a selection of mummers' plays performed in the area until comparatively recently. A section of the gallery is set aside for publicising the museum, the Centre, and the Friends organisation, Traditional Heritage, together with information on other museums, heritage centres, societies, and relevant groups and events in and around the Sheffield area. Daytime and evening courses, dayschools and weekend schools, workshops, and other events are held in this room. At present, the Workers Educational Association offers six ten week courses at the museum in the autumn and spring terms, and other courses during the summer. The museum also offers courses and workshops of its own, and local societies and groups use the room as a venue for lectures and meetings. Craft fairs and other events are held there, including the museum's annual Christmas fair, and a variety of educational and social activities.

The museum of course holds a substantial amount of material which is not currently on display. In addition to exhibitions and displays which have been on view previously and are now in storage, there are a number of individual collections such as the domestic items donated by the Orwin family of Chesterfield, and the Bentley, Blaess, Bottomley, Donaghey and Smylie families of Sheffield, along with a representative selection of early twentieth century machinery, tools, and fittings from the workshops of local craftspeople, fixtures and fittings from a local dentist's surgery and a chiropodist's practice, typewriters and office
equipment, a printing press, a wide range of early radios, projectors, and electrical appliances, a land camera, and a loom for making fibre carpets and mats, among numerous other items typical of life and work in the locality in the past. Several of the principal collections have the advantage of extensive documentation. For example, a large number of ledgers, order books, wage books, pattern books, advertising material, and other documentation salvaged from George Wostenholm’s Washington Works are preserved in the Centre’s archives, and offer a rare opportunity to set the museum’s collections from that firm in their full social and economic context. The archives also hold documentary material concerning the Austin and Dodson/Horton Brothers, Leclère, Muir Smith, and Orwin Collections.

Over the past four decades the Traditional Heritage Museum has made remarkable progress, thanks largely to the efforts of a dedicated band of volunteers. It has established itself alongside other museums and historical sites in the area, and its important contribution to the preservation of many aspects of the area’s heritage has now been fully recognised. It is important to bear in mind that teaching and research at the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition focus not only on the non-material heritage but also on material culture in its widest sense. As an integral part of the Centre from the outset, the museum’s collections are crucial to the holistic study and interpretation of tradition, both locally and in the wider world. The combined teaching and research resources of the Centre and the museum are unique assets which invite further exploration and exploitation in the future.

Notes

2. Ownership of the Collection was formally transferred to the University of Sheffield under the terms of a written agreement signed on August 7th, 1995, in pursuance of a resolution of the University Senate dated November 27th, 1991.
Australian Folklore: An appraisal

KEITH McKENRY

Abstract: The Journal Australian Folklore, now in its sixteenth year, is a notable survivor from the period in the 1980s when Australian folklore briefly found the limelight. Since that time it has provided an invaluable, if infrequent, forum for folklore scholars. It has built up a substantial body of published material, spanning the folklore spectrum and spilling over into related areas of scholarship.

Background

Prior to the appearance of Australian Folklore in 1987 there had never been an academic journal in Australia dedicated to folklore studies. Folklore scholars were obliged therefore to seek non-folklore oriented publication outlets. Alternatively, they had the option of publishing in one of a sequence of non-academic folk periodicals. The first Australian Folklore Society was established in Sydney on 16 January 1954. Its journal Speewa ran to three issues before the Society quietly faded away. Happily, the Sydney Bush Music Club, established in October 1954, survived. It published broadsheets and booklets containing songs and other material collected in the field by its members, most notably pioneering collector John Meredith. The Club’s quarterly journal Singabout ran from 1956 until 1964, its twenty two issues peppered with newly-collected songs, many which have since become Australian folk “standards”. Since 1964 the Club has remained active, but its monthly magazine Mulga Wire is a pale shadow of the old Singabout. The Folklore Society of Victoria, established in August 1955, had greater longevity than its Sydney counterpart. Between 1964 and 1975 it combined with the Victorian Folk Music Club to publish the magazine Australian Tradition, one of whose editors throughout was the redoubtable Wendy Lowenstein. This important magazine ran to thirty seven issues and like Singabout provided an outlet for much newly-collected material.

In 1981, Gwenda Davey and June Factor, both of whom were associated with the Institute for Early Childhood Development in Victoria, established the Australian Children’s Folklore Newsletter. Renamed Play and Folklore in 1997, it continues to present a wealth of material relating to the rich area of Australian children’s lore. A further publication outlet came in the form of the irrepressible Ron Edwards and his Rams Skull Press, established in 1950. Thus far the Press has published 310 books, the great majority of which Edwards has written and illustrated himself, drawing upon oral folklore or folk craft he collected in the field. The Press’s publications range from broadsheets to
a massive twelve volume 2860 page illustrated *Index of Australian Folk Song*, and include the pioneering *Bandicoot Ballads* and *Black Bull Chapbooks*, nine books in the major *Australian Bushcraft* series and twenty four *Australian Folklore Occasional Papers*. In addition, between 1966 and 1971, Edwards produced forty five issues of the magazine *Northern* (after issue 24 *National*) *Folk*, almost the entire content of which was his own collected material.

In 1979, from his base in far North Queensland, Edwards established a *new* Australian Folklore Society, specifically for collectors of Australian folklore. This Society, still in existence, has never operated on normal lines, for example by holding meetings or elections for office-bearers. Its sole activity has been the production of the *Australian Folklore Society Journal*, a publication which since September 1984 has run to fifty six issues. Its 1328 pages are filled with lively, uncensored debate and newly collected material, some of which is of great significance. It includes, for example, the unpublished third volume of John Meredith’s seminal work *Folk Songs of Australia*, serialised over a number of issues. The Journal’s contributors are drawn primarily from an inner circle of a dozen or so field collectors, and include few if any academic folklorists. Indeed it is possible, given the Society’s limited membership, that few academic folklorists have had access to it. Despite the importance of its content therefore, it has never substituted for a professional Australian folklore journal.

For all these reasons, when in March 1987 Graham Seal and David Hults took the plunge and established such a journal, they were swimming in uncharted waters. Folklore studies had long been a Cinderella field of activity in the Australian tertiary sector; it had never been recognised as a discipline in its own right, there were no tertiary institutions offering qualifications in the field, and it was unheard of for anyone anywhere on the continent to advertise a job for a “folklorist”. Seal and Hults were based at Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia. Seal had trained as a folklorist in Britain and taken up an academic post in humanities at Curtin; Hults had enrolled as one of his students. Both had a background as folk revival performers and as State representatives on the Australian Folk Trust, the national co-ordinating body for State and territory folk arts federations; Hults served in the early 1980s as the Trust’s Chairperson.

At the time Seal and Hults established their journal the small, dispersed community of Australian folklorists was optimistic that their discipline would soon be given overdue recognition and support. For several years the folk arts had been gaining a progressively higher profile within government, aided immensely by the presence in the national
government of a supportive federal Minister for Arts and Heritage, Barry Cohen.  

- In 1984 Cohen had entreated Commonwealth arts and heritage institutions to develop major initiatives in the "folk" field. The Australia Council (the national arts funding body), taking note of the Minister's views, had over several years increased markedly its funding for the Australian Folk Trust. By the mid-1980s the Trust had two full-time staff and allocated annually over $100,000 in grant monies to folk-oriented projects.

- In 1986 Cohen had established the Commonwealth Committee of Inquiry into Folklife in Australia. The Committee, chaired by Hugh Anderson with Gwenda Davey and myself as its other members, had a broad charter to report on measures appropriate to the proper safeguarding, dissemination and appreciation of Australian folklife.

The Australian Folk Trust gave Seal and Hults a grant to assist them to establish the new journal. The Centre for Australian Studies at Curtin University provided an institutional umbrella; the survival of the journal depended, however, on its ability to attract subscribers.

Seal and Hults were confident the subscribers would be found. The Trust had organised two National Folklore Conferences; the first (Melbourne 1984) attracted 152 participants, the second (Sydney 1986) 110. Further, the Government's Folklife Inquiry had attracted 245 written submissions. This was far more than were received by other recent inquiries in the arts and heritage areas. There was cause to believe therefore that a broad-based constituency of interest existed in the folklore field.

On 14 August 1987, five months after the new journal Australian Folklore appeared, the Commonwealth Committee of Inquiry presented its Report. Barry Cohen had recently lost his place in the Ministry and the Report was presented to incoming Minister, Senator Graham Richardson. Sadly, Richardson displayed no interest in the Inquiry, declining to meet the Committee and holding onto its Report for six months before leaving it to his junior Minister, Gary Punch, to quietly table in Parliament. As expected, the Report recommended a wide range of measures to support folklore collection and research, and community practice of the folk arts. It was warmly received by folklorists within Australia and overseas, but fell on deaf ears within the Government. The removal of Cohen from the Ministry had turned the tide; Richardson and his portfolio had other priorities. The folklore thrust within bureaucracy
evaporated. The Report of the Folklife Inquiry was quietly buried, and within two years the few senior staff in the arts and heritage portfolio who genuinely shared Cohen's interest in folklore had been moved on, and things in the portfolio returned to "normal".

In 1988, as hopes persisted that something would be salvaged from the Folklife Inquiry Report, the small, dispersed community interested in folklore studies banded together in a new Australian Folklore Association. The Association had however no external funding, and its activity level was low. Looking back, it is evident that the rush of bureaucratic folklore activity in the early 1980s was due to an accidental conjunction of a few well-placed and supportive individuals, rather than to any broad awakening of genuine interest in the field. For some Commonwealth institutions, like the National Library, the interest in folklore was genuine, for others such as the National Gallery it was viewed as a distraction, and in one instance - the Australia Council - it was actively resented. The Council viewed the folklore push as a threat to its policy of directing funding to professional artists and contemporary arts practice.

Despite the changed institutional climate, the Australian Folk Trust struggled on, hosting or co-hosting four further National Folklore Conferences (Canberra 1988, Armidale 1990, Melbourne 1992, Melbourne 1994). Then, however, the Australia Council stripped it of its government funding. In 1996, lacking the wherewithal to continue, it was forced to disband. By 1990 the only bright lights on the folklore horizon were the survival of the Australian Folklore journal, the continuing existence of the unrelated Australian Folklore Society Journal, and the establishment in November that year of a new Victorian Folklife Association, supported financially by the Victorian Government.

The Victorian Association was, by comparison with the Australian Folklore Association, well-resourced. It co-hosted the fifth and sixth National Folklore/Folklife Conferences in 1992 and 1994, and in 1998 through its innovative Director, Susan Faine, bid successfully to host the 13th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. This Congress, titled Traditions and Transitions: Folk Narrative in the Contemporary World, was held in Melbourne in July 2001, attracting 156 participants from thirty seven countries. It was the first major international folklore conference to be held in Australia, and folklore scholars held great hopes that it would raise the profile of folklore within Australian Academe, and gain their field recognition as a discipline in its own right. Sadly, this was not to be. While the Congress was judged a success, it struggled financially, and the Association lacked the funds needed to publish the proceedings. The following year the Association
lost its funding from the Victorian Government, and late in 2002 it disbanded.

Thus, seventeen years after its high point in 1986, the field of Australian folklore studies had lost virtually all its government funding, the remaining folklore periodicals surviving solely by virtue of the efforts of a small core of dedicated individuals. The same individuals, by and large, continue to be responsible for most of the folklore-based books that find a commercial publisher. Davey and Seal, for example, jointly edited both the 1993 *Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore* and the 2003 *Guide to Australian Folklore*. Davey and her co-editor at *Play and Folklore*, June Factor, each also have published a number of books on children's and family lore. Seal is sole author of a number of titles, mostly relating to contemporary folklore. Prolific authors Ron Edwards and Hugh Anderson continue to publish both in their own presses and elsewhere. John Meredith, Bill Scott, Bill Wannan and Warren Fahey round out the list of major authors in the field of Australian folklore.

On the academic front, efforts to establish courses in folklore studies continued. In the mid-1980s Dr Jill Stubington of the Music Department at the University of New South Wales broke the ice – or at least cracked it – by gaining approval to offer her students a course in Australian folk music. A handful of other tertiary institutions followed suit, offering lone folklore-related units in such areas as education and social science. A breakthrough came in 1997, when Monash University in Victoria established Australia’s first folklore qualification, a Graduate Diploma in Australian Folklife Studies. The course director was Gwenda Davey. Unfortunately, the course had only a tenuous existence and after a single intake resulting in ten graduates it was discontinued. The course since has transferred to Curtin University of Technology where, under the direction of Graham Seal, it is being offered on a part-time basis through the university’s Open Learning Program. At present, some fifteen students, including two from overseas, are enrolled in different course units. Since the course transferred to Curtin no-one has yet completed the Diploma.

Throughout the long period since the mid-1980s of declining government interest in folklore issues, the National Library of Australia continued to give strong support to folklore studies. It granted a number of fellowships to folklore scholars, gave financial and technical support to field collectors, and published books and sound recordings drawn from its folklore collection. Recently it renamed its oral history area “Oral History and Folklore” to reflect its strong involvement with the area. Other national heritage institutions – ScreenSound Australia (the National Film and Sound Archive), the National Museum of Australia, the National Gallery and the Australian War Memorial – all now recognise folklore
studies and the folk arts as important, and to differing degrees accept a role in relation to them. None, however, yet approaches the National Library in translating in-principle support into practice.

The journal *Australian Folklore*: an appraisal

Given the institutional and funding climate in which it has operated, the survival since 1987 of *Australian Folklore* is a notable achievement. This survival is testimony to the work of the journal’s founding editors Graham Seal and David Hults and, more particularly, to the efforts of its sole editor since 1992, Professor John S. Ryan of the Department of English and Communication Studies at the University of New England in northern New South Wales. Under the editorship of Seal and Hults, the journal built up a valuable coterie of assistants: Hugh Anderson became Reviews Editor, and Gwenda Davey, Ron Edwards and Jill Stubington joined him on a nominal panel of Editorial Advisors.

Spelling out the journal’s purpose, Seal and Hults wrote:

“A*USTRALIAN FOLKLORE* aims to focus on the disparate activity taking place across the country in the field of folklore research and study. To that ongoing end the journal has been structured to allow, as far as possible, for the broad range of interests and activities that inevitably present themselves under the rubric ‘folklore’.17

True to their word, in their first four issues the editors included articles on topics as diverse as

- Folklore generated by the Azaria Chamberlain (“dingo ate the baby”) case
- Nursery lore
- Contemporary folklore and racism
- Contemporary folk belief (water bottles warding dogs off lawns)
- The fabled lost continent of Lemuria
- Bold Jack Donahue and the Irish outlaw tradition
- Contemporary legend and the photocopy revolution
- Folklore and ethnic groups in Australia
- Attitudes and values in a contemporary folk club.
- Folk motif and Australian fiction
- Bagpipes in Australia
- Interpreting artefacts of British soldiers in colonial Australia

The journal also undertook the essential role of providing considered reviews of Australian folklore publications and had sections for notes and queries, reports, correspondence and notices about upcoming events,
conferences, publications, etc. However, as it appeared only annually, its usefulness in these latter areas was limited.\textsuperscript{18}

As the years have passed, the journal has enjoyed an ever-widening circle of contributors, including some from outside Australia. In each issue, too, more than half the contributors have either been private scholars or persons in employment outside the tertiary sector. This fact reflects the largely non-academic history of folklore studies in Australia and the pivotal role of private folklore collectors. Of the academic contributors, while consistently a substantial proportion have been associated either with Curtin University or the University of New England, the spread both of contributors’ faculties and of their institutions has become increasingly broad.

In 1992, when editorship of the journal passed to Professor Ryan, Seal and Hults remained on the Editorial Board and so a measure of continuity was retained. At that time the journal also became the official organ of the Australian Folklore Association. The relationship between the Association and the journal has however been largely nominal. One can subscribe to the journal without belonging to the Association. As editor, Ryan casts a wider net than his predecessors, stepping outside the mainstream folklore genre on occasion in order to provide context or counterpoint. He published for example a landmark speech by Prime Minister Paul Keating on coming to grips with Indigenous people. He also sometimes inserts material of historical interest, bringing to a new audience writings from deceased authors such as “Rolf Boldrewood” and Brian Penton. On occasion, too, he republishes in the journal material relating to Australia that appeared in overseas publications. Thus the journal now is often an interesting and eclectic blend of initial and subsequent publication.

Ryan has introduced, too, a practice of honouring major figures by “presenting” issues to them or commemorating their work. In this way pioneering folklore authors Russel Ward, John Meredith, Patsy Adam Smith, Bill Wannan, Bill Scott, Alan Scott and Hugh Anderson each have been honoured, as have been writers Alan Marshall and Dal Stivens. In most instances where an issue has honoured a particular individual, the journal has included a section dedicated to them. This section normally contains a synopsis of the person’s work, including a detailed bibliography, and commentary on and extracts from their writings.

The size of the journal has increased progressively. Only once reaching 150 pages in its six appearances under the editorship of Seal and Hults, it now regularly exceeds 280 pages and once reached 320 pages. Irritatingly, its physical dimensions also have grown, its height progressing in four steps from 20.2 cm in 1987 to 23.2 cm in 1995.\textsuperscript{19} Happily, the journal has retained its present dimensions since then.
Importantly, since 1996 (Number 11) the journal has contained a detailed index. Its most recent issue (No. 17, November, 2002) has twenty seven contributors and at 284 pages is a formidable read. It contains a major section commemorating the late Alan Marshall, three comparative and theoretical essays, seventeen contributions on a range of aspects of Australian folklore/folklife, and three review articles. Eight books are reviewed, four each from Australia and overseas, and there are fifteen notes, notices and comments. There is also a brief stop press section relating to terrorism and folklore.

While the journal focuses primarily on matters Australian it always has included articles that are not specifically Australian in content. Its first issue, for example, included a piece on the folklore of women in which nine of the twelve references cited were non-Australian. In the most recent issue the three comparative and theoretical essays have nothing to do with Australia: one examines the Christian mediaeval poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, another the contribution of Oscar Wilde’s “The Young King” to the fairy tale genre, while the third is a contribution from the United Kingdom on revivalistic storytelling at two English folk revival festivals. Other numbers of the journal have contained contributions from, among other places, the United States of America, Eire, New Zealand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and the maritime provinces of Canada.

In sum, as Professor Ryan states in the most recent issue, the journal is endeavouring “to treat the whole range of traditional/cultural heritage resources that are deemed to be comprised in folkloristics”. This material embraces both the tangibles – objects, documents, sites, places, etc – and the intangibles – voices, values, traditions, language(s), oral history, folklife. It is a vast corpus. Happily, the journal tackles it well. It is an invaluable resource for Australian folklorists.

Notes

5. As at November, 2002.
6. The first forty issues of the *Australian Folklore Society Journal* have been reissued in three bound sets (1-20, 21-30, 31-40) by the Rams Skull Press, Kuranda.

7. In 1986, the suggestion was made to a national review of Australian studies in tertiary education that folklore be accorded status as a separate academic discipline, rather than continue to be subsumed within the domain of other disciplines. The notion was put down with the comment that folklore studies do “not contribute much that is essentially new to pedagogy”. See I. McShane, *Anthropology and Folklore Report*, Canberra, Committee to review Australian studies in tertiary education, 1986.

8. Cohen had been inspired by the concept of having, as his major initiative for the Australian Bicentenary in 1988, a major Australian folklife festival modelled on the Smithsonian Institution’s annual *Festival of American Folklife*. This vision drove his championing of folklore within his portfolio. The festival proposal eventually floundered because of strident opposition from Australia’s powerful multicultural lobby. The lobby viewed Cohen’s proposal as a competitor for scarce multicultural arts funds for which they had their own plans.


10. This was more than had been received by recent government inquiries into Commonwealth Assistance to the Arts, the National Museum of Australia, and the National Film and Sound Archive combined. See K. McKenry, “The Folklife Inquiry”, *Australian Folklore*, 3 (March, 1989), 82-94.


16. Anderson is proprietor of the Red Rooster Press, which specialises in folklore titles.


18. The journal’s fifth number is dated September, 1990, coming only six months after number four; otherwise the journal’s issues have been dated a year apart.

19. The first issue originally was released in A4 format but later was reissued in a much smaller format.
References


McKenry, K., “The Folklife Inquiry”, Australian Folklore, 3 (March, 1989), 82-94.

McKenry, K., “Ron Edwards: The Man with the Ram’s Skull”, Australian Folklore, 7 (September, 1992), 46-58.


McShane, I., Anthropology and Folklore Report, Canberra, Committee to review Australian studies in tertiary education, 1986.


5 Bonney Street, Ainslie, ACT 2602, Australia
Linderman’s legacy of the last pre-contact: Indian life in the West

J. S. RYAN


These three volumes, originally issued in 1915, 1920 and 1931 - the first two by Charles Scribner’s Sons, the third by John Day Company - are now reprinted in an authorised paperback edition. They each have a new Introduction, the first two by Sidner Larson, the last by Fred W. Voget. Other works by Linderman recently in the same reissue series include Plenty-coups: Chief of the Crows; and Pretty-shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows. Together they constitute a remarkable account - an important picture of the American Indian country and of its life “before it was gone”.

The Ohio-born Linderman (1869-1938) had moved to Montana in his middle teens, to work as a trapper, and later as a publisher and politician. He was intimately associated with the Flathead, Blackfeet, Crow and other Indian tribes in the same region, being known by them as Co Skee See Co Cot. Typically, the first of these little books was dedicated to:

“CHARLES M. RUSSELL
THE COWBOY ARTIST

GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL
THE INDIAN’S FRIEND

AND TO ALL OTHERS WHO HAVE KNOWN AND LOVED OLD MONTANA

FOR I HOLD THEM ALL AS KIN
WHO HAVE BUILDED FIRES WHERE NATURE
WEARS NO MAKE-UP ON HER SKIN”

As with all who would catch from the recent past a golden moment, the actual epoch of focus encapsulated and in the tales retold, had already become “silver” when Linderman and his friends sought to gain direct
evidence and testimony from older tribal Indians who had personal experience and understanding of the now “old ways”. Many scholars have commented, justly, on Linderman’s own ability to incorporate details of Indian cultures which he had observed. For in his later thirties he rejected a life of business and a public life to write collections of Indian legends from oral tradition, and two novels about trapping on the Missouri River, which also contained much information about the mores and beliefs of the Crow Indians. The fourth and fifth volumes mentioned above were classic autobiographies for/about a Crow chief and the named Crow medicine woman respectively.

The events leading to his actually writing about legends in Indian Why Stories (1915) were concerned with his befriending the then homeless Chippewa-Cree people and his managing to bring about the justice of a special reservation being allocated to them. Very appropriately, this first work of memorial reconstruction, illustrated by Russell, tells of various Chippewa, Cree and Blackfoot legends, as told by an elder called War Eagle. The redactor’s purpose is clearly defined:

“I propose to tell what I know of these legends, keeping as near as possible to the Indian’s style of story-telling” (Indian Why Stories, p. xvi)

Very interestingly, the accounts focus on quite subtle performance details: pauses and the like, firelight and shadows, the snapping of a stick, as well as on change of mood in the speakers and the length of their speeches. Wit, or rather, a slow humour, pervades the utterances offered the (young) seeker. The folk wisdom behind the wisest creature being the tiny mouse, and not the noble bison, is refreshingly different, as is Old-man, depicted as a genuinely ageing figure, often rueful at his final limitations. For the birds and animals talk with great honesty to ever enlighten the “young-man” quester.

The second of the books is a more worldly aware and sophisticated text, as its Foreword makes clear. In the first book Linderman had somewhat ponderously contrasted the folklore of the “Old World” of Europe with America’s, finding the latter “too fond of nature and too proud of tradition to have forgotten or changed the teachings of his forefathers” (pp. xiii-xiv), poetic and yet now, sadly, only remembered by a patriarch. And he had focused on Old-man, or Napa, “a strange mixture of the fallible human and the powerful under-god” (p. xvi). The second collection, which appeared five years later, is somewhat wry and much more practical in its details of food-gathering, daily mores, and social dangers. And there is Old-man, still a very powerful figure who is also amusingly human and fallible, as well as mocking pretence as it
deserves. A more critical viewpoint emerges, but also an awareness that
the recorder is but a novice in matters Indian.

Yet he will show the latter-day Indians as stoic, “full of humor”
(*Indian Old-Man Stories*, p. xvi), silent in “the great out-of-doors”
(ibid.). But the traditional value system is carefully stressed as both
heroic and full of compassion:

> “Strength, bravery, endurance, speed, and cunning – everything that
> contributed to make his own wild life a success, or marked him with
distinction ... is reverenced when possessed in an equal or greater degree
among the lower animals and birds.” (*Indian Old-Man Stories*, p. xvii)

And the white man tells now of a “medicine-smoke” which he attended –
and Charles Russell had drawn (p. xxi) – and how intensely the Indians
are aware of nature. All of this is both echoic of European religions and
almost pantheistic. But his final point here is that Indians see each man
as *right* and they would have him hold fast to his beliefs. This is
enforced by the stories’ deep respect for the skunk, the weasel, the echo
and the howling dog (p. 155ff.), quite as much as for the larger
creatures.

The third collection – with a different present introducer and artist –
focuses on the ways in which the Crow Indian buffalo hunters and
warriors had viewed the world, and it covers dangerous missions, heroes,
personal contexts and encounters of human beings with Spirit Persons. A
feature is the considerable powers wielded by orphans, especially twins,
who receive remarkable gifts from various sources. Equally interesting is
the treatment of Old-man-coyote, as the creator and patron of the Crow.
He punished mortals for lack of respect, but not for moral transgression.

While we are already familiar with Coyote’s role as a mythical hero
or folktale character in a considerable body of oral literature recorded
from various Amerindian tribes, we do not necessarily find him here
presented as the later trickster, or as mischievous mediator between the
Way of the Tribe and the Way of the unrestrained ego, as Jarold Ramsey
would say in 1977.¹ He is, rather, in Linderman’s account the mentor of
the Crow in their time of trade and wealth in the eighteenth century. And
his adventures make him a kind of everyman with human weaknesses, a
shape-changer who always escaped unharmed, but learned thereby the
lessons that mortals needed to learn to survive as individuals and as a
society, and also received pragmatic counsel as to how to avoid surprise
by the enemy. Coyote’s cautions against spurious friendliness are both
important and morally sagacious. A similar shrewdness is to be found in
his hunting advice, his respect for sacred powers and his belief that
extended vision and increased endurance and speed can be attained. And
as the modern editor stresses, very correctly,
"As creator and patron, Old-man-coyote conveyed a special identity to the Absaroka as a people with their own culture." (Old Man Coyote, p. 6)

This is of course very far from the trickster image in stories common from the 1940s on.

Linderman’s views are thus all the more important, as an evocation of a proud value system since, as he tells us, they are “written faithfully” (p. 9) just as he got them from “old warriors … whom I have known for more than forty years”. The Crow are essentially a buffalo-hunting plains people, in love with horses, and the stories they told are summarised in Linderman’s words of 1931:

“Their stories … are often without form to me … Crow story-tellers themselves, sometimes seem to be unable to distinguish between these great characters [the sun and Old-man, or Old-man-coyote]” (Old Man Coyote, p. 13)

While the collector is by no means harsh in his views of the tales, we might well conclude that there is more to them than their recorder knew. He was a man both respectful of his informants and yet not merely the chronicler of their tales in their settings. Clearly, many of the told stories re-enacted performatively both sociological and psychological conflicts in communities under stress, and in all probability reflected considerable change in tribal and social structures.

The editorial caution of today’s scholars does little to tease out the tragic emotions, occasional ribaldry and remarkable beauty in these largely mythic narratives. Their tellings once constituted the primary tissue of their lifeways, and their performance must have transmitted both emotional and intellectual power. That Linderman did not perceive this is a pity, but his work as collector is the important matter. While Voget is an anthropologist and Larson a literary critic, neither has produced the fuller commentary that the collections would seem to warrant at this time, in view of the further tragic constraints upon, and denuding of, its deeper meaning of life of the heroic American Indian of the west.

It is therefore necessary to conclude that these are well-intentioned reprints of classic texts, yet edited/presented in a perfunctory way, whereas all the volumes deserved to fare much better at the hands of those reducing them now. For they constitute fragments of a cosmology, a civilisation now lost, and a worldview of which mankind is in dire need. In one sense it is not for outsiders to comment but, even at this late date, it is important to do so.
While we understand that the same press is about to issue in 1998 a form of overview, entitled *Artistry in Native American Myths* by Karl Kroeber, there is always an obligation on the scholarly editor to stress, however succinctly, a work's core, in this case a fine mix of ethnopoetics, mythic imagining, trickster orality and the poignant interface between human and animal cultures, offering a grammar of precious experience that cannot but revitalise all mankind's individualised imagining and mythic conceptualising.

**Notes**

2. See also his compiling and editing of *Traditional Literatures of the American Indian: Texts and Interpretations*, Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1997, xi, 159pp., £32.95.

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