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AMERICAN FOLKLORE AND AMERICAN STUDIES

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THE COLLECTION AND STUDY OF FOLKLORE IN AMERICA AROSE OUT OF THE most broad-gauged intellectual concerns of 19th-century Americans: the question of whether a new culture could be fabricated out of the pioneer experience, especially by those who were consciously concerned with putting old systems and traditions behind them; the confrontation between sophisticated culture and the expressions of the populace; the related face-offs between the agrarian and the technological world views and between the resultant competing economic, social, and political interests of different parts of the country; the concurrent existence of the many within the one, especially as diversity was dramatized by differences in languages and systems of interacting; and the sense of the past coming into collision with the demands of the present and the future, especially with regard to the size and composition of the population, and the characteristics of geographical and psychological place.

Folklorists from the beginnings of our discipline have addressed such problems, usually without attempting to solve them. To be sure, there have been those who actively involved themselves with one controversy or another, but members of the discipline have attempted primarily to fill in the sociocultural picture through the collection, description, and analysis of the "things" of culture: the material objects central to fashioning an existence, the texts of performances by which the various American groups gave voice to themselves, and the belief and value systems underlying folklife.

We take as our task in this article not so much to provide a comprehensive bibliography on folklore and American Studies as to delineate the practical and conceptual organizing principles of this field. This should help the student of American Studies to understand how any specific work relates to the literature as a whole. There are numerous bibliographical tools to guide

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access to the literature[1]; what we attempt here is a guide to its underlying organization.

* * *

The quest for what we would now call American folklore was part of the larger search for American culture by writers at least as early as the time of the Republic's founding. Every student of American literature knows of Irving's attempt, for instance, to locate in his own country something akin to the European legends he found so attractive, of Hawthorne's yearning for a depth of American tradition sufficient to provide a basis for the creation of literature, of Longfellow's attempt to write an American *Kalevala* in the same spirit of romantic nationalism that prompted Lönnrot's original, and of numerous others who shared the conviction that a richness of tradition was necessary to the development of a national literature and the proclamation of a distinctive cultural ethos.

This literary quest antedated the establishment of a scholarly discipline of folklore in the United States by more than a century. What seems to have generated the impetus to establish the American Folklore Society, in 1888, was the combined energies of belletristic writers concerned with defining American culture (Mark Twain, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Edward Eggleston, Joel Chandler Harris); historians involved in establishing a time depth and tradition for America (Francis Parkman, Reuben Gold Thwaites, John Fiske); ethnologists interested in the myths and customs of the native Americans (Franz Boas, J. Owen Dorsey, John Wesley Powell, Otis T. Mason); and the international literary-comparative folklorists of the day, concerned with relating American life to its forebears by tracing the dissemination of tradition across cultural boundaries (William Wells Newell, Francis James Child, T. F. Crane, George Lyman Kittredge).[2]

The major question that concerned them, like their predecessors, was how to define and delimit American folklore. The American Folklore Society was influenced in part by work of the Folk-Lore Society in Britain; for the British, however, the Britishness of their national folklore was unproblematic. Not so for the Americans—the nature, indeed the existence, of

[1]Especially useful are the following: the Bibliographic Notes to each chapter in Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore* (New York: Norton, 1968); Tristram P. Coffin, *An Analytical Index to the Journal of American Folklore* (Philadelphia: Publications of the American Folklore Society, Bibliographical and Special Series, Vol. 7, 1958); "Suggestions for Further Reading in Folklore," in Alan Dundes, ed., *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 475–81; Charles Haywood, *A Bibliography of North American Folklore and Folksong*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1961); Robert Wildhaber, "A Bibliographical Introduction to American Folklife," *New York Folklore Quarterly*, 21 (1965), 259–302.

[2]The membership list of the American Folklore Society is published in the *Journal of American Folklore*, 1 (1888), 94–96.

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American folklore was open to real question. Nor was this merely a 19th-century problem; Richard M. Dorson asks the same question in 1957, and it is still sufficiently open for his article to be reprinted in 1971.[3]

There are essentially two perspectives which, in various combinations, answer the question of what is American folklore. One position views American folklore more as folklore in America—i.e., an aggregate of the diverse bodies of folk tradition imported to America by the various groups that constitute the American populace. In this view, American folklore mainly consists of the declining remnants of old ways in the New World. The second approach views American folklore as an emergent cultural phenomenon, born of the interplay between the various groups that populated America and the distinctive American experience. The former view looks for preservation (or lack of preservation) of imported traditions; the latter explores the generating and shaping of a distinctively American folklore. The perspectives of individual folklorists in the United States range along the continuum between these two basic positions.

William Wells Newell, for example, the moving spirit in the founding of the American Folklore Society, articulated a view which had something of both positions. He emphasized the need to collect the "relics" of "Old English Folk-Lore" in the United States, spoke of the survival of French and Spanish folklore in the New World, and directed attention to the more recently imported lore of the German, Irish, Bohemian, Russian, Armenian, and Japanese immigrants to American cities.[4] All this views American folklore as brought from elsewhere.

When writing of Afro-Americans, however, Newell reveals a different perspective: "The true character of the plantation negro, a mystery to his former masters, who viewed him only from the outside, is to be found in his folklore. The interesting music, which he has developed in his new home, hitherto imperfectly recorded and understood, offers a series of problems of the utmost importance to the theory of the art, exhibiting as it does the entire transition from speech to song."[5] Here is a distinctively American form of folklore, with African and European affinities, but unmistakably the product of an American experience.

A. H. Krappe represents an extreme version of the first position when he notes that:

> . . . there exists no such thing as American folklore, but only European (or Af-

[3]Richard M. Dorson, "A Theory for American Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore,* 72 (1959), 197–215, reprinted in Dorson's *American Folklore and the Historian* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), 15–48.

[4]William Wells Newell, "On the Field and Work of a Journal of American Folk-Lore," *Journal of American Folklore,* 1 (1888), 3–7; "Folk-Lore Study and Folk-Lore Societies," *Journal of American Folklore,* 8 (1895), 231–42.

[5]William Wells Newell, "Folk-Lore Study and Folk-Lore Societies," 233.

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rican, or Far Eastern) folklore on the American continent, for the excellent reason that there is no American "folk." . . . The fact is that "folk" cannot be transplanted by colonization and centuries are required for a renewed growth of traditions on the new and hence thoroughly uncongenial soil. . . . American folklore, then, means the folklore imported by Europeans, Africans, and Orientals. There is nothing "American" about it, and the very term "American folklore" is a bad misnomer.[6]

Krappe's position rests on a special view of the folk as the lower (agrarian) stratum of a complex society, with a long past *in situ.* In this view, Krappe was following the European tradition of folkloristics.

Toward the opposite end of the continuum is Richard M. Dorson, who claims that American folklore is the product of the American historical process. Dorson finds the foundation of a distinctively American folklore in "the great dramatic movements of American history: exploration and colonization, Revolution and the establishment of a democratic republic, the westward surge, the tides of immigration, the slavery debate that erupted in Civil War, and the triumph of technology and industrialization. . . . These forces have affected the folk traditions brought into the United States from Europe, Africa, and Asia, and they have shaped and created new folklore, or new adaptations of old folklore themes."[7] This conception takes account of the European provenance of significant parts of American culture, and yet views that culture—and its folkloric[8] component—as a distinctive emergent form.

* * *

It is important to note that both views are built upon a fundamentally pluralistic conception of American society and culture. To be sure, there is a widespread tendency to treat the British-derived element as somehow having priority, historically or proportionately, as in Newell's giving pride of place to relics of Old English Folk-Lore, or Krappe's special emphasis on the "old stock" of English folklore still to be collected in the Appalachian and Ozark regions of the country. Yet clearly the "ethnics" of various kinds have always occupied an equally vital place in conceptions of the American folk or folklore.

There is a potential double-edge to the suggestion that the most vigorous folk traditions are to be found among Afro-Americans, Indians, French-

[6]Alexander Haggerty Krappe, " 'American' Folklore," *Folk-Say: A Regional Miscellany,* Benjamin Botkin, ed. (Norman, Okla., 1930), 291–97.

[7]Richard M. Dorson, "A Theory for American Folklore," 203.

[8]Folklorists today distinguish between *folkloric:* qualities or characteristics of the folklore itself, and *folkloristics:* pertaining to the work and thought of folklorists.

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Canadians, Mexicans, Pennsylvania Germans, or other European or Asian immigrants. Such a view accords these people *and their culture* a significant place in American culture. Since folklore is valued as part of America's heritage, this is an important concession to cultural diversity, one few Americans—especially Boston Brahmins like Newell—were willing to make in 1888. On the other hand, if folklore pertains to the rude, unsophisticated, backward—even primitive—peoples of the world, then attributing folk traditions to "ethnics" becomes patronizing and pejorative.

One "other" cultural group in particular has presented a special problem: the American Indians. Long before the development of a scholarly discipline of folklore, Indians were viewed by many writers as a special cultural resource, resident primitives whose traditions, suitably cosmeticized and romanticized, might give some antiquity and exoticism to a new national culture. There was always some question, however, whether Indians were part of American society in quite the same way as Americans of British stock, or German immigrants, or even Afro-Americans. Folklorists have questioned whether Indians are "folk" or can appropriately be said to have a folklore, as well as whether they are Americans in any conventional sense. Various conceptions of folk and folklore exclude Indians from the field. In the history of folkloristics, the dominant conception of the folk has been the lower agrarian stratum of a complex civilized society, among whom the traditional customs and modes of expression have survived.[9] By such criteria, Indians are excluded on two counts: they do not fit the definition of folk; and their customs and expressions, fully functional and integral to their contemporary culture rather than merely surviving, therefore are not folklore.

Newell articulated the problem early, by distinguishing between *folklore* and *mythology*: "The appellation 'mythology' will . . . be applied to that living system of tales and beliefs which, in primitive peoples, serves to explain existence; 'folk-lore' was primarily invented to describe the unwritten popular traditions of civilized countries."[10] The distinction notwithstanding, Newell believed that since the popular oral traditions of both civilized society and primitive society were formally isomorphic and genetically homologous, it was productive to study them together. Newell was apparently compelled to deal with these issues because members of his fledgeling society questioned the appropriateness of including both kinds of phenomena within their scope. Here are the earliest signs of strain in what has remained an uneasy marriage between folklorists and anthropologists in the United States. Until comparatively recently, anthropological folklorists

[9]This conceptualization of the folk is related both to the sociological tradition of Tönnies, Durkheim, and Redfield, and the 19th century anthropological thought of Tylor, Maine, Hartland, and others.

[10]Newell, "Folk-Lore and Mythology," *Journal of American Folklore*, 1 (1888), 163.

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devoted their primary attention to Indians and other "primitives," while those who identified themselves primarily as folklorists (usually with training in literature or history) worked among the isolated, unsophisticated, "tradition-bound" agrarian folk.[11]

Here, the in-between characteristics of Afro-Americans are instructive, for they are viewed as peasants by some, as social problems by others, and as a quasiprimitive people by yet a third group of investigators. As agrarians, they came as close as one would find to a native peasantry, and so they were studied by various belletristic folklorists following in the pattern of Joel Chandler Harris. On the other hand, Northern interest in "the Negro problem" was exhibited from many perspectives even before the Civil War. For instance, the abolitionists William Francis Allen, Lucy McKim Garrison, and Charles Pickard Ware discovered the slave songs (especially spirituals) and focused on their features demonstrating resistance in *Slave Songs of the United States*.[12] This interest has been maintained by W. E. B. DuBois, Russell Ames, Howard Odum, Miles Mark Fischer, Eileen Sothern, and many others. Odum, the famous sociologist, wrote his dissertation on Black songs as a reflection of Southern society and published many books on the subject.[13] His colleague Newbell Niles Puckett wrote a similar study focusing primarily on beliefs.[14] The literary and sociological strands found a common interest in studying the place of Blacks in American society, an interest reflected as well in the works of social historians. From Ulrich Phillips, Cash, and Dollard, through Sterling Stuckey, Lawrence Levine, and, most recently, Eugene Genovese, histories of Black society have drawn heavily on Afro-American cultural traditions.[15]

Finally, American anthropologist-folklorists have also devoted considerable study to Afro-American communities. Most notable were Elsie Clews Parsons and Melville J. Herskovits, both students of Boas. Parsons not only edited many collections of Afro-American lore but her financial assistance kept the American Folklore Society going during the Depression. Herskovits carried out important ethnographic studies of villages in Haiti, Trinidad, and Surinam, and encouraged a great many other monographs by his

[11]The distinction is still maintained both explicitly (cf. Richard M. Dorson, ed., *African Folklore* [New York: Doubleday, 1972]), and implicitly by the great majority of folklorists, even those attracted to the ethnographic study of folklore as performance and communication.

[12](New York, 1867; rpt. 1951).

[13]For a bibliography of Odum's work, see Katharine Jocher et al., eds., *Folk, Region, and Society: Selected Papers of Howard W. Odum* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1964), 455–69.

[14]*Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Patterson Smith, 1926; rpt. 1969).

[15]This tradition is reviewed most recently in Genovese, *Roll, Jordan Roll: The World the Slaveholders Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974); Stanley M. Elkins, "The Slavery Debate," *Commentary*, 60 (Dec. 1975), 40–54; and Herbert G. Gutman, *Slavery and the Numbers Game* (Champaign-Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1975).

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students and colleagues.[16] In his special interest folklore, Herskovits, in studying African retentions and pan-Afro-American Black folklore, differed from most other scholars, who saw Black lore as a component of a distinctively Southern regional culture.

* * *

The place of regionalism in American folkloristics is complex. Some implicit sense of region pervades much of the scholarly literature; yet folklorists have fallen far short of exploiting the full potential of this concept, or of meaningfully contributing to it. Although two of those most important in developing the scholarly concept of region, William Francis Allen and Howard W. Odum, also collected folklore, the folklore itself plays a secondary role in identifying and defining regions in their work.

Only a few works by cultural geographers and folklorists who have adopted their methods use folkloric materials to define American regions. Especially influential is Fred Kniffen, whose conception of region owes much to the anthropological concept of culture area. Kniffen's article, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion,"[17] uses folk architecture to determine both regional patterns and pathways of cultural diffusion. Henry Glassie's work owes much to Kniffen's, but goes beyond folk housing to examine other elements of material folk culture.[18]

The definition of regions in cultural geography has always been based centrally upon agricultural and domestic material culture; and the culture area concept, from which much thinking about regions stems, is basically an ecological construct. Nonmaterial culture, far less closely tied to the environment, rarely enters into the definition. Accordingly, Joan E. Miller's identification of a distinctive cultural region in the Ozarks through analysis of the distribution and content of folktales collected by Vance Randolph represents a unique contribution.[19] Most folklorists have used the concept of region in two ways: by being regionalists themselves, in the sense of a proud

[16]Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-Tales of Andros Island, Bahamas* (Lancaster, Pa., 1918); *Folk-Lore from the Cape Verde Islands* (Cambridge, 1923), 2 vols.; *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina* (Cambridge: Metro Books, 1923; rpt. 1969); *Folk-Lore of the Antilles, French and English* (New York: 1933, 1936), 3 vols.; Melville J. Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (New York, 1937; rpt. Garden City: Doubleday, 1971); Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny: Among the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana* (New York: Black Heritage Library Collection Series, Columbia Univ. Press, 1934); *Surinam Folk-Lore* (New York, 1936); *Trinidad Village* (New York, 1947); *The New World Negro,* Frances S. Herskovits, ed. (Bloomington: Funk and Wagnalls, 1966).

[17]*Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 55 (1965), 549–77.

[18]*Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1968).

[19]"The Ozark Culture Region as Revealed by Traditional Materials," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 58 (1968), 51–77.

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regional self-identification; and by looking to certain backwater or "tradition-bound" areas in various sectors of the country as being somehow more essentially "folk" than areas more closely tied to mass society.

With regard to the former effect of regionalism, we witness the collecting contest between the old American North and South to see which region produced more versions of "Child Ballads"—those canonized in Francis James Child's monumental and antiquarian *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads.*[20] The period between the World Wars was the era of the great folklore collections in the United States and Canada. Stimulated by the efforts of Cecil Sharp[21] in the southern Appalachians, the genre most fully collected was folksong and ballad, with special emphasis on the supposedly oldest in the repertoire, the Child ballads. Regional rivalries became especially strong with the formation of the Virginia and North Carolina Folklore Societies and the Folklore Society of the Northeast.[22] Local societies emerged on the state level, but their major journals betrayed their essentially regional orientation: *Southern Folklore Quarterly, Western Folklore, Bulletin of the Folk-Song Society of the Northeast,* and *Midwest Folklore* (but compare *New York Folklore Quarterly* and *Publications of the Texas Folklore Society*).

Such a focus almost certainly arises more from propinquity than from any sense of sociocultural identity. Nonetheless, many collector-writers did operate with some conviction of geographical and sociocultural differences, though the differences are hardly ever discussed except impressionistically.

Important exceptions to this rule were those interested in more than one region and who therefore operated implicitly (and on rare occasions explicitly) on a comparatist basis. Notable here are the compilations of Benjamin Botkin. After editing the regional *Folk-Say* volumes in the Midwest, his first major anthology was national: *A Treasury of American Folklore.* He followed this commercial success with a number of regional "treasuries," from New England, the South, and the West.[23] Botkin's approach, based on library resources, was perhaps more catholic than the work of collector-scholars. He includes urban and labor lore in these compendia as well as those agrarian materials which characterize most other regional collections.[24]

[20]5 vols. (Boston, 1882–98; rpt. New York: Dover, 1965).

[21]*English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians,* 2 vols., Maude Karpeles, ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1932).

[22]This can be inferred from D. K. Wilgus, *Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1959), 175–76, 196–97, 202–03.

[23]B. A. Botkin, *A Treasury of American Folklore* (New York: Crown, 1944); *A Treasury of New England Folklore* (New York: Crown, 1947; rev. 1975); *A Treasury of Southern Folklore* (New York: Crown, 1949); *A Treasury of Western Folklore* (New York: Crown, 1951; rev. 1975); *Folk-Say: A Regional Miscellany,* 4 vols. (Norman, Okla.: 1929–32).

[24]*A Treasury of Railroad Folklore* (New York, 1953); *Sidewalks of America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954); see also his *New York City Folklore* (New York, 1956).

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In the main, however, most folklorists have taken the pastoral route, seeking out their materials in rural areas (the more subsistence the agrarian enterprise the better!). Even Dorson's work, usually so wide-ranging, when organized regionally focuses on the bypassed community, the out-of-the way place, the regional ethnic enclave.[25] To Dorson and others the question was: What happens to the "folk" and their lore with the breakup of the small community when the machine invades the garden? Few folklorists have recognized the implicit pastoralism, indeed utopianism, of this last-fruits gathering.

However, Dorson knew what he was doing in collecting, as did the other great folklorist of our time, Alan Lomax: they wished to preserve the stylistic alternatives implicit in American lore. Both Dorson and Lomax argue that America is a land of many voices, though they differ substantially concerning what song the people sing and what they sing about. Dorson, essentially the assimilationist, encounters the diversity of voices, but hears them singing in unison (he refers to them in his recent reprinting of his now-classic *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers: Folk Traditions of the Upper Peninsula,* as the expressions of "coexisting cultures.")[26] This he discovered as a "revelation" while on his "journey" over the waters of the Straits of Mackinac. His "quest" was to slay the dragon of spurious mass culture by finding the true folk. Not unexpectedly he found what he was looking for. Deep in the tradition of romantic nationalism, of Herder and Emerson and Whitman, his America is revealed in true bardic cataloguing style:

> I went to the Peninsula believing that one could uncover many kinds of living folk stories in America, in a limited time and area, and need not dream them up or copy them out in the library. The quest succeeded most happily. . . . I hear creation myths, fairy tales, tall tales, occult tales, legends, romances, exploits, jests, anecdotes, noodle stories, dialect stories, told by Ojibwa, Potawatomi, and Sioux Indians; by Finns, Swedes, Poles, Germans, Italians, Irishmen, Frenchmen, Englishmen, even by Luxemburgers, Slovenians, and Lithuanians; by farmers, lumberjacks, copper and iron miners, fishermen, sailors, railroaders, bartenders, undertakers, authors, county officials, newspaper editors; by the senile and the juvenile, the educated and the illiterate; by family circles and boarding house cliques in full blast, and by solitary old-timers in tar paper shacks.[27]

In other words, Dorson encountered a representative group of the peoples making up America, and lo and behold, living in harmony! This then was the ideal *American* folk community: ethnic diversity, founded upon a common sense of humanity, life lived in harmony with nature, far away from the city's madding crowd. Here "a spate of separate folk traditions, both ethnic and

[25] *Buying the Wind* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964).
[26] (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952).
[27] Ibid., p. 1.

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occupational, coexisted, while arching over all a new regional folklore had emerged, in the dialect humor common to the whole Peninsula."[28]

Lomax too hears this chorus, but interprets it differently. As he says in his comprehensive *Folksongs of North America,*[29] "The map sings. The chanteys surge along the rocky Atlantic seaboard, across the Great Lakes and round the moon-curve of the Gulf of Mexico. . . ." Rather than harmony he hears cacophony, for inherent in American society are irreducible conflicts and alienations made all the greater because of America's vastness and abundant riches. Dorson sees an epic battle between the forces of deadly technocracy on the one hand and those of the pure folk on the other. Lomax's lore speaks of troubles and division—Americans are "restless," producing "lonesome tunes" and "ghost songs." Dorson wages the battle by distinguishing *folklore* (vital, rich, etc.) from *fakelore,* the product of the technologists' mentality.[30] Lomax also battles the technological takeover, implicitly distinguishing between mass culture and popular culture, between the expressive products mass-produced by Madison Avenue, and the cultural products, also in recorded media, but still close to the folk mind and taste. This produces a classic liberal-radical face-off, one that remains unresolved. To Dorson, integrity lies in the untouched item of performance; to Lomax it lies in the spirit of the people and their stylistic structures. Therefore Lomax feels no hesitation in conjoining such items in what he and his father called "a composite photograph" to make a rhetorical and esthetic point, a practice anathema to Dorson.

* * *

Except for the compilations, most collections of American folklore have been organized not only by state or region but by genre. The first volumes to be published by the regional collectors tended to be devoted to song collecting, after the pioneering work by Cecil Sharp. Most regional collections went beyond the Child canon (though these were usually printed in the front of the books) and included a wide range of song types, broadsides and native American ballads, lyrics, spirituals, song-games, and other forms. Only later were other genres published—and then often one by one. The two great personal collections of Vance Randolph and Frank C. Brown indicate the potential range of folklore forms to be garnered by regional collectors. Randolph has published many specialized volumes of tales, songs, superstitions,

[28]Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1959), 137.
[29](Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), xv.
[30]Richard M. Dorson, *Folklore and the American Historian.*

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rhymes and games, and folk speech arising from his fieldwork in the Ozarks.[31]

The *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore,* published posthumously after World War II, was divided into volumes by genre. The Brown Collection provides a cross section of the genres of greatest interest to American folklorists. The greatest amount of space is given over to folk song, with different volumes for ballad, lyric and the music of both song-types. Equally important were the North Carolina folk beliefs, edited and annotated by the foremost American scholar of belief and legend, Wayland Hand. Archer Taylor similarly edited the riddle and proverb collections, as did Paul G. Brewster for the children's games. These three represent the height of the American branch of the great tradition of European comparatist scholarship applied to a regional collection—without clarifying the concept of region.[32]

Exceptions to this generalization about region and genre are the many collections focusing on children and on self-isolating groups, like lumberjacks, cowboys, sailors, and oilfield workers.[33] Here genre is used without the same rigid geographical restrictions. Newell made the major collection of children's games, taking his data wherever he could find them recorded.[34] To be sure, there are some regional collections of games, but more characteristic is Paul G. Brewster's *American Non-Singing Games,*[35] in which regional provenance is played down, although most of his material came from the upper Midwest.

Although the lore of the male occupational groups was often gathered in a single locale, it was considered more characteristic of the occupation than of the geographical area (except where the occupation was confined to one region, like cowboying). Furthermore, there was a recognition that with the lumbering, labor, and sea songs, the repertoire was shared across national

[31]Vance Randolph, *Ozark Mountain Folks* (New York, 1932); *From an Ozark Holler: Stories of Ozark Mountain Folk* (New York, 1933); *An Ozark Anthology* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1940); *Funny Stories from Arkansas* (Girard, Kans., 1943); *Wild Stories from the Ozarks* (Girard, Kans., 1943); *Ozark Short Stories* (Girard, Kans., 1944); *Tall Tales from the Ozarks* (Girard, Kans., 1944); *Ozark Superstition* (New York, 1947); *Ozark Folksongs,* 4 vols. (Columbia, Mo., 1946–50); *We Always Lie to Strangers* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1951); *Who Blowed Up the Church House? and Other Ozark Folk Tales* (New York, 1952); *Down in the Holler* (with George Wilson) (Norman, Okla., 1953); *The Devil's Pretty Daughter* (New York, 1955); *The Talking Turtle, (and other) Ozark Folk Tales* (New York, 1957).

[32](Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1952–59), 7 vols., Newman Ivey White, general editor.

[33]William Main Doerflinger, *Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman* (New York: Macmillan, 1972); John A. Lomax, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (New York, 1930; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1966); and *Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp* (New York, 1947); Mody C. Boatright, *Folklore of the Oil Industry* (Dallas: Southern Methodist Univ. Press, 1963).

[34]*Games and Songs of American Children* (New York: Dover, 1903).

[35](Norman, Okla., 1953).

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boundaries with Canadian woodsmen, British and West Indian sailors, or Scottish miners.

These occupational groups, like the agrarian peoples from whom the regionalists collected, are small and homogeneous faint replicas of our ideal sense of community. Yet they are nonfamilial and unisexual in their set-up. They do, however, maintain the close ties to nature traditionally considered quintessential to folkness. Agrarian, pastoral, nautical, or extractive occupations do not dislocate our notions of the folk nearly as much as factory jobs; hence folklorists have paid scant attention to the occupational lore of urban industrial society.

Little has been made of the fact that these isolated groups were often made up of deviants, drifters, men who often defined their masculinity in terms of their very brief (and highly sentimentalized) touch with civilization and its family-making females. (If Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* is right in saying that American men can't handle women and the cultural order they bring with them and thus eternally search for new frontiers, then "The Girl I Left Behind" is the great American song whether rendered by cowboy, hobo, sailor, lumberjack, soldier, or convict.)

This is somewhat borne out by comparing the song collections of the isolated male occupational groups with the lore of miners and other more urban occupations. The rich collections of newspaperman-folklorist George Korson among Pennsylvania coal miners and Wayland Hand's early works on Western mining traditions[36] show a lore stressing tragedy more than heroism, the familiar rather than the exotic features of occupational life. This has recently been brought into clear focus by Archie Green's *Only A Miner,*[37] notable not only for its solid historical underpinnings and its wide range of sources, but for its ability to tie together labor and industrial lore with various phases of the so-called "folksong revival." Relating folklore to truly popular culture, Green has been writing some of the most engaging and informed essays on our country's traditions as they have affected and been incorporated in popular recordings, handbills, liner notes, advertisements, and so on.[38]

The work of Green and Botkin, as well as some of Dorson's studies of Davy Crockett and other such popular materials, has constantly tested the line drawn between folklore and popular culture. These are usually distinguished by the medium of performance or presentation; if a record is somehow involved, some folklorists assume that "the traditional process of

[36]George Korson, *Songs and Ballads of the Anthracite Miner* (New York, 1926), *Minstrels of the Mine Patch* (Philadelphia: Gale, 1938), and *Coal Dust on the Fiddle* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1943).

[37](Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1972).

[38]See especially his "Commercial Music Graphics #34: Midnight and Other Cowboys," in *JEMF Quarterly,* 11 (1975), 137–52.

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dissemination," with its variations, will be eliminated. However, students of broadside, chapbook, and phonograph materials (especially Wilgus)[39] have demonstrated the constant employment of such documentary forms by the folk themselves both as *aides mémoires* and as ways of learning new items for performance. This has helped shift the differentiating process between folklore and popular culture from the medium of presentation to the relationship between the performer and his community.

* * *

In recent years, there have been some modifications of the traditional organizing principles of American folklorists—i.e., ethnicity, region, genre—and from the view of folk as rustic, isolated, homogeneous, unsophisticated. These departures have developed by degrees.

In Robert Redfield's classic formulation of the folk-urban continuum, folk society stands in polar opposition to urban society. One of the great demographic correlates of modern economic history, however, has been the movement of country folk—both European peasants and people from rural America—to the city. It was natural that folklorists should follow them there, and thus—unreflectively at first, more self-consciously later—the way was opened for the conceptualization of something called "urban folklore."

The earliest efforts were concentrated on immigrant folklore, maintaining the traditional focus in every respect save that the studies were carried out among people who had moved to urban milieus. This work was informed by an especially strong salvage mentality; most collectors envisioned the lore as the survival of living European traditions that were certain to die out by the second, or at best, the third generation.[40] Except for the assimilationist or acculturational model, these collectors provided little in the way of theory, or even of holistic pictures of ethnic life in America. This is less the case in sociological works such as Williams' study on urban Italians[41] or Thomas' and Znaniecki's extensive study of Poles.[42]

The work of Benjamin A. Botkin, head of the folklore section of the WPA Federal Writer's Project, represents the first major attempt to identify a distinctively urban body of folklore. Botkin received little attention from his

[39]D. K. Wilgus, "The Rationalistic Approach," in Mody C. Boatright, Wilson M. Hudson, and Allen Maxwell, eds., *A Good Tale and a Bonnie Tune* (Dallas: Southern Methodist Univ. Press, Texas Folklore Society, 1964), 227–37; and Wilgus, "The Text is the Thing," *Journal of American Folklore*, 86 (1973), 241–52.

[40]D. Demetrocopoulou Lee, "Folklore of the Greeks in America," *Folk-Lore*, 47 (1936), 294–310.

[41]Phyllis Williams, *South Italian Folkways in Europe and America* (New Haven, 1938; rpt. New York: Russell, 1969).

[42]William I. Thomas and Florian Znanieki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, 2 vols. (New York, 1927; rpt. Octagon, 1971).

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academically based colleagues, and little effort was devoted to the study of urban lore until very recently. To be sure, a good deal of children's lore had been collected in urban environments; there was occasional commentary on how such materials emerged out of the city.[43] Abrahams' dissertation on Black folklore in a city environment grew from a collection centering on child lore,[44] where the agrarian repertoire was still being enacted. His published book, *Deep Down in the Jungle,*[45] however, reflects his new interest in the uniquely urban late adolescent and adult lore of the "Camingerly" neighborhood.

City lore had already been noted in Dorson's *American Folklore* in a chapter on urban legends. He and his colleagues at Indiana (especially Linda Degh) are presently carrying out a major team effort to collect ethnic and urban lore in Gary, Indiana.[46]

The growing awareness and acceptance of America's cultural pluralism and the rise of the "new," "white," or "unmeltable" ethnics of the late 1960s has revived interest in ethnicity on the part of the public, scholars, and particularly among the ethnics themselves. Ethnic leaders have become newly aware of how their traditions and customs provide a minimal sense of community, and a "folklore revival" has followed in urban areas like Detroit and Cleveland.[47] The current revival challenges many basic concepts of the discipline, such as the concept of the folk group, which must include part-time ethnics, ethnics living in close-knit communities, and the ethnic group on a national scale. Moreover, it demands that folklorists come to terms with the implied notion that consciously manipulated performances or other kinds of staged interactions between the community and a larger public could not be folklore.[48] Yet as late as 1968, scholars at a Wayne State University conference on "Folklore and the Urban Experience" still asked, "Is there a folk in the city?" without resolving the question.[49]

This problem may be viewed as part of folklore's effort to reconceptualize the folk. Classic folk theory focuses on rural peasants; this was extended to include certain nonpeasant groups—cowboys, lumberjacks, sailors, miners—who purportedly share with the peasant folk the qualities of isolation, homogeneity, and unsophistication. The search for folklore in cities led

[43]Leah Rachel Clara Yoffie, "Three Generations of Children's Singing Games in St. Louis," *Journal of American Folklore,* 60 (1947), 1–51; see also the review of scholarship in Roger D. Abrahams, ed., *Jump-Rope Rhymes, a Dictionary* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, American Folklore Society, 1969).

[44]Negro Folklore from South Philadelphia: A Collection and Analysis (Diss. Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1962).

[45](Hatboro, Pa., 1964; Chicago, 1970).

[46]Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago, 1959), 244 ff.

[47]Mary Daly, "Ethnic Crafts in Cleveland," *Historic Preservation,* 26 (1974), 19–23.

[48]Alan Dundes, "The American Concept of Folklore," *Journal of the Folklore Institute,* 3 (1966), 226–49.

[49]Américo Paredes and Ellen Stekert, eds., *The Urban Experience and Folk Tradition* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1972).

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to further extensions of who might constitute "folk." All definitions still seem to lead to the ideal of the folk community—that is, to folklore as an aggregate of "items" of culture recurrently used face-to-face, scenes most characteristic of agrarian communities whose members teach and entertain each other. Even Abrahams explains his urban-derived material as a post-agrarian phenomenon, arising in neighborhoods in which the cooperative and competitive forms of expression are derived from some agrarian past.[50] Just how much this pastoral vision has skewed the data is impossible to determine right now, but certainly alternative models are being tried out.

Interestingly, teaching folklore in universities has had a significant effect upon the extension of the folk concept. As early as 1923, Martha Warren Beckwith studied the signs and superstitions of her students at Vassar (who were some distance removed from the peasantry) as folklore.[51] College folklore offerings proliferated in the 1950s and 1960s; students were usually required to undertake small fieldwork, or "collecting," projects of their own for the campus folklore archives. Not all students had access to informants with rural or immigrant backgrounds, and many turned their attention to the expressive traditions of other groups not conventionally considered folk—air traffic controllers, sorority and fraternity members, automobile mechanics, hobbyists, etc. Traditionality and generic continuities were the unifying threads here—well-established folkloric touchstones—but the diversity of the collections in burgeoning campus archives gave substance to new formulations concerning the nature of the folk.

Thus, Alan Dundes, in one of the first modern textbooks in folklore, defines the folk as "*any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is—it could be a common occupation, language, or religion—but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own."[52] Such formulations of folk have encouraged further research among groups who do not fit the traditional model.

Notwithstanding these extensions of the conceptual boundaries of the discipline, the preponderance of folklore scholarship still centers on traditional folk culture and expressive forms; decades of past scholarship maintain a momentum of their own, and the pastoral promise remains as attractive as ever as a human (albeit utopian) possibility. However, this momentum is not the only reason for the substantial lack of attention to the expressive culture of secretaries, business executives, and other contemporary occupational groups. Not every feature of social identity is equally productive of expressive culture—the folklore of bookkeepers will never be as rich as that

[50]See especially his *Talking Black*, in press.

[51]Martha Warren Beckwith, "Signs and Superstitions Collected from American College Girls," *Journal of American Folklore*, 36 (1923), 1-15.

[52]Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

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of cowboys, or even of automobile mechanics, for reasons having to do essentially with the structure of relations in different social categories. It is clear that there is some relationship between the extent of shared experience and the development of an expressive repertoire. But to date folklorists have paid little attention to such differential factors of social structure.

Folklorists may speak of the new folk as groups, but, in strict sociological terms, they are identifying social categories, defined in terms of shared identity features rather than in terms of social interaction. Bauman's exploration of differential identity and the social base of folklore is one of the very few attempts by a folklorist to come to grips with this problem, and there is little in other disciplines to aid in such explorations.[53] A few folklorists have made attempts to cast their own distinctive light on the concepts of group and community. A small number of studies have attempted to demonstrate how folklore, both in content and performance, articulates group boundaries. William Hugh Jansen's suggestive article, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore,"[54] distinguishes certain content features of folklore by the ways they assert in-group cohesion, developing stereotypical lore about outsiders as a means of exclusion and exploitation. Abrahams' study, *Positively Black,*[55] explores such factors in Afro-American lore, while Neil Rosenberg's excellent dissertation similarly analyzes southern racist jokes.[56]

A social interactional perspective, centering around the notion of performance, has gained importance in American folkloristics in recent years as a result of the convergence of several lines of inquiry. One important line, which may be traced back at least to the work of Cecil Sharp, has been the steadily increasing centrality of fieldwork. As the body of American folklore collectanea reached the point at which comparative study was possible within the American context—region with region, historical period with historical period—folklorists turned their attention increasingly to the dynamics of the folk process. How does oral transmission actually work? What factors underlie the patterns of variation discernible in the texts available to us?

This is not to suggest that attention to the dissemination process was a new departure for folklorists; international comparative folklorists from at least the 1880s studied the diffusion of items of folklore through time and space. The diffusionists, however, were concerned ultimately with origins,

[53]Richard Bauman, "Differential Identity and the Social Base of Folklore," in Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman, eds., *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1971), 31-41.

[54]*Fabula,* 2 (1959), 205-11; reprinted in Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore,* 43-51.

[55](Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

[56]Neil V. Rosenberg, *Stereotype and Tradition: White Folklore About Blacks,* 2 vols. (Diss. Indiana Univ.).

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attempting to get from the dispersed versions of a particular item back to its Ur-form, and they viewed the process of oral transmission negatively. Moreover, the scope of diffusionist studies was macroscopic, far removed from the transmission of a tale or song from one flesh-and-blood performer to another. It was essentially a library and archival venture, requiring only as comprehensive a collection as possible of variant texts of the item under study. Fieldwork was encouraged as a means of filling in the corpus of available texts. To the fieldworker immersing himself in the folklore of a particular community, however, the broadly macroscopic perspective took a back seat to a concern with more finely tuned dynamics. Collectors like Cecil Sharp and Phillips Barry attended to the dynamics of the oral process in the localized regions in which their informants learned, performed, and passed on their songs.

Those interested in performance itself first studied noteworthy performers, those individuals with the richest repertoires and most developed talents who raised the local folk traditions to the highest artistic levels, or who best represented important cultural strains. Since the early 1940s, a series of studies have been devoted to especially gifted story-tellers and singers from a variety of regions; one such interest was in figures whose exaggerated tales of their own exploits made them comic folk heroes, and who added their tall tales into the oral tradition.[57] Other collectors appended biographical sketches of informants to their published works,[58] or included such performances in the body of their texts.[59]

There followed scholarly descriptions of individual performance styles and detailed analyses of individual repertoires, culminating in book-length treatments of the life and art of individual folk performers, like Abrahams' study of the Ozark singer Almeda Riddle and Bess Hawes' collaboration with the Sea Island singer Bessie Jones on a collection and description of the latter's extensive repertoire.[60]

Besides a human and scholarly interest in the lives of their gifted informants, folklorists with a dedication to fieldwork also understood the formative influence of the performer's sociocultural milieu on his art more deeply than their library-bound colleagues. Closer attention was paid to description of community and locale, sometimes merely impressionistic, sometimes bolstered by anthropological theories relating folklore and culture.

[57]Cf., e.g., Dorson, *American Folklore*, 227–30, in which he surveys the work of Mody C. Boatright, *Gib Morgan, Minstrel of the Oilfields* (Dallas: Southern Methodist Univ. Press, 1945), and William Hugh Jansen's "Abraham 'Oregon' Smith: Pioneer Hero, and Tale-Teller" (Diss. Indiana Univ., 1949).

[58]E.g., Alton Chester Morris, ed., *Folksongs of Florida* (Gainesville, Fla., 1950).

[59]Richard M. Dorson, *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers*.

[60]Roger D. Abrahams, *A Singer and Her Songs: Almeda Riddle's Book of Ballads* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1970); Bessie Jones and Bess Lomax Hawes, *Step It Down* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

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In a related vein, the interest in community, locale, and personal experience as formative influences has led some folklorists to pursue oral history through folklore. Attention here is focused on the way in which views of the past and its relation to the present are embodied in the legends, ballads, personal narratives, and other expressive forms of community members. The work of folklorists in this field exhibits two major thrusts. Like historians, they are concerned with the historicity of oral traditions, toward the reconstruction of a historical past. Like anthropologists, they are interested in a society's sense of its own past, of the world view of its members, without necessary reference to the historical accuracy of the oral testimonies. A classic study that bridges both major concerns is Américo Paredes' account of a border ballad and its hero, *With His Pistol in His Hand.*[61] Also worthy of mention is William Lynwood Montell's *The Saga of Coe Ridge,*[62] which mines the oral history of a small Black community in southern Cumberland County, Kentucky.

Studies of the biography, repertoire, and performance style of folk performers and their sociocultural context have enriched the study of American folklore. Still to be done are ethnographic studies of performance itself, within the context of events and occasions. A general theoretical framework for such studies is emerging within the discipline, drawing from linguistic anthropology, literary criticism, and our own folkloristic heritage. In this framework artistic performance is a distinctive mode of communication and enactment; stylized, foreground esthetic events relate to everyday experience, while exhibiting an integrity of their own.[63] This movement has not yet resulted in descriptions of folkloric performances themselves, though these will certainly come in great profusion in the next few years. Such descriptions will likely begin with an expressive profile of the community under study, i.e., surveying the significant expressive events and their associated artistic means: genres, styles, codes. This approach will note not only the specifics of performance, but the cultural equipment and expectations as well, and thus encompass both the unity and diversity of American expressive culture as enacted in social life.*

[61](Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1958).

[62](Knoxville, Tenn.: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1970). Other works include *Selections from the Fifth and Sixth National Colloquia on Oral History* (New York, 1972); the issue on folklore and oral history, *Journal of the Folklore Institute,* 8 (1971), 79–104; and Wayland D. Hand, ed., *American Folk Legend* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), especially Horace P. Beck, "The Making of the Popular Legendary Hero," 121–32, and D. K. Wilgus and Lynwood Montell, "Beanie Short: A Civil War Chronicle in Legend and Song," 133–56.

[63]See Richard Bauman, "Verbal Art as Performance," *American Anthropologist,* 77 (1975), 290–311, and the references therein.

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