

# CHAPTER 1

# THE SOCIAL BASE OF FOLKLORE

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

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

Folklorists have always been conscious of their own role in creating the category of folklore. Although “folks” have been objectified in a variety of institutions and representations (including the nation-state as a political entity), such publications as

the Grimms' *Deutsche Sagen* confer the further dignity of academic objectivity upon the Germans as a people, legends as a kind of thing in the world, and German legends as a distinct corpus (1816–1818). Nationalist, populist, revolutionary, and colonialist scholars around the world have continued to produce cultural objects in the hope of modeling social futures.

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

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

Bauman does not define this new phrase, used at that time to refer to the class, ethnic, and occupational makeup of political parties and social movements. The word “base” has, to be sure, an objectivist and perhaps Marxist tinge (cf. Williams 1973). It implies the dependence of cultural forms on societal structures, in contrast to later theorists such as Michel Foucault who treated discourse as constitutive of society itself. This debate would become fruitful for folklorists. For Bauman’s immediate purposes, however, the primary value of the phrase “social base” lay in allowing researchers to seek a “direct and empirical” connection between folk and lore (1972: 33).

In this overview, I follow Bauman in tracing the interlocking development of three dominant approaches. Each of them situates the social base of folklore at the nether pole of one of the core binary oppositions of Western modernity: old and new, particular and universal, fluid and fixed. The first takes folklore to be the cultural forms proper to the deepest stratum of social life, flattened and superseded by the historical, hierarchical, or institutional overlay of modernity. The second views folklore

holistically as the expressive bonds of community, which assert or maintain its differential being against external pressures. The third turns from stratum and bonds to performance, finding the social base of folklore in the contingencies of a situation it seeks to transform. That very contingency, however, has destabilized the institutional base of the field of folkloristics: is there truly an isolable object to justify an autonomous discipline? I conclude by looking at some folkloristic reactions to the present tension between the visibility of the cultural and the elusiveness of the social.

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

It is not easy to generalize about a body of scholarship that, more than that of many disciplines with theoretical aspirations, is distributed internationally, ideologically, and institutionally.<sup>1</sup> The social base of folkloristics emulates that of its subject matter insofar as most folklorists are closely engaged with particular situations, populations, and cultural forms. In the wake of civil rights movements, anticolonial movements, and the breakup of the Soviet Union, folklorists around the world challenged the dominance of the comparative “Finnish” method, and the field now has multiple centers and paradigms as well as a healthy suspicion of totalizing assertions. By the same token, the field has rejected canonicity in either its subject matter or its interpretive authorities, remaining open on principle to examining any kind of cultural production and considering knowledge from any source on its merits. This exceptional framework presents challenges for disciplinary self-presentation within the hierarchical knowledge structure of universities. It is not devoid of status anxiety: folklorists take on the tinge of their engagements, which can leave them politically compromised or stigmatized by association with the low, local, or ephemeral. And folklorists are frequently involved with their research at a personal level, particularly if they do ethnographic fieldwork. Studying live cultural forms, they are caught up in performance and aesthetic evaluation, and the performers often criticize or make use of their interpretations. Participating in powerful collective experiences, necessarily accepting hospitality, folklorists develop emotional attachments and ethical responsibilities in relation to an often subaltern and vulnerable “social base.” Like many of my colleagues, I feel occasional impulses to valorize myself, my discipline, or my subject matter, and I rarely find it possible to detach the reading of a particular situation from the larger question, “What is to be done?” (Chernyshevsky 1989 [1863]). Such concerns can cloud scholarship, but they also have heuristic value. Folklorists do not find it easy to claim objective scholarly authority over an unproblematic domain of reality. The social base of folklore research itself encourages a useful humility before the task.

## THE VERNACULAR LAYER

The concept of folklore took shape as Western thinkers began to contrast tradition with modernity. As modernity itself grew older, the sociotemporal location of folklore shifted. In the nineteenth century, most scholars understood folklore as a historical

stratum within general culture, a residue surviving chiefly in the lowest layers of society. Today the layers have reversed: folklore is seen as emergent, rising up from the interstices of institutions and the new platforms of digital culture. In between came a Marxist conception of folklore as the culture of the dominated classes and the American liberal idea of folklore as the shared vernacular of everyday life, underlying formal institutions. Borrowed from linguistics, the very word “vernacular” exemplifies the ambiguities of this view of folklore as partial and submerged. Used primarily to contrast a native tongue to a language of power or learning, “vernacular” derives from the Latin word for a native-born house slave (Howard 2005).

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

Thus by the early nineteenth century there was already a long history of attention to peasant and provincial expressions in Europe, treating them for the most part as requiring to be recorded in text but eradicated from practice. Of course this history moved in tandem with the discovery of the “primitive” in the process of European overseas exploration and imperialism (De Certeau 1988). But while the imagined primitive is radically alien, the imagined folk is the intimate Other. It lives within the border of the nation state; it lives within the emotional memory of modern Western man. In 1697 Charles Perrault described his fairy tales as learned from peasant nursemaids. More than a century later, the lullaby learned at the breast would remain the metonymy of oral tradition for Herder and the German Romantics (Wellbery 1999: 190). The folk is all that is close and yet estranged: the servant class, the feminine, the domestic, the rural. Close enough both to arouse and to defile the right-thinking bourgeois individual, it excites simultaneous nostalgia and repudiation. The associated late nineteenth-century conception of unschooled beliefs and customs as cultural “survivals” raised similar anxiety, implying both historical anomaly and a certain vigor in persistence.

Marxist theory made the anxiety explicit. Writing in the early 1930s from Fascist Italy, where the southern peasantry lived in quasi-servitude and extreme regional diversity hindered the advance of modernity, Antonio Gramsci began to understand folklore as a foundation for revolution. In an influential few pages, he defined folklore as inchoate philosophy, pieced together from the cultural detritus that made its way to the subaltern strata of society (1985). In the view of Gramsci and the Italian school founded by Ernesto De Martino in the 1950s, the archaism of folklore was objectively, though not consciously, resistant to dominant ideologies

(Lombardi-Satriani 1974). Latin American and US Latino folklorists, writing from the tensions between indigenes and colonizers, produced a more contemporaneous model of cultural contestation. Américo Paredes demonstrated that the heroic history of Texas took very different shape in Anglo-American literary treatments and the oral memory of Mexicanos, with the material evidence largely supporting the latter representations (1958). Attached to union movements, the Federal Writers Project, and the Library of Congress, left-wing populist folklorists in the United States documented work songs, the narratives of former slaves, and other evidence of progressive strains in oral tradition (Green 2001; Hirsch 2010). Young white male scholars in their wake, coming of age in the folksong revival and the Civil Rights era, celebrated the transgressive performances of African American male street culture (Abrahams 2006 [1964]; Jackson 2004 [1974]).

The mainstream of US folkloristics took a different line out of the theory of folklore as survival of earlier stages of civilization. William Wells Newell, founder of the American Folklore Society in 1888, grafted the survivalist anthropology of the Englishman E.B. Tylor onto the new psychology of the American William James. Newell identified supernatural belief as the property not only of children and country people but a common propensity to epistemological error corrected in some cases by the self-conscious rationality acquired through schooling (1904). The psychoanalytic interpretations of Alan Dundes also owe something to this American concern with common foundations. Dundes understood much folklore as the symbolic precipitate of unconscious processes that takes collective shape in such shared forms as the cockfight or the football game (2007). More often, American scholars revised Newell to defend the rationality, self-consciousness, and thereby the full citizenship of the folk: David Hufford's account of supernatural belief shares Newell's emphasis on common perceptual experience as the source of tradition, but documents the self-critical monitoring of the experiencer (1982). Only in the 1990s did many US folklorists become comfortable again with the old European idea of custom as second nature (Kelley 1990), acknowledging the layer of inattention and habit in which much cultural practice is transmitted and reproduced (Cantwell 1993).

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

This conception of the lower stratum as everyday and familiar had an important afterlife in US folklore studies. Some, influenced by the Chicago school of sociology, saw folklore in localist terms as the "little tradition" coexisting with a shared "great

tradition” (Redfield 1956). Implicitly, a strong research emphasis on domestic sociability as the context of folk performance and women as tradition-bearers understood folklore in the framework of liberal politics as the private sphere (e.g. Goldstein 1964). Most explicit theorizing resorted to technological criteria, invoking the oral or, later, the face-to-face stratum of culture (e.g. Thompson 1977 [1946], and still Ben-Amos 1972). This formulation provoked quarrels, with successive cases being made for writing, print, the telephone, the copy machine, and ultimately the Internet as genuine conduits of tradition: in practice folklorists have followed the folk themselves to explore expressive interaction in the favored medium of the moment.

In the “new perspectives” turn of the 1970s, US scholars seeking to revitalize the Boasian tradition in the field began to replace “folk” with “vernacular.” Rediscovered by sociolinguists, architects, and cultural critics, this adjective was used to claim the autonomy, coherence, validity, and contemporaneity of practices hitherto defined in terms of lack (Brunskill 1963; Labov 2006 [1966]; Illich 1980). The vernacular was the everyday order of culture, developed in person-to-person interaction without the mediation of institutional codes or controls. “Vernacular” remained a contrastive term to “standard,” but now it was seen as dynamically engaged with the upper layer, as folklorists synthesized the Western Marxist, postcolonial, and liberal traditions. Ill at ease with the disdain for popular culture in some of the US literary establishment (e.g. Macdonald 1962) and with what they knew of the Frankfurt school’s critique of mass culture as ideological mystification (Benjamin 1968 [1936]; Horkheimer and Adorno 2002 [1947]), most American folklorists emphasized creative adaptation and critique by consumers (e.g. Sutton-Smith *et al.* 1995; Santino 1995). Revising the Italian conception of subaltern cultures as unconscious resistance, the students of Paredes argued that minority expressions explicitly challenged the dominant discourse (Limón 1983).

To be sure, the insistence on synchronic meaning found in Ben-Amos’s redefinition of folklore threatened to erase history just as the concern with historical reconstruction had once caused scholars to ignore the communicative present. Several lines of research corrected this tendency. By the late 1960s a preponderance of folklorists rejected the Anglo-American scholarly orthodoxy that enslaved Africans had lost their native cultures on the boat: there was ample evidence of African forms persisting in diasporic expressions (Vlach 1978; Abrahams and Szwed 1983; Thompson 1983). In the 1980s, as creole forms became central to theories of language origins, folkloristic interest in the creole also intensified, encouraging a revisiting of earlier accounts of oral transmission. So did Mikhail Bakhtin’s account of verbal utterance as intrinsically dialogic (drawing on previous utterances), subsequently framed in French literary theory as intertextuality (the making and reading of texts through other texts) (Bakhtin 1981; Kristeva 1980). Still determined to demonstrate the active role of the people once deemed mere “tradition-bearers” (Von Sydow 1948), folklorists now argued that creativity entailed the reworking and shaping of available materials – an argument especially favored in feminist revisions of *ex nihilo* mythologies (Babcock 1986; Weigle 1989). Any given practice was thus likely to have not a single straightforward social base but historical layers, hybrid sources, and complex authorship. Folk art scholars traced social exchanges in women’s ritual arts (Turner 1999) and unearthed the social roots of works deemed by the art world to be the

spontaneous expression of uneducated “outsiders” (Ward and Posen 1985; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989). In both cases, though, the social was no longer simply the “context” for the cultural expression: rather, it was the very subject of the art.

In Primiano’s influential formulation of “vernacular religion” (1995, cf. Magliocco, this volume) and a large body of work on vernacular healing systems (e.g. Brady 2001), the idea of the vernacular is inflected by this work on assemblage to become a more self-conscious version of Gramsci’s “common sense.” Rather than a stable layer, the vernacular is now described as the immediate sphere of engagement in which actors negotiate between the tradition, professional, and alternative discourses available to them, drawing on multiple resources to create a practical repertoire. We see here some influence of an American tendency to equate agency with consumer choice, but also a sense that actors’ space of maneuver is shrinking as institutional procedures and commercial products colonize ever more everyday activities. Parody and poaching necessarily replace autonomous creation in a world so dense with prior discourse (Dorst 1990; M. Hufford 1999). We might now imagine the strata as reversed, with the vernacular growing up from the cracks in the institutional layer.

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

## THE SOCIAL BOND

In tandem with the conception of folklore as a lower cultural stratum there evolved a compensatory holistic view. In modernizing mood, nineteenth-century thinkers

might see the practices and dispositions of the past as impediments to progress. But in moments of distress with change, they looked back with regret at the apparent cultural coherence and social cohesion of their childhoods; they might also draw on the social knowledge arising from pre-modern constraints to imagine alternatives to the social violence of industrial expansion. Early nationalist work channeling the streams of tradition into forward-moving cultural projects was followed by a concern with the dynamics of small groups, giving way in turn to a discovery of folklore in every conceivable kind of social assembly. In arguing over what might constitute a folk community and examining their own investments in that argument, folklorists produced a variety of insights into the role of cultural form in social bonding: the role of performance in making bounded groups seem like objective realities; the transmission of cultural form in the creation of social networks; and the creation of a sense of communal belonging in individuals.

Folklore research begins to take shape as an autonomous discipline with Romantic nationalism and more specifically in the writings of Johann Gottfried von Herder, who wrote in the 1770s of oral traditions as vital organic processes grounded in place. Herder did not consign traditions to the past, though he judged them vulnerable to external influences. Under normal circumstances, individuals would continue to assimilate their traditions, contribute to them, and develop them as the lifestream of the nation. After the Napoleonic invasions, German thinkers systematized Herder's ideas into a prescription for nation-building. Channeling the flow of poetry into the procedures of philology, Jakob Grimm and others reconstructed a posited cultural community of the past with a view to its future realization. They created the shared cultural currency and pedagogic frameworks that, circulated within the imagined national boundary, would thicken interaction and quicken group consciousness for ensuing political struggles (Anderson 1991; Bendix, this volume).

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

Seeking to wrest free of powerful neighbors, small would-be nations at the European periphery embraced the new apparatus with special enthusiasm, and small countries such as Finland, Estonia, and Hungary continue to exercise major international influence in the field. But larger polities seeking to retain their hold on diverse populations also produced folkloric documentation for public consumption and created institutions of folklore scholarship. Folklore proved politically labile: the same forms might be made to serve nationalist or separatist, imperial or anticolonial, fascist



or socialist agendas. To be sure, most successful political projects, whether revolutionary or reactionary, were led by small elites or soon coopted by them, and the showiest genres of folk performance were often mobilized, sometimes coercively, to signify popular consent to their doings. Thus colorful costumes and rhythmic dances have come to connote collective passivity to many people, and the word “folklore” is tainted by association in Spanish and some other languages.

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

In the twentieth century, the culture concept rooted in Boas’ transplantation of the German Romantic tradition encouraged most American folklorists to maintain their focus on rural communities or their immigrant descendants, with the nation-state taken for granted as backdrop. The idea of culture as a holistic way of life was popularized in mid-century in widely read ethnographies by Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and others; it was also operationalized by social scientists working for the US government during World War II and after, both in efforts to understand enemy psychology and in campaigns to win the cooperation of local ethnic groups in war and counterinsurgency operations (Price 2008). Functionalist social theory turned nationalist ideology into science by positing that the world was naturally divided into organic self-maintaining collectivities (Parsons 1951).

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

communication” that would identify an “expressive economy” of complementary and competing formulations of group experience (Hymes 1964; Ben-Amos 1976; Falassi 1980). This move did not directly challenge the concept of homogeneous community but began to treat cultural forms as flexible and rhetorical, restoring attention to social process.

Common descent or history ceased to be a criterion of folkness for many scholars. The methodological turn to context and participant observation, the political preoccupations of the civil rights era, and professional anxiety about the dwindling population of ballad-singers and fairytale-tellers all prompted a search for a contemporary folk, defined increasingly in sociological rather than anthropological terms as “small groups” without reference to a prior tradition (Ben-Amos 1972). Dundes claimed that any group developed traditions, or what Ben-Amos called artistic communication: “The term ‘folk’ can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor” (1977). Folklorists argued at meetings over whether lovers, owner-pet dyads, and individuals might constitute folk groups, while pushing earlier lines of research to expand in obvious social directions: from immigrant folklore to family folklore, from urban folklore to suburban folklore, from old sects to new religious movements and even mainline Protestants, from secret societies to college fraternities. Groups acquiring public identities as communities through civil rights struggles followed, with work on gay folklore and the folklore of the deaf (Goodwin 1989; Hall 1991). Pop-cultural publics became objects of folklore research when they thickened into fan communities such as Deadheads and Trekkies (Bacon-Smith 1992). Folklore theory began to reflect explicitly on identity (Dundes 1993; Oring 1994), and personal identity emerged as a new focus, in studies both of traditional performers (Sawin 2004) and of self-formation through consumption, with a special interrogation of women’s appropriation of exotic traditions (Lau 2000; Shukla 2008; Bock and Borland 2011).

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

New studies of festival and “display events” puzzled out the dialectics of group-making and differentiation. In contrast to anthropological accounts of collective liminality, Abrahams and Bauman addressed conflict not as a temporary ritual break but as structural, arguing for multiple organizing principles and co-existing social positions in a single community (1978). Stoeltje and Bauman identified festivals as key ethnographic sites of modernity, the product of commerce, mediation, and ethnic coexistence (1989). Abrahams explored the expressive repertoire of large-scale events, particularly the nonverbal modalities that could compel a common attention among strangers: noise and explosions, rhythm, gigantized décor, smell, and especially food (1982). There followed studies of ethnic foodways as the medium of intergroup sociability (Brown and Mussell 1984), the aesthetics of marketplace pitches and county fairs (Prosterman 1995; Kapchan 1996), and the gendered construction of embodied experience (Young 1995).

In the face of a growing disciplinary emphasis on communal identities, Noyes argued for the need to make an analytical distinction between group, network, and community: the institutionalized entity, the empirical pattern of social interactions, and the imagined collectivity to which individuals claim belonging (2003 [1995]). Each thread of the earlier research has received ongoing attention.

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

In the course of recognizing their own historical role in objectifying political communities, folklorists observed that the "folk" also objectify themselves in institutions and monuments. African American and Latino folklorists pointed out that the minorities usually studied by white scholars in their transgressive moments spent most of their time in the same struggle to create order as that of the dominant population, under more challenging circumstances (Davis 1992). The performance of respect and organizational hierarchy in Caribbean "tea meetings," African American women's clubs, and Native American ceremonies confirms the aspiration to stable social being (Abrahams 1993; McGregory 1997; Jackson 2003). Like new nations, new religious groups construct lineages, rituals, and bodies of scholarship, linking claims of antiquity to present mechanisms of bonding (Magliocco 2004). In the burgeoning of inter- and intra-national tourism, communities construct themselves for the eyes of outsiders, in text, museum, and performance (Dorst 1989); producing these activities for strangers, however, creates social interaction among members that may become an end in itself (Bendix 1989). More aggressive performances of communal identity, such as initiating a foreign researcher into a local ritual or stuffing a visiting politician with local specialties, force powerful outsiders to acknowledge the group's existence and importance as well as to own an obligation to it (Fenske 2010).

In these last examples we can see that the making and witnessing of objective signs of identity also entails the forging of interpersonal social bonds, sometimes among member-performers, sometimes between performer and audience. This takes us to the network. Folklorists have long studied the diffusion of oral tradition across wide geographic and social distances. The implicit network approach of the historic-geographic method became explicit in work on the "legend conduit" (Dégh and Vaszonyi 1975): still more than the song or the fairy tale, rumor and contemporary legend circulate between strangers, between mouth and media, across racial boundaries (Fine and Turner 2004). Working at a more intimate level, studies of jokes and riddles showed how traditions could regulate social boundaries but also bridge them, the dyadic question-and-answer form establishing complicity and provisional solidarities (Hasan-Rokem and Shulman 1996; Oring 2008). Folklorists interested in patterns of social reciprocity have observed that they are thematized in oral tradition itself. In the Irish tale of "The Man Who has no Story," a guest in a strange house who declines to make the effort of contributing to the evening's entertainment is sent out on the road to be buffeted

with supernatural punishments, after which he has indeed a story to tell (Glassie 1997: 319–324). The same requirement of performance in return for hospitality can be found today at Chinese urban banquets: a potential new business partner earns the trust of others by singing a song or telling a joke that attests to grace under pressure, self-mastery while drinking, and a concern for the general well-being (Shepherd 2005).

The word “tradition” comes from a Latin legal term (*traditio*) for a hand-to-hand transfer of property; it is worth considering this handover in terms of the gift exchange first described by Marcel Mauss (1923–1924). Vernacular performances are typically offered and valued knowledge passed on in the context of ongoing social relationships. Where no such relationship exists, the gift creates one: even if giver and receiver never meet again, there is an obligation to remember the giver and context of giving. To be sure, folklore is no stranger to commercial exchange, not only in its recent commodification but in many of its earliest documented manifestations in fairs, marketplaces, and among itinerant peddlers. Nonetheless, there is always a social supplement to the monetary transaction, an expressive “gift.” The personhood and social identity of the seller expose themselves to the gaze, perhaps in expressive pattern and costume, perhaps in a narrative authenticating the product sold. Sustenance may be shared: ethnic restaurants, with their mimesis of domestic hospitality, are privileged mediators for new immigrant groups in establishing provisional social solidarities, reversing the larger host-guest relationship. In festival and tourist settings, embodied participation is offered through the invitation to join in dance. Although much of folkloristic performance works to objectify and naturalize group shibboleths, the shibboleth can thereby become the invited point of entry for outsiders (Michael 1998), creating social bonds vital to the circulation of information and resources, the restructuring of collective action, and the maintenance of existential solidarities that may be mobilized in time of need.

Just as folklore’s rethinking of its keywords found a useful external irritant in Hobsbawm and Ranger’s “invention of tradition” in the 1980s (1983; cf. Briggs 1996), so Benedict Anderson’s “imagined community,” discovered somewhat later by folklorists, provoked both appropriation and contrastive reflection (1991 [1983]). Many scholars argued that not just nations but all communities were imagined. Some, however, were more imagined than others, requiring a greater effort to construct persuasive symbols and narratives that could not be supplied by prior common experience. Imagination, in turn, did not imply unreality. Recurrent exposure to community-marked narratives and images instills compelling memories into individuals; recurrent participation in communal performance incorporates the community into the body such that individuals identify with it not of choice but from a sense of inevitability: they feel connected, responsible, bound in history or bound in fate to those who have shared the powerful experience (Noyes 2003). This naturalized belonging gives rise to its own metafolklore: *blason populaire* and ethnic slurs against outsiders, inside jokes and restricted codes, self-mockery, and even the covert performances of shared experience denied in the public presentation of the group (Herzfeld 1997).

The imaginary that bonds communities may be freely chosen, as in the rituals carefully negotiated and designed by neo-Pagan congregations, with their voluntary

membership (Magliocco 2004). It may be imposed from above, as in the state rituals of fascist and communist regimes. It may be imposed from outside, through discrimination and stereotyping, even though imprisonment, expulsion, or genocide. Mobile moderns tend to idealize communal attachments, but belonging is ambivalent in practice, a source of both comfort and tension. Where belonging is thick, with a rich imaginary reinforced by dense interaction among community members or strong external pressures, individuals are likely to feel an almost sacramental strength of meaning in everyday actions that is not free of claustrophobia. Community can be a painful inheritance and it restricts individual freedoms: Glassie has suggested in lectures that the formal intricacy of arts like Turkish rugs and Irish fiddling is the product of personal frustration, the great folk artists being talented individuals who lack other channels for their energies. Folklorists often remain attached to communitarian imaginings nonetheless, in part because of this aesthetic payoff, in part to find redemption from a violent social history, and in part from ethical and practical concern for the future, given that institutional modes of belonging, however consensual and democratic in principle, seem insufficient in practice to create a sense of mutual responsibility or energize commitment to the general good against the prevailing economic pressures to individualism.

### PERFORMANCE IN CONTEXT

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

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

environment, purpose, and aesthetics, and eventually at place-making itself as a discursive practice (M. Hufford 1992).

Scholars of oral tradition focused instead on the human juxtapositions in shared space. Responding to national, ethnic, and immigration conflicts in the present, Mediterraneanist scholars re-examined the cultural evidence of urban coexistence across millenia (Herzfeld 1997; Bromberger and Durand 2001; Hasan-Rokem 2003) and the sharing of performance forms and narratives among apparent enemies (Marzolph 1996; Colović 2002). Sociability among rural neighbors as a counterweight to sectarian performance has similarly interested scholars of Northern Ireland (Glassie 1975b; Cashman 2008), and Jackson has demonstrated that patterns of ceremonial intertribal visiting among Native Americans in Oklahoma invoke a past of vigorous exchange among Native nations prior to their forced relocation (2003).

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

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

lullaby, expressing frequently violent criticism of their position (Jordan and Kalcik 1985).

The idea of performance redounding back on its social base posed a dynamic contrast to the postwar culture concept. Inspired by Kenneth Burke, Abrahams argued that folklore was rhetorical, seeking to name situations and so transform them (1968). Genres began to be seen as reified intentionality, collectively designed over time to address recurrent situations (cf. Shuman and Hasan-Rokem. this volume). Bauman urged attention to “emergence,” the unplanned dimension of performance that arises from contingencies and interaction effects (1977). The vocabulary of folklorists increasingly emphasized the active role of performance and performers: tradition became traditionalization, context contextualization. Performance did not grow inevitably from either a generic or a social base, but declared its own ancestry and pointed to its own sphere of relevance. Emphasizing the conscious application of folklore to situation in performance, scholars also were able to look at the intertextual relations among performances and the effects of textual appropriation, showing how a religious hymn might hearten protesters at risk of arrest, a politician’s use of proverbs authenticate him as a member of the people, or a personal narrative in a mass-mailed charitable appeal excite the empathy and open the checkbook of the reader (Mieder 1997; Shuman 2005).

Recent research has taken the performance turn’s concern with agency to its extremes. At one end, folklorists study voluntary engagements in ludic, subsistence, religious, and professional activities: quilting, hunting, Scouting, gaming, dancing. They have been interested in the sociological question of how such activities build civil society (Fine 2010), the psychological question of how they build masculinity (Mechling 2004), the folkloristic question of how they build community (Feintuch 2001), and even in the phenomenological question of how they build parallel worlds of experience (M. Hufford 1992). Here performance is performative, in J.L. Austin’s sense (1962), creating realities both intentionally and incidentally.

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

In pursuing the performance approach to its logical conclusion, folklorists began to undermine their own differential identity. If everything is performance – as scholars coming from theatre, rhetoric, anthropology, and elsewhere were also concluding – then why draw boundaries? This dissolution of disciplines was explicit in the program of the early 1970s, a unified approach grounded in philological method. Addressing the vernacular layer, folklore studies could become the foundation of the human sciences. Institutionally, however, the intellectual convergence made it possible during

the 1980s for the most theoretically adept American folklorists to “pass” into better-positioned fields with less historical baggage: cultural theory, American studies, linguistic anthropology, and the new performance studies. (Less theoretically inclined ones did not pass but perhaps melted into departments of art, literature, music, area studies, and even history.) Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, while acknowledging her folkloristic roots, argued that reconfiguration was intrinsic to the natural history of disciplines (1998a).

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

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

Most folklorists did not follow some of the new roads through the performance turn to the social base. Warner’s influential notion of “publics” imagined and assembled by a text (2002) went a step too far for many nurtured on an idea of tradition shaped in long-term interaction. More useful was the concept of “scene,” appropriated by ethnomusicologists from their informants to describe a site of ongoing encounter around an artistic practice (Straw 1991). In these two conceptions, performance calls its own social base into being. But even the scene has not crossed the disciplinary line to any great extent, though it frees us from the conceptual burdens implied by such words as “folk” or even “subculture.” Many folklorists are suspicious of too pure an analytical reliance on performance: the grounding of artistic form in everyday life and the material constraint implied by the formulation of “social base” feel right despite their limitations.

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



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

### EMBLEM AND STIGMA

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

This critique of the concept of authenticity was a central preoccupation of folklore studies in the 1980s and 1990s. The idea of a folk tradition streaming unsullied from a pure social source, unclouded by mediation and unpolluted by self-conscious manipulation or foreign influences was not only romantically naive but socially exclusionary, and geared to the creation of differential economic value as well as specious political unity (Bendix 1997). The biographies of folklorists were critically revisited with a view to their ideological compromises. Field engagements and textual practices including folksong collecting, text editing, interviewing, ethnographic writing, and archiving became the object of both historical reexamination and present-day prescription (e.g. Kodish 1987; Lawless 1991; Briggs 1993; Bendix 2010; Fenske and Davidović-Walther 2010). Critiques of misrepresentation in tourism, museums, and folk festivals gave way to a more positive interest in them as sites of cultural production (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998b).

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

Styles are by definition imitable through attention and practice. Oral ballad style invigorated English romantic and Spanish modernist poetry. Hip-hop graffiti, clothing, rap and turntable styles have been adapted globally. There is also a generic folk style. Indigenous communities trying to open up tourism know the recipe for creating “traditional crafts” suitable as souvenirs. Global subaltern populations seeking the sympathy of Western audiences for a politically inconvenient cause learn how to construct both oral testimony and sellable crafts in a nonthreatening “folk” register: bright colors, simple shapes, the marks of production by hand, and a thematics of family life, spirituality, and proximity to nature (e.g. Westerman 1994b; Peterson 1998; Adams 2005). Even so new a medium as the Web has an identifiable vernacular style, imitated by designers of corporate sites in order to make product testimonials or political arguments look consumer-volunteered. Howard notes that Cicero already speaks of the “indescribable vernacular flavor” that brought success to a certain Roman orator (2005), and we can compare the current stylistic imitation of popular social movements by American political action committees and lobbyists, recognized by critics as “astroturf” rather than “grassroots” activism. In such cases, the style is purely the emblem of the social base.

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

A theoretical question is also raised. Does it still make sense to talk of the social base of folklore in a world of flexible networks and mobile traditions? Folklorists recognize themselves as creating fixity out of flux; they recognize their habit of pointing to their own documents as evidence that a world of stable working classes and integrated

communities once existed or might still be recoverable. In this, scholars build upon the strategies of those they study. Communities in a state of dispersal compress old lifeways into containable form: a professionalized genre like bluegrass that travels along with migrants, or a festival for which migrants return home once a year (Cantwell 1984; Magliocco 2005). They secure in representation what they can no longer maintain in practice. Entire regions, such as Appalachia in the United States, and entire populations, such as the Roma in Eastern Europe, have moved into an uncanny double reality. Their cultural production, notably music, is mobile, powerful, omnipresent: celebrated as national identity and world heritage, immortal in archives and cyberspace, profitable as commodity form. Their social base is increasingly spectral, subject in the Appalachian case to environmental transformation that is making old communities uninhabitable and in the Roma case to more forthright dehumanization and denial of citizenship. Cultural visibility in both cases seems to work in inverse proportion to social visibility and human rights generally (see Noyes and Silverman in Kapchan forthcoming). The gentrification that comes with touristic development follows a similar logic, multiplying the signs of the Other while expelling the Other's body (Welz 1996).

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

Two recent formulations, resonating respectively with the academic and the applied poles of folklore work, have traced back an arc from the performance turn to the field's beginnings. The more matter-of-fact comes from Richard Bauman, summing up the "prevailing theory" of folkloristics as "the philology of the vernacular" (2008). The methods are those of the performance approach, now extended diachronically into textual study reproducing the scope of the older philology. The object is the vernacular, which he now describes as one of two competing communicative modalities: "If the vernacular pulls toward the informal, immediate, locally grounded, proximal side of the [communicative] field, the cosmopolitan pulls toward the rationalized, standardized, mediated, wide-reaching, distal side" (2008: 33). He notes changing sociologies of textual circulation and changing "social bases" of interest to folklorists at different historical stages, instead finding folklore's continuity in the nature of communicative process itself: the informal, immediate, local, and proximal have always been part of its quality space.

The subaltern body returns in the other definition, coined by Diane Goldstein in 2007 and used by Goldstein and Amy Shuman in a series of conference panels and papers since then: "the stigmatized vernacular." In this formulation, the anxiety of

folklore research is explicitly problematized, both the ethical commitment to social justice and the desire for disciplinary respectability. The stigma is the conspicuous visibility of something normally kept out of sight, in this case the marked term of modernity's binary oppositions: the traditional, the non-standard, the low, the poor, the collective. Folklore – a word uniting the performances of subalterns with the scholarly framings and institutional packagings thereof – might then be seen as euphemism, the screen that simultaneously conceals and calls attention to an anomalous presence inside the modern nation state or global order. Folklore valorizes rubbish and turns pollution into sacrality. Addressing what is liminal, it cannot escape the instability of its subject; in receiving traditions, it assumes the trace of the subaltern body.

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

## NOTE

- 1 For the sake of limiting the discussion to manageable complexity, I concentrate on the field as it has developed in the United States. This is one provincial view among others. As the chapters in this book make clear, the United States has never been the field's center of gravity.

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